

The Manna and the Messiah (Exodus 16)

I don't know about you but I never enjoyed tests in school. I really don't like pop quizzes

- the teacher surprises you with a test to see how well you were listening.
- One exam in HS I took twice, and got 0 both times. I think part of it was multiple choice.
- That's pretty bad! In college I flunked a class I think was called 'intro to Biblical study.'
 - o A bad start for a guy who would be doing biblical study all his life!
 - o I was just interested in sports, immature, and into wasting opportunities.

I didn't like exams and especially didn't like public speaking assignments

But God! He graciously patiently changed me even as I failed miserably.

- That He made me a pastor sometimes amazes people I've met later who knew me then.
- Today in Ex 16 we'll see God give a test to Israel that they didn't expect or enjoy.
- Their response shows they didn't listen or learn from what God was teaching them.
- They got a zero on their first test in ch 15 and will get a zero on this one.
- But God, amazingly graciously patiently helps the immature here as He did me.
- Despite their failings and complaining, God is changing them to serve Him.

His way of transformation is by a hands-on education

At Marah, God changed water from bitter to sweet in the end of the last chapter

- and it says He tested them there to see if they'd listen to His teaching (15:25-26).

Now look at ch 16 and v. 4: *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, **that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not...**"*

Dt 8:16 says God fed manna to test and humble and do Israel good in the end

God as a good Teacher helps and fixes what we get wrong on the test. He prepares.

- His classroom is creation. Last week I was in the desert of Arizona.
- This week we'll see Israel in the School of the Desert.

Spurgeon called this desert wilderness "the Oxford and Cambridge for God's students. There they went to the University, and he taught and trained them, and they took their degree before they entered into the promised land."¹

Let's join Israel at Wilderness U. Ex 16:1: *They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin [short for Sinai in that wilderness] which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. [2] And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, [3] and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." [4] Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, **that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.** [5] On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily." [6] So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, "At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, [7] and in the morning you shall see **the glory of the LORD**, because he has heard your grumbling against the LORD. For what are we, that you grumble against us?" [8] And Moses said, "When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we?"*

*Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.” [9] Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’” [10] And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and **behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.** [11] And the LORD said to Moses, [12] “I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’” [13] In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. [14] And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. [15] When the people 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, “It is the bread that **the LORD has given you to eat.***

At our old church helping out in children’s ministry one time, the teacher was talking about this

- She asked the kids ‘what is it, what was the stuff from heaven called that Israel ate?’
- It was white and it starts with Ma...’ An excited kid raised his hand: ‘Mayonnaise!’

Well, the children of Israel are asking ‘what is it?’ ESV footnote says in Hebrew it’s ‘man hu’

It’s like in English, watcha-ma-call-it? (Hershey named a candy bar Whatchamacallit)

[31] Now the house of Israel called its name manna [from ‘man hu’/‘what is it’ back in v. 15]. It was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. [32] Moses said, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, so 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 jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the LORD to be kept throughout your generations.” [34] As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the testimony to be kept. [35] The people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan. [36] (An omer is the tenth part of an ephah.) [half-gallon or 2 liters]

4 decades of daily provision of food: boiled, baked, beat, ground, wafers, cakes, etc.²

The ark of the testimony/covenant had only 3 items in it:

- the rod that did miracles, the tablets of stone with the 10 commandments,
- and a day’s worth of manna God kept from spoiling.
- This is incredibly important for God’s people beyond those 40 years.
- v. 32 says later generations were to see this.

Manna tasted like honey, maybe as a foretaste of the land of milk and honey,

- to taste and see the Lord is good. Manna is in the top 3.
- Aaron did miracles by a rod that made Egypt’s sorcerers say ‘this is the finger of God.’
- Later the law was written in stone by the finger of God on tablets,
 - o but in the manna we see what God’s hand provided daily.

What is it? What is it all about?

- God says it’s so His people know Him more and see His glory in His provision (v. 6-7).

May God help us see His glory here and know Him more as our Provider

There’s a message for us in the manna and in the Messiah, in the problem and solution in Christ

The problem: Grumbling dishonors God and distorts reality

1 Cor 10 says the Exodus is for our example/instruction, to not grumble like Israel

When you grumble about situations or spiritual leaders or sinful people you live or work with,

- you’re actually grumbling about the sovereignty of God. He permits and has a purpose and plan for everyone and everything in our lives for our good and His glory.

