

Exodus 16
August 17, 2014

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

I want you to try and put yourselves in Jesus's shoes. You are sitting at the right hand of God, and you look down from heaven and the very people you have just delivered from Egyptian slavery are grumbling in the desert because they have run out of their supply of unleavened bread. How do you think you'd feel and why?

- Accused of failing to take care of your children?
- Angry that they have a short memory of the mighty wonders you performed?
- Sad because your children just can't seem to "get it," i.e. the Lord never fails to provide for His children?
- Irritated because you have to show them again that "I am the Lord YOUR God?"
- Hurt? Offended? Etc...

Transition: The Israelites have traveled approximately another four weeks in their journey in the desert. They have run out of bread and grumbled to Moses and Aaron about this reality, and the Lord, who believes they have grumbled against Him, has responded surprisingly well. You will see that the goal of His response is to help the Israelites understand that He is "the Lord their God." That means His assumption is that the Israelites don't fully trust Him yet.

I realize that this is a familiar storyline to many of us, but it still has a fresh, powerful message for us today. [Draw on DEB: Pretend there is an address of www.exodus16.com with a refresh icon.] The content may be the same, but there are new comments at the bottom! Hear the voice of the Spirit and how He speaks through class members!] So as we go through this passage, let's invite the Spirit of God to illumine how we are like the Israelites, but most importantly, let's invite the Spirit to show us by the end of the class how we can live day by day with our trust firmly placed in the Lord to provide for our needs. Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Ex 16:1-9]

Observations/Process Qs-

V.1:

- The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt.
- **Q:** If your basic need for food was threatened, how do you think you might act?

V.2:

- In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.
- **Observation:** It wasn't a handful of people grumbling, but the "whole community." Their need for sustenance to live has been threatened.

V.3:

- The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

- **Observation:** They don't have a vision for their future. They don't "feel free" yet and do see how that is going to happen.

V.4:

- Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.
- **Q:** Where does our bread come from? [Heaven]
- **Q:** What frequency has the Lord chosen to provide for the Israelites? [One day at a time]
- **Observation:** This verse could well have read, "I will rain fire and brimstone upon those ungrateful sinners!" But the Lord was full of grace and mercy.

V.5:

- On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

V.6:

- So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt,

V.7:

- and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?"

V.8:

- Moses also said, "You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD."
- **Q:** When we express discontent with what we have, who are we really grumbling against? [The Lord]

V.9:

- Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.'"
- **Reminder:** The Lord knows our every thought. He hears our critical thoughts, our uncharitable thoughts toward others, our wrongful thinking, but He also hears the grateful thoughts. He loves hearing "thank you." He loves seeing us recognize him as OUR Lord.

[Read Exodus 16:10-20]

V.10:

- While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.
- **Q:** If you had just heard, "You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord," how would you feel if you saw the "glory of the Lord appearing in a cloud?" [Scared because the Lord might be angry? Humbled?]

V.11:

- The Lord said to Moses,

V.12:

- “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’ ”
- **Q:** The Lord is willing to provide for the needs of His children, but in the end, what did He want the Israelites to understand? [He is the Lord YOUR God]

V.13:

- That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.

V.14:

- When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor.

V.15:

- When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.

V.16:

- This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Each one is to gather as much as he needs. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’ ”

V.17:

- The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little.

V.18:

- And when they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one gathered as much as he needed.

V.19:

- Then Moses said to them, “No one is to keep any of it until morning.”

V.20:

- However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.
- **Q:** Why do you think some of the Israelites kept part of the manna until morning? [They probably weren’t trusting that the Lord would provide it again the next day.]

[Read Exodus 16:21-36]

V.21:

- Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away.
- **Observation:** The Lord provides fresh manna daily. Our part is to go gather it.

V.22:

- On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person—and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses.

V.23:

- He said to them, “This is what the LORD commanded: ‘Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.’ ”

V.24:

- So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it.

V.25:

- “Eat it today,” Moses said, “because today is a Sabbath to the LORD. You will not find any of it on the ground today.

V.26:

- Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.”

V.27:

- Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none.
- **Q:** Why do you think some of the people went out on Sabbath to gather manna – even after they were told “there will not be any?” [Food was more important than rest]

V.28:

- Then the LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions?”

V.29:

- Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out.”
- **Q:** How respectful are we that the Lord “gave us the Sabbath” to give us rest? Do you think we are just as guilty as the Israelites?

V.30:

- So the people rested on the seventh day.

V.31:

- The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.
- **Observation:** The Lord provided bread that the people would enjoy, i.e. tasted like honey.

V.32:

- Moses said, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the desert when I brought you out of Egypt.’ ”

V.33:

- So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the LORD to be kept for the generations to come.”

