

11. Bread from Heaven

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It has been only about a month since the Israelites left Egypt. They started murmuring when they came to the Red Sea. When they crossed the sea, they sang the song of Moses, the song of redemption. But it was not long before they began to murmur again and to sing, this time – the Wilderness Blues. They were a bunch of grippers.

But then again, we are not much better than them. Because we, too, often gripe about what we don't have rather than being grateful for what we have.

We are going to meet a group of two million people who whined and complained to Moses and Aaron about their inconvenience and discomfort, but ultimately their distrust to the Lord. Let's learn from their shortcomings so that we don't do the same thing in our lives.

A. MORE MURMURING, MORE WHINING

Exodus 16:1-3 And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. 2 Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

It was a good thing that Israel was not ruled by a democracy at this point. Things would have gone real bad for Moses.

Here Israel had a selective memory of the past. They remembered the pot of meat of Egypt and longed for them. There are many Christians who have been saved out of sin of drug, alcohol and pornography, you name it, but they still wanted to go back to the old life with some lame excuses. Many of us have had that temptation. Stay far away from it.

God had no intention of letting His people starve. His plan was to lead them through the wilderness, and He had promised to take care of them.

B. OUR GRACIOUS GOD WHO TAKES SO MUCH

Exodus 16:4-12 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. 5 And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." 6 Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, "At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt. 7 And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord; for He hears your complaints against the Lord. But what are we, that you complain against us?" 8 Also Moses said, "This shall be seen when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the Lord hears your complaints which you make against Him. And what are we? Your complaints are not against us but against the Lord." 9 Then Moses spoke to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel,

'Come near before the Lord, for He has heard your complaints.'" 10 Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. 11 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 12 "I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'"

The blessing of bread from heaven came with the responsibility of obedience. This responsibility would test the Israelites and measure their obedience. It is not because God didn't know how they would respond, but because they didn't know themselves.

It is interesting to note that the murmuring here was recognized to be against God. We should be very careful when we begin to gripe and murmur about the circumstances in our lives. Any time we murmur concerning our situations in life, we are, in essence, murmuring against God because we have committed our lives to God.

C. HEAVENLY CATERING

Exodus 16:13-15 So it was that quails came up at evening and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp. 14 And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, as fine as frost on the ground. 15 So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat.

The name 'manna' means, "What is it?" and the name comes from the question asked in this verse. When God's provision comes, we often do not recognize it. Because we often think that we are the ones who made it happen.

D. LEARNING TO LIVE WITH DEPENDENCE ON GOD DAILY

Exodus 16:16-21 This is the thing which the Lord has commanded: 'Let every man gather it according to each one's need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent.'" 17 Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. 18 So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need. 19 And Moses said, "Let no one leave any of it till morning." 20 Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. 21 So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted.

The children of Israel had to gather manna each day, which reminds us of what Jesus said in His model prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread" in Matt 6:11. This is the way God wants us really to live, day by day, trusting in Him to take care of us.

Does it mean that we should not have retirement plan or investment for future? If you can do it, by all means, please do it. What the Lord wants us to do is that we depend on Him for provision, not on our savings accounts, CDs, investment accounts, stocks or bonds. A couple of black Mondays in New York Stock Exchange will bring our investments to nothing more than a pile of scrap papers.

We don't like to be in the position where we just have to wait on God day after day, but that's exactly what God wants from us.

The Israelites clearly heard God's command and they clearly knew what they were supposed to do. Yet for some reason they felt they did not have to obey God's command. There was a harsh penalty for their disobedience – what they gathered in disobedience bred worms and stank like our fleshly solutions.

E. GOD'S PROVISION AND RULE FOR THE SABBATH

Exodus 16:22-31 And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. 23 Then he said to them, "This is what the Lord has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'" 24 So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. 25 Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. 26 Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, there will be none." 27 Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. 28 And the Lord said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? 29 See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." 30 So the people rested on the seventh day. 31 And the house of Israel called its name Manna. And it was like white coriander seed, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.

With this bread from heaven, there were two laws involved. The first was that they were not to try to store any overnight. The second was not to expect to find any on the seventh day. On the sixth day, they were to gather enough for two days, and there wouldn't be any of this manna on the ground on the seventh day. Did they keep it? No.

When we are told not to do a certain thing, guess what we want to do so bad? You don't believe me? Now, don't think about number '5'. What are you thinking now? 5! I settle my case. We are just rebellious people. These people were following the Lord not by their free will.

Despite what God said, some went looking for bread from heaven when He said there would be none. People today still look for life and fulfillment in places God has said there would be none.