In end of v. 3 they grumble to Moses ‘*you brought us out into this wilderness...*’

- They assume evil motives and accuse him of a death wish and a death march.
- But he doesn’t take it personal, in v. 6 Moses replies that Israel will know it’s actually really God who brought them out. God is the sovereign ultimate cause.

Moses wrote earlier even where man intends evil, God intends it for good (Gen 50:20)

Look at the middle of v. 8: ‘...*the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble **against him**—what are we? Your grumbling is **not against us but against the LORD.***’ This is more than groaning like ch 2.

- This isn’t constructive criticism to one you love (better than murmuring behind the back).
- You may not agree, but better to ask them why
 - o don’t accuse and assume you know why (their heart).
- Don’t complain to or about others,
 - o but you can respectfully vent to God (like psalms of lament).

The psalms show how to pour out feelings in faith to God

Kevin DeYoung clarifies grumbling against the Lord ‘is not a humble cry for help, but saying... “I know how to run the universe a bit better...” [than God’s sovereignty is running it]. Instead of... “This really hurts, but I’m ready to receive whatever I must receive from God’s hand”, grumbling [is] “This stinks, and I’m ready to rebel against God’s heart.” That’s the difference.’³

We can be discouraged as life feels hard or harsh, but we dishonor God to judge Him hard or harsh

In v. 3 Israel wishes God’s hand killed them in Egypt. What a dishonor to God!

- Patrick Henry said ‘give me liberty or give me death,’
- Israel here says ‘give me slavery or give me death’!⁴

They’d rather be back under Pharaoh’s hand as slaves than trust the hand of God who saved?!

In the middle of v. 3 they reminisce about Egypt ‘*when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full ...*’ the 2nd part of the problem: Grumbling dishonors God and distorts reality (past and present).

Sin exaggerates how bad the present is and how good the past was (nostalgia)

O for the good old days again with the Egyptian good old boys and their pots of BBQ brisket!

- O for a good old town buffet with unlimited bread as we all sat around fulfilled!
- That’s a distorted memory of the past! And it distorted more over time.

The Egyptian menu in their memory got greater later in Numbers 11:5: *We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.*

- It’s like they can smell it: free fish and fruit and fancy vegetable medley.
 - o But they forget how flesh smelled after Egyptians beat an Israelite to death.
- Do they remember the river where they caught fish is where their babies were killed?
- Selective memory of meat minus straw for bricks, slave-masters, etc.

They have a distorted recall of things as better before, but their reality was bitter before

Ex 1:13 *they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field...with heavy burdens* (v. 11). Just weeks earlier they said we ‘*stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants [who] have...a sword in their hand to kill us*’ (5:21).

- But now they talk like they’d rather have that than be a part of this rescue operation.
- It’s like slaves finding it hard after emancipation who wished they died on the plantation

- Or POWs being rescued from a concentration camp by the WWII allies
 - o but haven't eaten or made it home yet – if they grumble at rescuers, it's insulting.

Listen up: If God saved you from slavery to sin, why do you look back or grumble on the way?

Complaining is offensive to the God who's delivering you!

Don't be hard on Israel as they starve, listen to your own heart.

- Your grumbling dishonors God and distorts reality.

That's the problem. **Now the solution in the manna and in the Messiah**

2 applications. Trust the Lord... #1. to care for physical needs (food, rest, etc.)

[12] *"I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"* –

- He knows their talk about meat and bread,
- and will graciously show His care in supplying it so they know Him.

This is undeserved unmerited favor to complainers! Despite their murmurings He gives mercies

Even as they grumble, He has grace. If we're faithless, He remains faithful

Ex 16 shows God's care for physical needs.

- Moses wrote earlier of Jehovah-Jireh, or Yahweh the Provider,
 - o and 'God-Who-Sees/who looks after me' (Gen 22:14, 16:13 NKJV/ESV).
- Moses later wrote of Israel in 'the wilderness, he encircled him, [God] cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye' (Dt 32:10).
- The Lord keeps His own in tender care, you can trust Him to provide all your needs.

This should encourage us in 'various trials knowing the testing of faith produces endurance'⁵

[16] *This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat.'*

- It's all-you-can-eat for all 2 million Israelites!

v. 18 says as they measured, 'whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat.'

- Apparently they shared with whoever had need.
- The Lord's care moved them to care for others.

