

## Message #30

## Exodus 16:22-36

If ever there has been great confusion in the church, a major area has been concerning the Sabbath day. The Sabbath day was on the seventh day of the week, not the first day of the week. The Sabbath day was not for the Church; it was for Israel. It was part of the O.T. Law and we are not under law, as Paul said, but grace (Rom. 6:14; Gal. 2:21). God gave the Law and the Sabbath day to Israel, not the Church (Neh. 9:13-14). You may find a complete discussion of this point in our “Law versus Grace” series, pp. 35-42.

Now to this point in Exodus: whenever the people faced some inconvenience or difficulty, instead of going to the God who just parted a sea and miraculously delivered them, they murmured and complained. So God decided that He would make them stop once a week and force them to think about Him and His provisions.

**GOD SPECIFICALLY DEMANDED THAT HIS COVENANT PEOPLE ISRAEL STOP WORKING TO GATHER MANNA ON THE SABBATH DAY.**

This is for Israel. There are not stop working, stop gathering manna mandates for the church. In order to test Israel, God demanded that one day be a day in which people stopped doing their normal stuff and focus on Him and His grace provisions. The way God would do this would be by actually performing another miracle.

**HISTORICAL FACT #1 – Moses gives instruction to the people about God’s food .  
16:22-24**

Now Moses had already told these people that on the sixth day of the week they were to prepare twice what they normally would prepare to eat (16:5). According to **verse 22**, on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread (manna), which amounted to two omers or about 4 quarts for each person. Apparently, **this was a shock to the people so they went to Moses and brought to his attention that there was double the amount on the sixth day.**

Now I believe that in order to collect this manna, you had to move out away from your tents and livestock. Probably it was necessary to walk out a ways into the wilderness and pick up your manna supply. On the sixth day, each leader needed to pick up a double supply for his family and there was plenty there. **It is a wonderful moment in a person’s mind when the bulbs go on in the brain and God’s people realize God is faithful to His Word. It should never be a shock to us that God is faithful to do what He promises to do.**

In **verse 23** Moses said this is what the LORD means for you to do. **What this means is that God had revealed there would be a double portion, but at this point He reveals a reason for it.** The reason is tomorrow, which would be the seventh day, is a Sabbath observance or holy day set apart to God. So boil or bake whatever you need to boil or bake and keep the leftover manna bread until the Sabbath day and then you can eat it.

Now there seems to be some question whether or not the manna was to be baked or boiled or the quails were to be baked or boiled or whether this refers to some other things that spice up the meal. The way things were baked was by putting something in a covered pot or skillet over an outdoor fire and the way things were boiled was by putting water in a closed or open pot in an outdoor fire. So if this refers to the manna, then God permitted a portion to be baked or boiled, rather than eaten raw.

According to **verse 24**, they did that and put some aside on the 6<sup>th</sup> day and God saw to it that the manna did not become foul or filled with worms. So this was a miracle of God. The manna typically would melt when the sun got hot (16:21) and if one tried to save some of it until the next day it would become foul and breed with worms. So the fact that one day per week the manna did not spoil was, in fact, a miracle of God.

**HISTORICAL FACT #2** – Moses gives instruction to Israel about God’s Sabbath. **16:25-26**

Now most people do not have a clue what this Sabbath is all about. But the writer of Hebrews clearly informs us what this is all about. Very early in the infant days of Israel’s history, **God wanted the nation Israel remembering the Sabbath because this pointed to Jesus Christ who puts an end to any works system of salvation (Hebrews 4:9-11)**.

Now this is the first bare bones theological discussion Israel gets about the Sabbath. From it we learn the following six instructive things:

**Sabbath Instruction #1** - The day is called “Sabbath.” **16:25a**

The actual word “Sabbath” means to rest. According to William Gesenius, the primary meaning of the word is “to sit down and sit still and rest” (*Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 804). This Sabbath was a day one could stop the normal work of gathering and preparing food.

So this first use of the word is in the context of taking a break from going outside and getting your food on that particular day. This does not mean you sat around the tent all day and did nothing.

Truth is there were still some things that needed to be done. The cattle still needed to be fed and watered and so did the people. People with livestock still need to take care of that livestock even if it were the Sabbath day. The fact is this was specifically about not collecting quails and manna.