V.34:

- As the LORD commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna in front of the Testimony, that it might be kept.
- **Observation:** The Lord considered providing manna as a spiritual benchmark for the Israelites. The Lord wanted to be remembered for generations to come that He was the Lord their God who provided daily bread in the desert.

V.35:

- The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.
- **Q:** How long did the Lord provide manna one day at a time to His children? [40 years!!]

V.36:

- (An omer is one tenth of an ephah.)

LOOK:

After today's lesson, we should all be convinced that the Lord gives us daily provisions to sustain us and take care of our basic needs. However, I don't want us to miss an important spiritual truth about Jesus. Let's look at John 6:25-35 first. As quick background, Jesus just performed the feeding of the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish, and now they are trying to keep up with Him:

1. Read John 6:25-35
2. Read John 6:41-51

Q: Look at John 6:29. What is the one and only requirement Jesus has of us? [Believe in Him!] He said "I AM THE BREAD that came down from heaven." (v.41)

Q: What does it mean to you when Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry?" [Let class wrestle this. Matt 4:4 "Man does not live by bread alone, but on *every word that comes from the mouth of God.*"]

Dry Erase Board [Two Column Headings: "Seek Him First" and "When..."]

Invite the class to give knee-jerk reactions to "Seek Him First when..... and record on the DEB. Bottom Line: Always seek Him FIRST.]

X-Ref (Matt 6:31-33) Focal verse "Seek FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." The Lord gave us this sequence for a reason! He says in v.32 that "your heavenly Father knows that you need them." If you will come to Him FIRST, *you will never go "hungry" physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally, or financially.* [Look at this from the other direction: Are you "hungry?" Self-evaluate: Have you sought the Lord FIRST?]

Q: Did the Spirit of God illumine the areas of your life in which you are just like the Israelites?

Q: More importantly, has the Spirit shown you how you can live day by day with your trust firmly placed in the Lord to provide for your needs? Let's thank Him for showing up today through our closing prayer.

Close in Prayer allowing class members to voice their gratitude for how the Spirit spoke to them today.

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Ex 16)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

This chapter should be read in connection with John 6, for the manna from heaven is a type of Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life. It also illustrates the written Word of God on which God's pilgrim people feed from day to day (Matt. 4:4).

I. The Manna Explains Who Jesus Is

The Hebrew word *manna* means "What is it?" (v. 15), the statement of the Jews when they could not explain this new food that God had sent. "Great is the mystery of godliness," writes Paul in 1 Tim. 3:16. "God was manifest in the flesh." Consider how the manna pictures Jesus Christ:

A. His humility.

It was small (v. 14), which speaks of His humility; for He became a baby, and even a servant.

B. His eternal nature.

It was round (v. 14), which reminds us of the circle, symbol of His eternity; for Jesus Christ is eternal God (John 8:53–59).

C. His holiness.

It was white (v. 31), a reminder of His purity and sinlessness; He is the holy Son of God.

D. His sweetness.

It was sweet (v. 31). "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8). Note in Num. 11:4–8 that the "mixed multitude" that went with the Jews did not appreciate the taste of the manna but asked for the "leeks, onions, and garlic" of Egypt. They were not satisfied with simple manna. They "ground it, beat it, and baked it," but then it tasted like "oil" and not like honey. There is a spiritual lesson here for us; we cannot improve upon the simple Word of God (Ps. 119:103).

E. His nourishment of us.

It was satisfying and strengthening, for the nation lived on manna for nearly forty years. All that we need for spiritual nourishment is Jesus Christ, God's heaven-sent Bread. We are to feast on the Bread that will never leave us hungering.

II. The Manna Illustrates How Jesus Came

A. It came from heaven.

It was not imported from Egypt, or manufactured in the wilderness; it was given from heaven, the gift of God's grace. Jesus Christ came down from heaven (John 6:33) as the Father's gift to hungry sinners. To say that Christ is "just another man" is to deny the teaching of the whole Bible that He is God's Son sent from heaven.

B. It came at night.

The people gathered the manna early each morning, for the manna fell at night. This suggests the darkness of sin in this world when Jesus came. It was night when Jesus was born, for He came to be the Light of the World (John 8:12). And it is still night in the hearts of all who have rejected Him (2 Cor. 4:1–4).

C. It came on the dew (vv. 13–14).

The dew kept the manna from being defiled by the earth (see Num. 11:9). This is a type of the Holy Spirit for when Jesus came to earth, it was through the miracle ministry of the Spirit (Luke 1:34–35). Had Jesus not been born of the virgin, He could never be called "that Holy One."

D. It fell in the wilderness.

This world is not a paradise. To the unsaved person, it is a wonderful place, but to the Christian on his pilgrimage to glory the world is but a wilderness. Yet Christ came to this world in love to give men life. What grace!