Paul applies this to church giving, he talks about care for others God puts in hearts in 2 Cor 8:16 and he says 'your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, [then Paul quotes Ex 16] "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack." ...He who supplies...bread for food will supply and multiply your seed...to be generous in every way...supplying the needs of the saints but...also overflowing'⁶

As you regularly give a % to God's work or needs of God's people, He'll take care of you

The NT quotes this text for the truth that God meets our physical and financial needs as we give

- and so we can give to others' needs.
- But Ex 16 isn't just providing food, it's providing rest, too.

[23] *he said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a **day of solemn rest**, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.'* ...[26] *Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none.* [27] *On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none.* [28] *And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? [29] See! The LORD*

has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.” [30] So the people rested on the seventh day.

That’s hard if you’re a workaholic, or you’re wanting to be productive and get ahead

We’ll study Sabbath more in ch 20

- The point here is trust God to care for needs and trust God to rest (also a need)
- Bread is God’s gift, and v. 29 says rest is His gift, too, on the Sabbath.
- And He gifts them with extra food the day before so they would stay home for a day.
- Pharaoh gave no straw or days off but their new Master gave Israel a weekly day of rest
 - o because He cares for their physical needs.

Work they did every other day ceased, they prepared the night before, to rest a day in their place

The NT doesn’t command us to shelter in place to rest, but we need regular rest, too

Physically, mentally, spiritually we need weekend rest and nightly sleep because we’re not God. Ryken wrote⁷ ‘If ever a society badly needed the gift of God’s rest, it is our own. We are always complaining about how tired and busy we are. As Christians, we grumble about not having enough time... However, if we do not receive the gift of God’s rest, [it’s like] we are really still working for Pharaoh. Rushing around from one activity to the next, trying to get ahead in life, always working and never waiting (even on Sunday)—this lifestyle comes from the sinful nature. And according to the Bible, there is no peace or rest for the wicked (Isa. 48:22).

Therefore as Christians we are called to stand against the strivings of the surrounding culture’

Ps 46:10 ‘cease striving and know/be still and know’ God is God and we are not

Trust the Lord #1. to care for needs (food, rest) and #2. To provide each day (don’t worry)

[21] Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

- Morning by morning new mercies they see,
- each day all they needed God’s hand had provided, great is God’s faithfulness, amen?
- For 40 years His mercies never came to an end, they’re new every morning.

But some didn’t trust what Moses said, and they tried to hoard some just in case in v. 20: *But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank.*

They couldn’t store up a backup, every week day they had to trust there would be fresh manna.

- Don’t worry about tomorrow, what you’ll eat, etc.,
- trust God each day for sufficient provision.

Say ‘*the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want/lack...surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days...*’

He made them lie down in rest, led by still waters in ch 15, restored their soul, cup overflowed.

Phil 4: ‘*I have learned both to be full and to be **hungry**, both to abound and to **suffer need**. I can do all things through **Christ** who strengthens me...And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches...*’ NKJV

Paul learned the secret of contentment that replaces complaining (cf. 2:14)

Turn to Mt 4 and let’s see how Christ strengthens us.

- In His humanity, He suffered need and needed rest and was hungry.
- These lessons aren’t just about manna, they’re about the Messiah.

Mt 4:1 *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the **wilderness to be tempted** [same word for ‘tested’] by the devil. [2] And after fasting forty days and forty nights, **he was hungry**. [3] And the tempter came and said to*

him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” [4] But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”” [Dt 8]

Jesus didn't grumble like His forefathers, He trusted God and His sufficient word

Jesus had physical needs, and in v. 11 the angels ministered to those needs,

- but first, like Israel, Jesus went from the water to the wilderness to be tested by hunger.
- Satan points out God did a miracle of bread before,
 - o if you're His Son, do it, don't trust the Father's provision and timing.

Jesus passed the wilderness test Israel failed, so that His people don't have to fail.

- He showed us how to respond with scripture (*It is written* 3x)
- and to rely on God's timing and providing.

He models fighting the sin of murmuring by meditating on the Word that's sweeter than honey

Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed to resist some temptation strong?
 ...the burdens press, and the cares distress, and the day grows weary and long?
 O yes, He cares; I know He cares!... I know my Savior cares!

Heb 4 says our sweet Savior was tempted in every way and sympathizes with every weakness, so we can go boldly to His throne of grace to receive mercy and find help in our time of need.

