

The March Through the Wilderness and Pictures of the Gospel (Part 1: Manna)  
(Principles taken from P. Fairbairn: *Typology of Scripture*)

Today, we will consider one of the greatest and most beautiful miracles that pictures the Gospel of Christ: God's provision of a bread-like substance while Israel was in the wilderness. The Hebrews called it "Manna," the bread from heaven. Let me read the story from Exod. 16:1-7: **"They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, 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. 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. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily." 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, 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?"**

Before beginning, let me say that as New Covenant Christians we have the fullness of God's revelation in the Bible. And we look back on this miracle of the manna with clarity. In John 6 the religious leaders come to Jesus and say: **"Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 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. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst"** (John 6:31-35). The manna given to the Hebrews in the dessert was given by God from heaven, but only as an earthly food, or food that perishes. But Jesus is the "heavenly" food that comes down from heaven. And those who "eat" of him (that is, believe in him), will never perish. With this in mind, I have 5 truths about the manna that will help us see the beauty of Christ in the Gospel.

1. The Manna Came Because of an Urgent Need. I think it is somewhat obvious that the Hebrews had left their homes in the Land of Goshen in Egypt behind, homes and lands

they had occupied for close to 10 generations. And then, God did not lead them to cities or places with new homes. Instead, He led them into the desert, a place called the Wilderness of Sin. And yes, they had taken the wealth of Egypt with them. And yes, they took their livestock. And yes, there were certainly some provisions. But, they were not prepared for the desert and the lack of food compared with what they had in Egypt. And apparently there was a great and urgent need. In v. 3 they said to Moses: ***“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.”*** And in response to this urgent need, God provides. He begins to rain manna from heaven on a regular basis.

Such is the case with this world as God gives his Son. **“For God so loved the world (evil world) that He gave his only begotten Son . . .”** (John 3:16). In John 3:17 Jesus tells Nicodemus that God **“did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him . . .”** Since the fall of Adam, this world and its inhabitants have been under the curse of death . . . physical death and spiritual death which is separation from God. We are not merely in the earthly wilderness of the physical place called “Sin.” We are in the wilderness of SIN itself. And there is no escape from this wilderness. And in and of ourselves, and in this evil world there is no resource that we can provide that can and will deliver us from certain death, except the gospel of Christ. Such is the case with every sinner that comes to Christ. Eph. 2:1-5 says: **“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.”**

2. The Manna Was the Gift of God. The Hebrews now found themselves in the wilderness, the desert. And though they had some provisions, there was not enough to sustain long-term. We are not sure if they brought seed to sow (probably not sufficient for the entire population). But, if they had seed, up until this time in their early journey (first 2 years), they were in the desert, land not suited for farming, or at least not prepared. And up until now, they were yet to conquer anyone with resources. So, the people cry out to Moses and to God. But, their “crying out” was not in desperation for God’s help, but in complaining, saying God had brought them out to kill them. They say they wish they had died in Egypt. And, they wanted to go back. And then God says to

Moses, “*I am about to rain bread from heaven.*” Frankly, if the Hebrews are to get what they deserve, God would let them die in the desert, or send them back to Egypt as slaves. But instead, God sends the most beautiful gift, and this gift is undeserved.

John 4 and woman at the well (retell story briefly). Jesus says to her: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”(John 4:10)

Brothers and sisters, this is exactly what we get in the Son of God. The Son is God’s gift to us. And this gift is not deserved! I think of Paul’s words in Rom. 5:6-11: “**For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”**

3. The Manna came in Abundance. When the Israelites woke every morning to new manna coming down with the dew of the night, there was enough for everyone. We read in Numbers 11 that there was manna in abundance. They gathered it, they boiled it, they fried it, they made cakes out of it. And such is the Gospel of Christ! Listen to these words from Col. 1: 15-19: “**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell . . .**”

In the incarnation of Christ, God has held NOTHING back. Our Mormon friends believe Jesus was the first created being, the first angel. And they believe He was sinless. But they believe he is still a created being. This means they cannot believe that ALL the fulness of God dwells in Him as we just read. This means their “gospel” is not big enough; it is not ABUNDANT! A limited gospel is not an abundant gospel.

Jesus says, “**If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father**” (John 14:9). Brothers and sisters, the Bible says that all our blessings flow down from the Father to us. But the Bible also says that all our blessings come from the Son. In John 6 when Jesus speaks of himself as the “bread from heaven” he says, “**Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you**” (John 6:27). And then a few verses later, he says, “**For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.**” Here, Jesus makes himself equal to God when he says that the Son will give life to the world. For ONLY God can give life.