Numbers 11:4-8 Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium. The people went about and gathered it, ground it on millstones or beat it in the mortar, cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil.

Mama Moses published "1001 Ways to cook Manna": how to make Manna Bagel, Manna Donuts, Manna Ghatti, Manna Taco and Moses' favorite MannaCotti.

For forty years, God supplied them manna, they were tired of God's provision. Especially, the mixed multitude were the ones who had intense craving for what they used to have in Egypt.

We still have the mixed multitude in Christianity today. There are the group of Christians who are a half in and a half out in their faith. To them, having daily devotion is dumb and boring. They'd rather do drinking, doing drugs, messing with someone who are not spouses and watching pathetic reality shows than learning what God says through the Bible. They are driven by flesh, not by the Spirit of God.

F. MANNA AND THE BREAD OF LIFE

Actually chapter 16 should be read in connection with John 6, because the manna from heaven is a type of Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life.

1) Manna represents Jesus' attributes

- The small size of manna speaks of His humility. God became as a tiny human baby, and even a lowly servant.
- It was round which reminds us of the circle, symbol of His eternality. Jesus Christ is eternal God.
- It was white, a reminder of His purity and sinlessness. He is the holy Son of God.
- It was satisfying and strengthening. The nation lived on manna for 40 years. All that we need for spiritual nourishment is Jesus Christ, God's heaven-sent Bread of Life. We are to feast on the Bread of Life that will never leave us hungering.

2) Manna shows us how Jesus came

- It did not come from wilderness plants, nor from Egypt, but from heaven as the gift of God's grace. Jesus Christ came down from heaven as the Father's gift to hungry sinners.
- It came at night, so that the people gathered the manna early each morning. It was night when Jesus was born. And He came to be the Light of the World.
- It fell in the wilderness. To the unsaved person, this world is a wonderful place, but to the Christian on his pilgrimage to glory the world is nothing but a wilderness. Yet Christ came to this world in love to give us eternal life. What grace!
- It fell right where they were. How easily accessible the manna was to the Jews! They did not have to climb a mountain or cross a deep river. Jesus Christ came to the sinners like us where we live. We can come to Him at any time.

3) Manna shows us what we must do

- We must feel the need. The spiritual hunger within us can be satisfied only by Christ. Much of the unrest and sin in the world today is the result of unsatisfied spiritual hunger. People are living on substitutes and rejecting the nourishment that God freely provides.
- We must stoop. The manna fell on the ground where people had to stoop to pick it up, not on the trees. Many sinners will not humble themselves to God. Until they repent and turn to the Savior, they will not have eternal life in Jesus.
- We must take for ourselves. The hungry Jews were not fed by looking at the manna, admiring it, or watching others eat it. They had to pick it up and eat it themselves. Jesus doesn't say to us, "Just admire Me, you will be saved," but He declares to us, "Accept Me into your heart as your Savior, then you will have eternal life."
- We must do it early. Some say, "I do my devotion late at night before I sleep." For me, by the time I am ready for bed, I am in coma. Besides, I'd rather give my first portion of the day to the Lord. When I do that, the rest of the things I have to do come in order, because the Lord helps me.
- We must continue to feed on Him. Many expect the pastor or Bible teacher to gather the manna for them and "spoon-feed" them on Sunday. The test of our spiritual walk is this: Do I think enough of Christ to start my day with His Word and prayer?

Someone has calculated that to supply an omer of manna which is six pints each for two million people daily would have required four freight trains with sixty cars each. How generous God is to us!

G. MANNA TO BE KEPT FOR NEXT GENERATIONS

Exodus 16:32-36 Then Moses said, "This is the thing which the Lord has commanded: 'Fill an omer with it, to be kept for your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'" 33 And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations." 34 As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. 35 And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. 36 Now an omer is one-tenth of an ephah.

A pot manna was put in the ark, which is described in greater detail in final part of the Book of Exodus. In the Ark were placed three things:

- 1) **Aaron's rod that budded** – Aaron's rod that budded speaks of Jesus' resurrection.
- 2) **The pot of manna** – The manna speaks of Jesus as the Bread of life. He is provided as spiritual food for us.
- 3) **The Ten Commandments** – The Law speaks of the fact that Christ alone kept the Law. He fulfilled it for you and me through His sacrifice.

H. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Let's not be so quick to gripe about what we don't have, rather let's be grateful for what we have from the Lord.
- 2) Let's remember that any time we murmur concerning our situations in life, we are, in essence, murmuring against God because we have committed our lives to God.
- 3) Let's feed our spirits daily with the Word of God and communication with Him in prayer.