

A large field of mushrooms, likely Amanita muscaria, growing in a grassy area. The mushrooms are densely packed and have a characteristic red cap with white spots. The background shows a grassy field with some trees in the distance.

Written By Rev.
John Marinelli

Manna

In The Morning



Introduction

God rained down Manna from heaven to feed the children of Israel while they were in route from Egypt to the land of Canaan. This was just after God opened the Red sea and the Jews crossed over to safety on dry land.

Their 400+ years in bondage was over and they were heading to possess the "Promised Land" that God gave Abraham. They gave up the fleshpots, cool water and abundance of food, trusting God to provide for them as they entered and traveled through the wilderness.

It is believed that there were over 21/2 million in the caravan that Moses led out of Egypt. This would include men and women and children. They all left Egypt with hope, faith, and trust in God and were strongly committed to holding on until they made it to their Promised Land.

The Wilderness

And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:

And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

Manna From Heaven

Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. And Moses

and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: Exodus 16:1-6

This Manna was not only God's provision to keep the people alive but it was also a sign that proved that God was really leading them. It was a miracle that would show the Israelites God's love and mercy.

God made sure that the Manna was seen as an authentic miracle by raining it down from heaven. He did this for 40 years.

Manna looked like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey (Exodus 16: 31). When the Israelites saw it, they asked each other, "What is it?" (Heb. man hu [aWh'm]). This led to the name "manna, " "what?"

It came each morning, except on the Sabbath day. It could be collected each day for that day alone, and only as much as could be eaten in one day. If a person tried to collect more than needed or to store the manna for future needs, it would grow wormy and foul (v. 20).

In this way it was impossible for the Israelites to evade total dependence on God or to use the manna greedily for personal gain. Miraculously, the manna could be preserved on the sixth day and eaten on the Sabbath, and it was not to be found on the Sabbath morning (vv. 22-29).

The Rebellious

Eventually, the rebellious Israelites grew tired of the manna and regretted the day they were delivered from their bondage (Num 11:6). They came to detest the manna and longed instead for the rich foods of Egypt (v. 5). But God continued to give the Israelites a steady supply of manna during their forty years of desert wanderings. When Joshua and the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land at Gilgal, they celebrated the Passover and ate the produce of the land. On that day, the manna ceased, again illustrating its miraculous provision (Joshua 5:12).

The Purpose of The Manna

The purpose of the Manna was to test Israel's faith, to humble them, and to teach them that one "does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Deut 8:3,16). A hungry Jesus used this

quote to refuse Satan's suggestion that he turn stones into bread (Matt 4:4). Like the Israelites in the desert, Jesus was totally dependent on the provisions of his heavenly Father while in the wilderness of temptation (Matt 4:11).

“Bread of Life” A Metaphor of Jesus

The people in Jesus' day misunderstood the significance of the manna. They longed for a physical miracle, like the manna, which would prove to them that Jesus' words were true (John 6:31). But Jesus wanted his disciples to seek for the bread of heaven that gives life to the world, instead of physical bread to satisfy their appetites. When they asked, "From now on give us this bread, " he answered, "**I am the bread of life**" (vv. 32-35). To the church in Pergamos, Jesus encouraged faithfulness by promising that true believers would receive "hidden manna" to eat (Rev 2:17). Just as Moses' manna brought with it physical blessing, so this heavenly reward will bring eternal life. (Contributed by William T. Arnold...Baker's Evangelical Dictionary).

Manna Was The, “Bread of Heaven”

Manna was the “Bread of Heaven” it was a metaphor or picture of Jesus. He said this about Himself.

“I am the Bread of Life” (John 6:35) is one of the seven “I Am” statements of Jesus.

Jesus used the same phrase “I AM” in seven declarations about Himself. In all seven, He combines I AM with tremendous metaphors, which express His, saving relationship toward the world. All appear in the book of John.

John 6:35 says, *“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”*

A Basic Dietary Item

Bread is considered a staple food—i.e., a basic dietary item. A person can survive a long time on only bread and water. Bread is such a basic food item that it becomes synonymous for food in general. We even use the phrase “breaking bread together” to indicate the sharing of a meal with someone.

Bread also plays an integral part of the Jewish Passover meal. The Jews were to eat unleavened bread during the Passover feast and then for seven days following as a celebration of the exodus from Egypt.

Finally, when the Jews were wandering in the desert for 40 years, God rained down “bread from heaven” to sustain the nation (Exodus 16:4).

All of this plays into the scene being described in John 6 when Jesus used the term “bread of life.” He was trying to get away from the crowds to no avail. He had crossed the Sea of Galilee, and the crowd followed Him. After some time, Jesus inquires of Philip how they’re going to feed the crowd. Philip’s answer displays his “little faith” when he says they don’t have enough money to give each of them the smallest morsel of food.

Finally, Andrew brings to Jesus a boy who had five small loaves of bread and two fish. With that amount, Jesus miraculously fed the throng with lots of food to spare.

Afterward, Jesus and His disciples cross back to the other side of Galilee. When the crowd sees that Jesus has left, they follow Him again.

Jesus takes this moment to teach them a lesson. He accuses the crowd of ignoring His miraculous signs and only following Him for the “free meal.” Jesus tells them in John 6:27,

“Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”

In Other Words

In other words, they were so enthralled with the food, they were missing out on the fact that their Messiah had come. So the Jews ask Jesus for a sign that He was sent from God (as if the miraculous feeding and the walking across the water weren’t enough).

They tell Jesus that God gave them manna during the desert wandering. Jesus responds by telling them that they need to ask for the true bread from heaven that gives life. When they ask Jesus for this bread, Jesus startles them by saying,

“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

A Phenomenal statement!