Brothers and sisters, in Christ we have abundant life. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are alive. (The Bible teaches that life comes from the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit in abundance.) And one application from this fact is that in Christ, we have EVERYTHING we need, not just for eternal life, but EVERYTHING we need for life and godliness now. 2 Pet. 1:3 says: “**His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence . . .**”

4. The Manna was within the Reach of All. God did not send the manna far away from the camp. It fell just outside the camp, very close. Everyone had access. There was no excuse for not taking the steps to gather the manna. In the OT, the revelation of God stayed “primarily” with Israel. Yes, there were times where God sent his prophets to the nations (Jonah and Nineveh). However, this was not the norm. But, with Jesus the gospel has expanded. How far has the gospel expanded? Jesus says, “**As you go, make disciples . . .**” As we go where? As we go to the ends of the earth. This is one of the great mysteries of the Gospel as it has no boundaries; it goes to ALL the peoples of this world. And there is no discrimination! This is why we spent time in Central Asia. This is why JB & Ellie (and others) are going to far away places. This is why we still send folks to these places. Today is still the day of salvation. Until the final coming of Christ, we will continue to do send (and go).

An application of this truth is that we are all without excuse.

5. The Manna Came Daily. God sent the manna on a daily basis (except the Sabbath, where there was a double portion). The Israelites were supposed to take just enough for the day and not hoard the food for coming days. This was the command of God. Each day would bring the appointed provision. If they took extra, what would happen? The manna would become corrupt and inedible. Such is the same with us and the gospel of Christ. In Christ, God gives us what we need every day.

So what can we learn from this truth? Do you remember the Lord's Prayer? The disciples came to Jesus and asked him how to pray (Matt. 6). And right in the middle of the prayer, we find the words, "***Give us this day our daily bread.***" Do you pray this daily? Now, as we've seen, in Christ, we have everything we need for life and godliness. And if you are in Christ, your position, your standing, your relationship with the Father, is established upon the righteousness of Christ. But, we are still to DAILY ask for the Lord's "bread." Now, in my years here, I haven't known any of us to starve. And we certainly give thanks, but the lack of physical "bread" (at least until now with this group) is not our problem. This may be the case one day. And, we still ask that God would continue to give us our food to eat. And we are a thankful people.

But, this statement goes much deeper than just bread. It goes to ALL physical needs. And it goes even FURTHER as God provides so much more. Do you need bread? Ask Him. Do you need a job? Ask Him. Do you need healing in some way? Ask Him. These are all needs. But, there is more. Do you need patience? Ask Him. Do you need relief from your anxiety? Ask Him. Do you need more accountability in your life? Ask Him. Do you need more boldness in your witness? Ask Him. Do you need more love for your husband or for your wife or your children, or your neighbor you don't care much about? Ask Him. Do you need to understand the Bible more? Ask him. Do you need to have deeper affections for God? Ask Him. How are you doing in this regard?

Our Father knows how to answer our prayers. But we miss so much if we do not ask? I think of the old hymn "*What a Friend We have in Jesus.*" The first line goes: "*What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.*" All the blessings of God come to us because of the person and work of Christ. In the OT, they had to go through the priests who offered daily. But now, in the new covenant, we are called a "kingdom of priests." We have direct access to the Father through the Son.

One final application: Each day the manna came, sufficient for the day. In the same way each day brings the grace of God in Christ which is sufficient. Each day we must pray

for grace . . . for the day. His mercies are new every morning, right? This means we must rely upon NEW grace every day. This means you cannot “lay up” grace that you think will be sufficient for the future, as if you can do away with the necessity of constantly going to the treasury of Christ. Isn’t this what many of our Baptist friends do when they walk an isle or raise a hand and then get baptized. And years later, they don’t attend church except at their convenience. And years later, there has been no change toward godliness, no sanctification in their lives, as if they can store up some “experience” to bring out later to justify their guilty conscience. If this is the case, maybe your conscience is seared (1 Tim. 4:2). I hope not. But, my point is that we cannot store Christ up. However, as we go to him DAILY, his treasure chest is FULL of new blessings! Consider Gal. 2:20: **“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”** Brothers and sisters, this is the key to EVERY blessing, EVERY work of God in you life and mine. Jesus says, apart from me you can do nothing!

Oh, the blessings of God pictured in the manna in the desert. And all of these blessings we find in the gospel of Christ. Let me summarize in closing. 1) Christ meet our most urgent need; 2) Christ is God’s gift to us (free gift); 3) In Christ we have abundant life; 4) Christ is given for the entire world (not just the Jews); and 5) In Christ God gives grace sufficient for every day.