

Lessons from The Manna

Speaking of Israel in the wilderness, the inspired Apostle writes that they “did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink ...” And “these things” he tells us “all happened unto them for ensamples (*Greek, Types*), and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the worlds are come” (1Cor. 10:4,11). In our considerations from Exodus chapter 16, the first portion of our daily readings for today, we are presented with the “spiritual meat” of the Manna. It’s spiritual nature was not intrinsically within it’s physical substance, for under certain conditions it bred worms and stank. Rather, like the “rock that followed them”, the nature of it’s spirituality is that it taught spiritual things relating to our Master Jesus the Christ, and us, being part of his multitudinous body of believers.

Part of the purpose of the Manna is stated in Deuteronomy chapter 8:

“... he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know: *that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Yahweh doth man live*” (Deut. 8:3).

Again, it is written in Exodus chapter 16:

“... I will rain bread from heaven for you; and my 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*” (Exo. 16:4).

The daily consumption of the manna taught dependence upon Yahweh for all things – unless he miraculously provided that food each day, they would go hungry and starve. But in addition to this, the circumstances by which it was obtained and the frequency of it’s providing also taught particular lessons, the primary one of which was the teaching of reliance upon the Word of God.

The provision of Manna, we are told, was also to “prove them” and test their obedience. In this respect, we find conditions attached to reaping the “corn of heaven”, and Israel failed each of these. Firstly, it was stipulated that once gathered, it was not permissible to keep it until the next day: “let no man leave of it till the morning”. But human nature being as it is, “*they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank, and Moses was wroth with them*” (Exo. 16:19-20). The only exception to this commandment was on the sixth day, when twice as much Manna was to be collected and cooked ready for use on the sabbath. This would ensure Israel did not profane the Sabbath law by working to gather and cook their food. But again, human nature being as it is, “it came to pass that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none” (Exo. 16:27). In these two respects therefore, Israel were taught to learn, and implement the word of Yahweh concerning these matters, yet failed in both counts.

In other places in scripture, the partaking of the Word is again associated with the partaking of food. So Jeremiah spake:

“Thy words were found, *and I did eat them*; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Yahweh Elohim of armies” (Jer.15:16).

This ought to have been the example of Israel: to rejoice in the blessings He Gave, and to obey His commandments and statutes, partaking of them also, spiritually consuming them, and feeding upon the spiritual strength they would give. Indeed, in Jeremiah, we have an exhortation for ourselves: we need to daily feed ourselves with the Word of God, just as Israel did the Manna, for the promise of Wisdom is: “I will love those that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me” (Prov. 8:17).

There is a particularly significant example of this in the case of our Master during his wilderness trials. One of the temptations that came was, “command that these stones be made bread”. However, Messiah drove out the temptation by citing the passage of Deuteronomy we are considering: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mat. 4:4). So it is that there is a physical eating, and a spiritual eating. Bread is necessary, but not by itself. Man must partake of the spiritual food with all the eagerness of enjoyment experienced in partaking of physical food. Christ spake of the spiritual eating thus: “whoso eateth the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jno. 6:54). But we read that “from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him” (Jno. 6:66). These could not receive the spiritual things that Messiah spake, and so departed from him.

What is particularly interesting is that the context of this place in John’s Gospel is of Christ comparing himself to the Manna in the wilderness:

“as the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread that came down from Heaven: not as your father’s did eat manna, and are dead: ***he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever***” (Jno. 6:57-58).

Also, he had earlier declared:

“Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world ... ***I am the bread of life***: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (Jno. 6:35).

There are then, many points of comparison between the Manna provided by Yahweh (not Moses), and Jesus the Christ being the “living bread” “from Heaven” – we shall consider some of these by way of exhortation for ourselves.

There were essentially three different types of Manna, all of which point towards our Master.

First Type of Manna

The first type only lasted a day, as we have seen, breeding worms and stinking if it was kept till the morning (A comparison could be made with the Passover Lamb, which had to be consumed before the morning). It may be in alluding to this that in what is commonly called “The Lord’s Prayer”, we read: “Give us this day our ***daily*** bread” (Mat. 6:11). Notice this point: we are to “take no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought of the things of itself” (Mat. 6:34). We only need sufficiency for the day. Who knows what may befall us tomorrow: today might well be our last, for all we know. We must therefore attend to spiritual things whilst there is yet time. Regarding the day that the Manna was to last for, there is a pre-eminent “day” in Scripture, a day of opportunity. So the apostle writes: “exhort one another daily, ***while it is called Today***” (Heb. 3:13). We are only allotted this one “day” to feed richly upon that which has been provided for us. The new day shall commence with the rising of the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2), and at that time, our probation will be over. If

we have been found wilfully disobeying our God, as Israel did, the only end for us will be to suffer the corruption of death “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark. 9:44,46,48). This first type of Manna therefore represents the corruptible nature of disobedient men (i.e. the manna would only corrupt upon man’s disobedience in keeping it when he ought not). Yet it also portrays Messiah as one who redeemed the time, giving all due attention to the Word, that in the resurrection morn, there would be not corruption in him.