**Sabbath Instruction #2** - The Sabbath day is “to the LORD.” **16:25b**

Now it is clear that God does not need a break, but what He did want the people to do was to think about Him and all He had done for Israel. So this was not just a day to rest, **but a day to think and refocus on the truth about God; specifically, on the grace of God and the provisions of God.**

Victor Hamilton made a very interesting observation. This is the first of six Sabbath day commands in Exodus (16:21-30; 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:12-17; 34:21; 35:2-3). There are six more found in the book of Leviticus and Deuteronomy (Lev. 19:3, 30a; 23:3; 25:1-7; 26:2a; Deut. 5:12-15). Then he observed there are some passages that present some different aspects to the Sabbath day (Gen. 2:1-4; Num. 15:32-36; 28:9-10). But then he rightly observed none of the 12-15 passages call this day a day of worship. “There is no verse in the O.T. that says, ‘You shall go to ‘church’ on Saturday’” (*Exodus*, p. 257).

**Sabbath Instruction #3** - The Sabbath day was a day to eat the previous day’s collection.  
**16:25c**

God expected His people to eat. In fact, instead of gathering food, all they needed to do on this day was eat what was already there.

**Sabbath Instruction #4** - The Sabbath day was a day in which God would not supply manna.  
**16:25d**

Now if people did not prepare double portions and went out looking for manna on the Sabbath day, they would not find it.

**Sabbath Instruction #5** - The Sabbath day was on day seven. **16:26a**

The instructions are as clear as can be. God gave Israel the precise day that she was to do this. She was to gather double on day six because the Sabbath was on day seven.

**Sabbath Instruction #6** - The Sabbath day would be a day in which people will not find manna. **16:26b**

The point is plainly stated again that you will not find manna on day seven.

Now this fact right here proves that this is for Israel and not the Church. Some have tried to put some legal Sabbath day requirement on the Church by saying God demands you never work on Sunday. Well, if this were a true Sabbath day requirement, then we would have to say if you ever go to work on Sunday, God will not bless you and you will not be paid. You will not find a paycheck at the end of your work. Obviously this is not the case because this manna mandate is not for the church.

Now I do believe with many commentators that there is a principle and that principle is in any dispensation if you try to shortchange God, you will discover you will not ever really get ahead.

Now you would logically think that Israel would say well, this is as clear as it gets.

**HISTORICAL FACT #3** – Some of the people disobeyed God’s Word. **16:27**

Even though the instruction was as plain as day, some of the people went out on the seventh day to collect manna. This may mean a couple of things. Some didn’t collect a double portion on the sixth day or some did collect a double portion on the sixth day but greedily wanted more on the seventh day. Either way, it is a violation of what God wanted Israel to do.

This was very offensive to God and to His Word. Whenever we do something that is totally against the Word of God, we basically say to God—we don’t trust you and we don’t believe you.

**HISTORICAL FACT #4** – God graciously reminds His people of His Word. **16:28-30**

In **verse 28**, God comes to Moses and says, “How long will you (plural) = Israel, refuse to keep God’s commandments and instructions?” Moses was not disobedient on this point, but the nation was. Well, so far the answer to that question “how long” is well over 3400 years. Now we need to carefully consider this fact because it clearly shows that no one can or will ever keep the Law of God. This was one simple command given to the nation Israel. Collect double the food on day six and don’t collect food on day seven. The fact is some of the nation could not even obey that one simple command. What chance do you think people have concerning the entire Law of God with all of its commandments, ordinances and statutes?

In **verse 29**, Moses repeated that no one was to go out of the camp and look for food on the seventh day. This does not mean all locomotion must cease. This does not mean they could not go outside and take care of animals or go to the bathroom; it just means that they were to stop looking for food out in the wilderness on the seventh day.

This locomotion point became a point of Sabbath day legalism. A rule that was invented by Jewish Pharisaical leaders was that you could not travel beyond the suburbs of a city on the Sabbath day. Then they made up the actual distance which was about  $\frac{3}{4}$ ’s of a mile. They also wanted to kill Jesus Christ because He walked and grabbed some corn in a cornfield to eat one Sabbath day (Lk. 6:1-2, 11). God never said anything like that to Israel. What He said was on the Sabbath day you are not to go outside to try and gather manna.

In **verse 30**, the text says that the nation finally got the memo and they rested from looking for food on the Sabbath day.

The point here is that no one was to go out and harvest manna or quail on the Sabbath day. God did not say you may only move so many steps on the Sabbath day. Nor did He say you could not ever eat some corn from a field on the Sabbath day—He said don’t gather manna on the seventh day.

I think there is a real point of interpretation we need to see here. Do not ever read into a text more than is actually there. Take it literally. This literally was for Israel.

When the manna stopped some 40 years later, the Sabbath manna gathering law was over. God's Word covers things in regard to Israel and things in regard to the Church. If God's Word says something for the Church, then believe it and obey it; but don't start making up stuff His Word does not say.