E. It came to a rebellious people (vv. 1–3).

What poor memories Israel had! They had been away from the bondage of Egypt only six weeks and had already forgotten God's many mercies. They murmured against Moses and against God (see 15:22–27), and they longed for the fleshly diet of the old life; yet God in His grace and mercy supplied them with bread. Verse 4 could well have read, "I will rain fire and brimstone upon those ungrateful sinners!" But, no, God proved His love toward them by raining bread upon them. See Rom. 5:6–8. Someone has calculated that to supply six pints (an omer) of manna each for two million people daily would have required four freight trains of sixty cars each. How generous God is to us!

F. 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; the manna came where they were (see Rom. 10:6–8). Jesus Christ is not far away from sinners. They can come to Him at any time.

III. The Manna Shows What We Must Do with Jesus Christ

A. We must feel the need.

There is a spiritual hunger within that can be satisfied only by Christ (John 6:35). It was when the Prodigal Son said, “I perish with hunger” that he decided to go back to the father and seek forgiveness (Luke 15:17–18). 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 (Isa. 55:1–3).

B. We must stoop.

The manna did not fall on the tables or on the trees but on the ground, and the people had to stoop to pick it up. Many sinners will not humble themselves. They will not bend! They will not repent and turn to the Savior!

C. 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. Christ must be received inwardly by faith if the sinner is to be saved. This is what Christ meant in John 6:51–58 by “eating His flesh and drinking His blood.” John 6:63 makes it clear that Christ was not speaking about literal flesh and blood, and John 6:68 tells us that it was His Word that He was referring to. When we receive the Word inwardly, we are feeding on Christ, the Living Word.

D. We must do it early (v. 21).

“Seek the Lord while He may be found!” is the warning of Isa. 55:6 (NKJV). The manna disappeared when the sun became hot, and this suggests that the day of judgment will arrive when it will be too late to turn to Christ (Mal. 4). It also suggests that, as believers, we must get our spiritual nourishment from the Word early in the day as we meditate on it and pray.

E. We must continue to feed on Him.

Once we receive Christ as Savior, we are saved eternally (John 10:27–29). It is important, however, that we feed on Christ to have the strength for our pilgrim journey, just as the Jews fed on the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:11ff). How do believers feed on Christ? By reading, studying, and meditating on His Word. God invites each of us to get up early in the day and gather from the Word the precious manna to nourish our souls. We cannot hoard God’s truth for another day (vv. 16–21); we must gather fresh food for each new day. Too many Christians mark their Bibles and fill their notebooks with outlines, yet never really feed on Christ.

Note that the spiritual manna (Christ) accomplishes more than did the physical manna that God sent to the Jews. The OT manna sustained physical life, but Christ gives spiritual life to all who receive Him. The OT manna was for the Jews only, but Christ offers Himself to the whole world (John 6:51). It did not cost Moses anything to secure the manna for Israel, but to make Himself available to the world, Christ had to die on the cross. How sad it is that most of the people in the world walk on Christ as if he were unused manna on the ground, rather than stooping to receive Him that they might live.

The daily gathering of the manna was God’s test of Israel’s obedience (v. 4), and it is still God’s test for His people. Those Christians that begin their day with the Bible, gathering spiritual food, are the ones God can trust and use. Alas, many Christians still hunger for the

carnal diet of the world! (v. 3) And many expect the pastor or the Sunday School teacher to gather the manna for them and “spoon-feed” them. The test of our spiritual walk is this: do I think enough of Christ and His Word to start my day gathering manna?

Joshua 5:10–12 tells us that the manna ceased when the Jews entered Canaan at Gilgal, and that they ate the “old corn of the land.” The manna came down from heaven, speaking of Christ in His incarnation and crucifixion. The corn grew up out of a place of burial and death, and speaks of Christ in His resurrection and heavenly ministry. To enter Canaan means to enter into our heavenly inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:3), and this means laying hold of the blessing we have in His resurrection, ascension, and heavenly priesthood. Too many saints “know Christ according to the flesh” (2 Cor. 5:16, NKJV) in His earthly life and ministry and have never graduated into His heavenly priestly ministry. When they do take that step, they are “eating the old corn of the land”—feeding on His resurrection power.

Toussaint, S. D. (1985). Acts. (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds.)The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. (Vol. 2, pp. 134–135). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

b. The provisions in the Desert of Sin (chap. 16)

(1) The provision of bread and quail (16:1–20).