Now go to Mt 6:11 and this is what Pastor Steve prayed earlier, let's say it again all together:

'Give us this day our *daily bread*...'

- God wants us to remember this every time we pray.

It's not 'our weekly bread,' or 'our month's worth of food – pray for daily bread like OT Israel.

- Exactly 3 years ago some of our daily supplies weren't available in stores.
- People hoarded a few month's worth of paper products in fear.
- We need to trust God to provide our needs every day.

That doesn't mean we sit back, sleep in, and slack off.

- Israel gathered daily manna early before it melted.

In v. 34 Jesus says don't worry about tomorrow (like Ex 16), sufficient is each day's trouble.

- v. 25 says don't be anxious for your life, what you'll eat (like OT Israel).

Look at v. 26: *Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*

- If you look at birds, they're fed as they work to gather up food every morning.
- The early bird gets what? God feeds them with worms they daily dig for.
- If God cares for birds, He'll take care of you! Don't worry!

Turn to Jn 6 but know His eye is on the sparrow so we know He watches us!

- From every bird on earth to every hair on our head He has sovereign care.
- Don't fear, He said in another place, you're worth more than many sparrows!⁸

Jn 6:4 says this was at the time of Passover, when Israel ate bread to celebrate their exodus.

- v. 1 says Jesus went to the other side of the sea, kinda like Israel after their exodus.
- v. 6 says Jesus tested them with the question of bread for so many (also like Ex 16).
- Then in v. 11-12 Jesus miraculously multiplied bread to feed 5,000,
 - o they all ate as much as they could and were filled (like OT bread from heaven)

That miracle is in all 4 gospels to show Jesus is God who made bread in the OT

[31] *Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'*"
 [32] *Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you **the true bread** from heaven. [33] For the **bread of God is he** who comes down from heaven and **gives life to the world.**" [34] They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." [they want the free meal plan, manna always, but the Messiah is what they missed and needed. v. 35] *Jesus said to them, "**I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger...**" [47] Truly, truly, I say to you, **whoever believes** has eternal life. [48] *I am the bread of life. [49] Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. [50] This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. [51] **I am the living bread** that came down from heaven. If anyone **eats of this bread**, he will live forever...[57] As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever **feeds on me**, he also will live because of me. [58] This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. But in v. 61 they grumble again***

Application for disciples: stop complaining, keep coming to Jesus like v. 35.

- Comes is a present tense participle. And so is v. 57, keep feeding on Christ as your life.
- This isn't one-time, it's a daily bread of life.
- We feed on Him as we read in His Word that satisfies the hunger of our soul.
- The Word of Christ is sufficient for life and godliness because Christ is sufficient.
- With the soul or sin issues we don't need psychology or self-help, we need the scriptures
- Warren Wiersbe applies it like daily manna, 'start the day with the Lord, gathering spiritual food from the Word, because if we wait too long to meet God, the day will become cluttered, we'll get distracted, and we'll suffer from spiritual malnutrition'⁹

For unbelievers here, without Christ you will die in your sin.

- Your grumbling is enough to bring death and wrath of God (like Israel later).
- There's an eternal judgment for every careless word, according to Jesus.
- So confess your sin and need and come to Jesus the bread of life.
- Why labor for what is not bread, and what does not satisfy?
- Feast your soul in abundance, the all-sufficient Savior.
- Taste and see, take Him in by faith so He's a part of you.
- Trust the Lord who provides salvation in His death and resurrection.
- Blessed is the hunger for righteousness that He satisfies.

You are the Bread of Life, O Lord, to me;
 Your holy Word, the truth That saves me.
 Give me to eat and live With Thee ...
 As Thou did... at Galilee ...
 Then shall all bondage cease, All fetters fall;
 And I shall find my peace, My all in all.

¹ Charles H. Spurgeon, "Marah Better Than Elim" (No. 2301), Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1973), 39:151.

² See also Numbers 11:8.

³ [Sermon: Grumbling and Gathering | Kevin DeYoung | URC \(universityreformedchurch.org\)](#)

⁴ Also cited by DeYoung above and Ryken below.

⁵ James 1:2-3.

⁶ 2 Corinthians 8:14-15, 9:10-12.

⁷ Philip Graham Ryken, *Saved for God's Glory*, 442-443.

⁸ Matthew 10:29-31.

⁹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Delivered*, "Be" Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub., 1998), 82.