For example, we are to gather together on the first day of the week to study, sing, pray, give, worship and fellowship in church. If we were to say that feeding on manna is illustrative of feeding on the Word of God, then we would say the Sabbath day requires that we not go to church and feed on the Word of God, because the Sabbath requirement is don't go out and get manna on the Sabbath day. What has happened is a tragedy. Men have come up with their own "Sabbath day" restrictions not found in God's Word.

For example, I knew of some Christian men who used to love to go hunting together to hunt elk. They would travel way out in the mountains and set up their camp. They loved the Lord. They read the Word and they prayed and had great fellowship. A minister in a denomination told them they could not hunt elk on Sunday because of the Sabbath day manna law. A couple of the men felt they shouldn't hunt, but one of the men understood grace and one Sunday morning he went out and harvested one of the biggest bulls of his entire elk hunting career. When he got that bull, he bowed his head and thanked God because he loved the Lord and he knew the Sabbath day manna law was over.

Well, that is exactly the same kind of thing the Pharisees said to the people, which is why they wanted to kill Jesus Christ; because He was walking through a cornfield on the Sabbath looking for something to eat. God did not tell men in the church they could not hunt elk once a year on Sunday, He told Israel don't gather manna on the Sabbath.

**HISTORICAL FACT #5** – This manna Sabbath is to be remembered by Israel forever.  
**16:31-36**

The Sabbath day is not about sitting at home eating pot roast and taking a nap on Sunday. It is not about you not going for a drive in your car or not going for a bike ride or not going outside for a walk. **The Sabbath day is a national day for Israel in which she was supposed to remember the manna provision of God forever.**

**Reality #1** - The house of Israel named the bread. **16:31a**

The name of the bread was "manna" which means "what is it?" We could understand the name to mean we have never seen anything like it.

**Reality #2** - The house of Israel describes the manna. **16:31b**

There are three descriptions we get here of the manna:

**(Description #1)** - It was like a coriander seed. This has to do with size and shape. It was round.

**(Description #2)** - It was white. Numbers 11:7 said it had an appearance like bdellium, which is transparent.

**(Description #3)** - It tasted like a wafer with honey.

According to Numbers 11:8, when it was baked it tasted like a cake baked in oil. But when not baked, it apparently tasted like honey. So it apparently was very smooth to eat. Actually there are some cereals with honey that have been baked that are very good and smooth to eat.

**Reality #3** - The house of Israel was to remember this manna forever . **16:32-34**

According to **verse 33**, Aaron was supposed to take a clay jar or pot and put an omerful of manna in it. A sample of manna needed to be kept with Israel forever in the ark in the holy of holies of the tabernacle. The preservation of this manna was itself a miracle. An omerful was one-tenth of an ephah. An Ephah is about a bushel, so an omerful is about 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a bushel. This has been calculated to be about a half gallon or 2.2 liters.

Now at the time that this instruction was given, the tabernacle had not even been built nor had the Law been given. But obviously it would be constructed and when it was, this manna was to be kept inside the most holy place.

Now why was the manna placed first in a jar before the Law was placed in the ark? Because God is showing us something important—**experiencing My grace gift comes chronologically before understanding and applying My written Word**. God is a God who provides grace “manna” before He provides Law “mandates.” God has always been a God of grace before He was a God of law.

“The testimony” in **verse 34** refers to the tablets of stone on which God’s commandments were written. We learn from Hebrews 9:4 that the ark contained a golden jar of manna, Aaron’s rod that budded and the tablets that showed God’s covenant connection to Israel.

The Holy of Holies contained one item of furniture, the ark. It was a box that contained the Word of God, the staff of Aaron and a jar containing manna. This shows us all how important it was. God wanted His people to realize I am the God who provides for My people.

Now one question is worthy of asking and answering. The ark was kept in the most holy place and even the high priest did not look into the ark. It was concealed by an atonement cover. So the question comes, how could generations see the bread that was in a jar and put before the LORD in the Holy of Holies?

The answer is as God moved Israel from place to place, they would see the ark plainly and we may assume that at times the priest was to show the people what was in it.

**Reality #4** - The house of Israel ate the manna for 40 years. **16:35**

God supplied this manna for 40 years until she came to the border of the Promised Land. In fact, Joshua is clear to point out that when Israel got to the Promised Land, the manna stopped (Josh. 5:12). So once the manna stopped, the Sabbath regulations concerning manna were over.

There is a Sabbath rest for sinful souls—Jesus Christ. All one must do is stop working and start trusting.