The Second Type of Manna

The second type of Manna remained useable for two days. The Sabbath day was a day to be prepared for, since no work was permitted for that day. We are not told what might have happened to the manna had Israel left it till the next morning after the Sabbath: presumably it would have corrupted also – but the general principle remains that there was a need to prepare for the day of rest.

Regarding this preparation, the situation is similar to the parable of the 10 Virgins, as taught by Christ, and recorded in Matthew 25. Here, all 10 virgins should have made adequate provision for the time of their Lord’s coming, yet five did not. Instead of being ready, they did not have adequate oil to supply their lamps, and were therefore unable to cause them to shine at the time of the bridegroom’s appearance – and so were rejected. It is in a similar way that in order to prepare for the Sabbath day of rest, on the day we would call the Friday, Israel were to gather, and prepare a double portion, to have some in reserve for the following Saturday. So it is, that as we look forward to the Millennial Day of Rest (Heb. 4:8-9), we need to prepare and labour to enter into that rest: If Israel didn’t gather enough to prepare for the coming Day, they would have gone hungry. Even so, we must prepare for that day by consuming “the word made flesh”, or the “flesh” and “blood” of Messiah to be ready.

It is significant that this second type of Manna did not see corruption, lasting for two days. In this regard, it foreshadows Christ, of whom it is written: “Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:27). Throughout the period of 2 Millennial days, Messiah remains immortal, and incorruptible.

The Third Type of Manna

The Third type of Manna did not corrupt at all, but was to be kept within the Ark, where it would be preserved indefinitely. So Moses spake under Divine instruction:

“take a pot, and put an Omer full of Manna therein, and lay it up before Yahweh, to be kept for your generations. As Yahweh commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept” (Exo. 16:33-34).

We have seen how Messiah did not see corruption, but his brethren, the saints are also become incorruptible as did he. So it is written:

“... this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortality must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written. Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:53-54).

Incorruptibility therefore, will come to those who trust in Messiah’s power to save from sin and death, as well as Messiah himself

It is worthy of note that this incorruptible Manna was taken from the daily provision that was made. This being so, it would naturally have corrupted if left – but it was preserved within the Ark of Yahweh’s Presence. We can see the parallel: the corruptible Manna speaks of the corruptible nature of man. But that same Manna became incorruptible by being taken and kept within the Ark of the Covenant. So, it is natural human nature that will be transformed to become immortal and glorious. It is said of Christ: he “shall change our vile body, that it might be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil. 3:20-21).

It is interesting in this connection that Revelation chapter 2 speaks of the “hidden Manna”:

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden Manna ...” (Rev.2:17).

The “hidden Manna” here would apparently refer to that Manna contained within the ark, which the people could not see, but nevertheless believed that it was there, as a symbol of immortality. Just as this Manna was hidden in the ark, even so it is written that “you are dead, and *your life is hid* with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). What we seek after therefore, is to be granted to eat of that Hidden Manna, and all that it signifies in the Age to Come.

Fellowship

Another aspect of the Manna is seen in the way in which it was collected. So Yahweh commanded:

“Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons ... And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more and some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing left over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating” (Exo. 16: 16-18).

From these words we gather that although the command defined how much each individual could have, the most practical means of ensuring that all were fed was to weigh out the Manna, according to each person. Some gathered more, some less. There may have been good reason for this: the sick and the elderly might not have been able to gather as much as young able bodied people, who were in turn able to gather more than the prescribed amount. The only way to resolve the situation would be for those who had much to give to those who had little – and this was effected by pooling all of the gathered Manna together, and weigh out portions for each person.

This principle is brought out in 1 Corinthians 8, which is to do with monies being collected for the old and needy. Verse 15 cites Exodus 16:18, in the context of giving:

“if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be an equality: *as it is written, “He that had gathered much had nothing over, and he that had gathered little had no lack”* (2 Cor.12-15).

In this place, the Apostle is plainly drawing upon Yahweh’s provision of old, and the way it was distributed as an example for how brethren must together fellowship each other’s need, and as they are able, that there may be an equality.

In this regard, we are once more directed to our Master, and how he gave all for his brethren. In the same context as the above passage, it is written that:

“ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he were rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

In all these things we see Messiah. He shared the same flesh and blood as do we, yet which saw no corruption – he left nothing undone for the next day. First having a corruptible nature such as ours, Christ is now like the Manna which lasted for 2 days, typical of the 2 Millennia that concludes with his brethren being given to eat of the “hidden Manna”, and become immortalised as he. And like the Manna kept within the holy of holies, he appears in heaven itself – and our lives are hid with him. Truly Christ is the “bread of life,” of Yahweh’s providing, concerning which we should feed upon daily. Knowing that man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the Almighty, we must give attendance to the word, feeding upon it daily, that in assimilating it’s principles into our minds, we might be found worthy to partake of the Hidden Manna, and be granted life eternal before our God.

Christopher Maddocks