16:1–12. From the Desert of Shur (15:22) the Israelites one month later (cf. 12:6) entered **the Desert of Sin ... between Elim and Sinai**. As the people continued toward Sinai, the Lord provided several things for them, including bread (16:4) and quail (v. 13; cf. vv. 8, 12). As the journey lengthened into weeks the supply of bread (cf. 12:34) must have been depleted, so that the redeemed people again murmured **against Moses** (cf. 15:24). The lack of bread caused the people to forget their horrible plight in Egypt, to think only of the food they had **in Egypt** (cf. Num. 11:5), and to impugn the motives of their leader. As with the people’s complaint for water at Marah, **the LORD** immediately responded by giving them **bread from heaven** (which they called “manna”; see comments on Ex. 16:31). The bread came early **in the morning** (vv. 8, 12–13)—actually during the night (Num. 11:9)—and melted in the heat of the day (Ex. 16:21). Each day the people were to **gather only enough bread for that day**. This meant they would have to trust **the LORD** to bring the food each morning! **On the sixth day they** were to **gather** enough for that day and the next, since the bread would not come on the seventh day (v. 5; cf. v. 26). **Moses and Aaron** rebuked the people for their **grumbling against** them (v. 7) and **the LORD** (v. 8) and reassured them of His provision for their need, which provisions would cause the **community to know that** He is **the LORD** their **God** (v. 12).

16:13–20. **That** very **evening** God miraculously provided **quail** in response to the people’s request for meat (v. 3; cf. Num. 11:31–32, which refers to a different occasion; Pss. 78:27–28; 105:40). In the fall this small game bird, similar to pheasant and grouse, migrates south from Palestine and Arabia to Central Africa, and in the spring it returns. Egyptian art depicts people catching the birds in hand nets.

The bread (cf. Ex. 16:4, 12) came with the **dew**. When the dew was gone, **thin flakes** were on the desert. Never having seen this before, the people asked, **What is it?** (See comments on “manna” in v. 31.) Because it was sent from heaven the Psalmist Asaph referred to it as “the bread of angels” (Ps. 78:25). God told them to **take an omer** (about two quarts; see the chart “Biblical Weights and Measures” before the Book of Gen.) **for each person ... in his tent**,

which **the Israelites** obediently **did** (Ex. 16:17). However, some of them, failing to obey the next instruction, **kept some of it till morning**. Because of their lack of faith God caused their bread to spoil.

(2) The provision of a Sabbath rest for the people.

16:21–30. This is the Bible’s first mention of the Sabbath. After His six-day work of Creation God rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2–3). The Hebrew words “seventh” and “rested” are similar. Later God’s command for the Israelites to rest on the Sabbath became part of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:8–11). Following the Lord’s orders (16:4) most of the people **gathered** only enough bread for each day, and **twice** the amount **on the sixth day** because **the seventh day** was to be **a day of rest** (v. 23; cf. v. 26), **a holy Sabbath to the LORD** (cf. v. 26). No bread would be given on that day, but part of the bread of the sixth day was to be baked or boiled to preserve it for **the seventh day**. Disregarding God’s instruction (v. 23) **some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather** the bread. Lack of faith in God’s Word is disobedience. **The LORD** in His displeasure asked them, **How long will you refuse to keep My commands and My instructions?**

(3) The provision of a memorial of God’s grace in the wilderness.

16:31–36. **The people ... called the bread manna** (*mān hū’*, “what is it?” cf. v. 15). It was in thin flakes (v. 14), **white like coriander seed** (an herb), looked like resin (Num. 11:7, perhaps meaning it was light-colored and/or sticky), and it **tasted like honey wafers**. It also had the taste of “something made with olive oil” (Num. 11:8). Some writers have suggested that the manna was a sweet-tasting excretion left by insects on the twigs of tamarisk trees in June and July. However, manna was provided year-round, on the ground, and the tamarisk excretion does not spoil within 24 hours.

Then God told **Moses** to keep **an omer of manna**, about two quarts (or **1/10 of an ephah**, Ex. 16:36), in **a jar** as a reminder of God’s goodness for future **generations**. The manna was to be placed **in front of the Testimony** (v. 34). “The Testimony” refers to the two tablets of the Law (25:16; 31:18; 32:15; 34:29) which were in “the ark [of the covenant] of the Testimony” (25:16, 21) in the most holy place. The Hebrew word (and the corresponding Akk. word) for “Testimony” may have been a technical term to designate covenant stipulations. For a discussion of whether the manna was kept in the ark, as Hebrews 9:4 suggests, or in front of it see comments on 2 Chronicles 5:10.

The LORD continued to supply manna **until** the nation **came to Gilgal**, where they began to eat the products of the land (Josh. 5:12). The manna in the ark was a perpetual reminder of God’s loyalty to His people in supplying their needs. Jesus, referring to the Israelites’ manna (John 6:31, 49, 58), called Himself “the true [spiritual] Bread from heaven” (John 6:32), “the Bread of God ... from heaven” (John 6:33), “the Bread of life” (John 6:35, 48), and “the Living Bread ... from heaven” (John 6:51). Everyone who believes in Him, He said, would have eternal life (John 6:33, 51, 58).