This is a phenomenal statement! First, by equating Himself with bread, Jesus is saying he is *essential* for life. Second, the life Jesus is referring to is not physical life, but eternal life. Jesus is trying to get the Jews' thinking off of the physical realm and into the spiritual realm. He is contrasting what He brings as their Messiah with the bread He miraculously created the day before. That was physical bread that perishes. He is spiritual bread that brings eternal life.

Third, and very important, Jesus is making another claim to deity. This statement is the first of the "I AM" statements in John's Gospel.

The Phrase "I AM"

The phrase "I AM" is the covenant name of God (Yahweh, or YHWH), revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). The phrase speaks of self-sufficient existence (or what theologians refer to as "*aseity*"), which is an attribute only God possesses. It is also a phrase the Jews who were listening would have automatically understood as a claim to deity.

Fourth, notice the words "come" and "believe." This is an invitation for those listening to place their faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God.

The Invitation

This invitation to come is found throughout John's Gospel. Coming to Jesus involves making a choice to forsake the world and follow Him. Believing in Jesus means placing our faith in Him that He is who He says He is, that He will do what He says He will do, and that He is the only one who can.

Fifth, there are the words "hunger and thirst." Again, it must be noted that Jesus isn't talking about alleviating physical hunger and thirst.

The key is found in another statement Jesus made, back in His Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:6, Jesus says,

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

When Jesus says those who come to Him will never hunger and those who believe in Him will never thirst, He is saying He will satisfy our hunger and thirst to be made righteous in the sight of God.

If there is anything the history of human religion tells us, it is that people seek to earn their way to heaven. This is such a basic human desire because God created us with eternity in mind.

The Bible says

The Bible says God has placed [the desire for] eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The Bible also tells us that there is nothing we can do to earn our way to heaven because we've all sinned (Romans 3:23) and the only thing our sin earns us is death (Romans 6:23). There is no one who is righteous in himself (Romans 3:10).

Our Dilemma

Our dilemma is we have a desire we cannot fulfill, no matter what we do. That is where Jesus comes in. He, and He alone, can fulfill that desire in our hearts for righteousness through the Divine Transaction:

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

When Christ died on the cross, He took the sins of mankind upon Himself and made atonement for them.

When we place our faith in Him, our sins are imputed to Jesus, and His righteousness is imputed to us. Jesus satisfies our hunger and thirst for righteousness. He is our Bread of Life. (GotQuestions.com) **Recommended Resource:** Jesus: The Greatest Life of All by Charles Swindoll

Modern Day Use of Manna A Spiritual Application

Jesus said He was the “Bread of Life” and the “Bread” that came down from heaven. We know from John chapter one that Jesus was pre-existent as God and became man so He could be our Savior. Thus the, “Bread of Heaven” was and is the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us.

If we go to the Word of God every day, like the Old Testament saints went out to gather Manna, we would be filled with all the spiritual nutrients necessary to live in the wilderness of this world.

The Bible is the Manna of our day. It took hundreds of years to grow and it is for everyone. We need only to open the Bible and gather the spiritual food (Bread) that God has waiting for us.

Never Too Much

I know that some will say, just like the Israelites in the wilderness, I am tired of this Manna. The literal Manna may have become unappealing after eating it for 40 years. However, the Bread from heaven” does not get old; does not lose its flavor and will not cause you to wish for something else that is more satisfying.

The “Heavenly Manna” is the word of God and when it is sent from heaven it accomplishes all that God intended it to do.

“So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Isaiah 54:11

We can trust that when God sends us Manna from heaven, it will arrive safely and be a blessing to us.

Conclusion

The provision of Manna was to sustain the children of God while traveling in the wilderness. The trip was only about 3 1/2 days. However, because of the rebellion and idol worship in the camp, God chose to keep them in a state of wandering for 40 years until a new generation could emerge.

The new generation, at the direction of God, went into the Promised Land and took it for themselves. Once settled and able to grow their own food, the Manna stopped falling from heaven. This suggests several things that can apply to the Christian walk for faith. They are:

1. The Manna was only temporary. It was never given as a 40-year provision. It ended up being just that but it was not planned that way.

2. The purpose of the Manna was to teach faith and dependency to the newly founded nation. It was a way to test their faith on an on-going basis.
3. Manna from heaven is a metaphor for Spiritual sustenance but it cannot go beyond the physical realm... whereas the “Bread of Life” is an eternal provision.
4. The wilderness is a place of wandering for those that reject God’s love and guidance. The rebellious go into it but never come out.
5. The Manna was a Sign from God that proved to the people that God was really leading them.
6. We, like Old Testament saints, have seen the promises of God afar off and now consider ourselves strangers and pilgrims in the earth. Hebrews 11:13... We too are on our way to the Promised Land.
7. The, “Bread of Life” being a type of Spiritual Manna, is designed to sustain us in a wilderness-world as we walk in the Spirit; fight the good fight of faith and stand fast in the liberty that we have in Christ...until we see Jesus face to face and are welcomed home by God, our Heavenly Father. When that happens, the need for Manna will be no longer because we will have arrived at our destination.
8. Dependence upon God will always be, whether we are in the wildernesses of life or home with Jesus in heaven. In any event, we are still the “Children of God” and it is His pleasure to love us and care for our needs.
9. The Bible is the Manna of our day. We will starve and even live life in a weaken state of mind and actions without it. It is our only source by which we can mature in Christ. It is the Manna that helps us to discover the promises of God, and commune with the Holy Spirit.

Read what the psalmist said about his spiritual Manna.

***“Thy word have I hid in mine heart,
that I might not sin against thee.”***

Psalm 119:11 kjv