

Manna - What Manner of Stuff is This? It is a Gift!

Bible Selection: Exodus 16. Psalm 106:1-15.

By the end of the first month, the provisions brought from Egypt were exhausted. The 'wilderness' through which they were travelling was not a barren sandy desert. It supported acacia trees and various smaller herbs and provided various springs of water. Moses as a shepherd in this area for forty years was no doubt familiar with the bushcraft farming necessary for survival. However, it could not support 1.5 million or more people along with their livestock. Like them, new Christians soon find that the means used in pre-Christian days are inadequate for the demands of living 'in Christ.' God's plan for the Christian is to enjoy the milk and honey of 'his riches in glory in Christ Jesus'. Meanwhile, to get them there on this journey planned for 40 days duration, He had provided rations of bread and meat, new every day.

Grumbling Against God. The Hebrews had learned nothing from their experience of God's miraculous care: the plagues against Pharaoh, the Passover night, the passage of the Red Sea, the sweetening of Marah's waters, to say nothing of the ever present fiery, cloudy pillar guiding them. Through Moses God had declared His purpose - to take them from Egypt and give them Canaan. They had no excuse for their complaints now. The problem was that they had not learned from the works of God in their lives already to anticipate and participate in His ways (See Study N^o 4.) Let us make sure we correctly interpret and understand God's dealing in our lives and so do not fall into the same error.

Manna: "What is it?" v14. This is the usual meaning given. The Hebrews asked this question and so have scholars through the years¹. It can also be translated "It is a gift." It was whitish, oily, hard, could be ground between stones and then cooked in pans. It was not restricted to this desert for there is evidence of the phenomenon in other regions of the world.² What is significant in our text is that it came when God was ready to meet the need of His people in answer to their prayer. What is

self evident is that this bread seed was basically a carbohydrate and formed part of God's supply, God's gift. The other part was quail meat v13. This provided them with protein and other nutrients. God's purpose was to provide food for them for a short journey had they obeyed him at Kadesh Barnea Numbers 13&14. As it was, it became their regular diet for forty years, until under Joshua's leadership they crossed the Jordan into Canaan.

Some Significant Parallels.
 :4 It was bread from 'heaven.' This Hebrew word means the space above us: a. the heavens where birds fly; b. The heaven where clouds gather; c. The heaven where stars shine; d. the dwelling place of God. How should we understand it here? If manna did synthesise in the atmosphere by radiation then distil by cooling as suggested by some³, it still came from our heavenly Father as His gift. See John 6:32.
 :10. The Glory appeared in the cloud. When God makes His provision for you, however sparse it may seem to the flesh, you will have a sense of God's glory.
 :14. When the dew evaporated the manna lay there. If you do not give priority to

'God Time' you will miss out. Get up early or you will starve.
 :16. Take enough to satisfy. You will find little is as great as much if it is used appropriately v18. This verse is a record of their experience, not a command⁴.
 :20. God's grace must be gathered fresh every day. It cannot be put in the bank for a rainy day.
 :21. When the sun warmed the air, say 10am, it melted. Gather God's provision when you see it. It does not wait around.
 :22. God provides for your rest days too. He made us. He knows we need regular refreshing. He has allowed for it in His economy.
 :32. An omer was kept as a perpetual memorial. We ought to remember God's blessing, to encourage us when we are 'down' or to enrich the lives and pilgrimage of others⁵.

Manna is Called Spiritual Food in the New Testament 1 Corinthians 10:3. It

These Footnotes are to be Read (Spectacles supplied free if you can't see this small type): 1. Manna. What is it? A small round thing. In that area as reported from antiquity (Aristotle, Pliny, and others) a deposit falls from the air onto stones, trees and grass. It is sticky and resembles honey and can solidify. It comes with the dew and melts when the sun rises. It is collected and eaten on unleavened bread. However it is sparse, appears occasionally and cannot support life. In this study we must acknowledge this local phenomenon, but do not suggest that this substance is identified as manna. (See Ellicott v1. p248.) 2. Scandinavian peoples were almost destroyed in a time of catastrophe and recorded that they survived in part by eating the dew. The Greek poets record it as Ambrosia saying that it had the taste of oil and barley or honeycomb. (From an Internet essay by Velikovisky quoting: Tractate Yorna 76a. and J. A. MacCulloch, *Eddic Mythology*, 1930, p. 168. His book *Worlds in Collision*, Abacus 1972, pages134-141 gathers data from around the world and is worth your investigation.) 3. *Ibid*. 4. An Omer and the ephar (v36) are Egyptian measurements. Omer means sheaf and was, it seems, the amount of barley which could be shaken from a sheaf; about 2 litres. An homer was 100 omers, or a donkey load. (Ref. New International Bible Commentary.) 5. Verses 34-36 appear as an explanation added to the narrative for later readers. Moses was instructed by God to keep a diary of these events as they happened, which record is the basis of our Bible books. It is an accurate and reliable eye witness account, not the imaginative work of later writers.

was spiritual in source rather than substance, as it was the provision of God for their physical need. There is also a hidden manna Revelation 2:17, which is our feeding our hearts and minds on Christ, so that our soul is nourished and strengthened. This was termed by Jesus as 'eating His flesh and drinking His blood' John 6:49-51 which is our faith in His sacrificial death for all mankind. As we concentrate our minds and heart on Him we are strengthened. There is no other manna in this desert land. The Pharisees asked this of Jesus because they could not interpret the miracle of the loaves and fishes they had just witnessed. They also had failed to detect God's ways in the works of God in their every day lives. There are none so blind as those who do not want to see, or perhaps are too preoccupied to see. We must pray for spiritual perception to see and understand the hand of God at work in our daily life.

Welcome

Glen Park Gospel Church
 Lower Road, Eltham North
 Sundays 10.30 am

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