

# END-TIMES ISSUES

#78 Commandment #4 – Learning from Manna (Part 2).

1

Now for the details that point to God's involvement!

God makes sure you can't explain-away his involvement, without ignoring some of the **FACTS!**

- The things we looked at last time were expressions of God's involvement; but many of them are easier for people to explain-away (i.e., remove God from the picture), by means of natural explanations. (In some cases, they would have to *ignore* certain details.)
- Today we look at some things that *defy* natural explanation (though people may try to explain them away).
  - ✓ People like to ignore these things. Or discredit the descriptions. Or say that the people were ignorant and superstitious. *Any excuse they can think of!*
  - ✓ Yet even in things that can be explained by natural processes, God is still involved! This is called "Providence." (For the last century or so, this concept has been widely ignored, due to the influence of people who want to *remove* God from all aspects of life.)

2

Manna was not a naturally-occurring substance!

- The people who act as though the Israelites were just a bunch of ignorant, superstitious wanderers in the desert... and who consider *themselves* to be wise, and the Israelites to be stupid...

WE'RE A BUNCH OF IGNORANT, SUPERSTITIOUS WANDERERS, LOST IN THE DESERT!

IF WE DON'T UNDERSTAND SOMETHING, WE JUST CALL IT A "MIRACLE," AND SAY "GOD DID IT!"

- These "wise" accusers are actually the ignorant fools! In Scripture, this is a *moral* issue.
 

The **fool** says in his heart, "There is no God."  
Psalm 14:1 (BSB)

Although they claimed to be wise, they became **fools**,...  
Romans 1:22 (BSB)

3

Don't follow the example of the moral fool!

- Science can describe the observable phenomenon that are seen when God is actively involved in something.
- Science cannot use natural processes to explain anything God does *outside* natural processes.
- It is OK to explain what can legitimately be explained; but we need to have enough *integrity* to acknowledge the existence of those aspects that cannot be explained. *God is involved in both*; for all things owe their existence to him. Even the *natural* entities of reality would fall apart without him.

For in Him all things were created, things 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.  
He is before all things, and **in Him all things hold together.**  
Colossians 1:16-17 (BSB)

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The events that occurred when manna was introduced demonstrated:

Ⓛ God working **PROVIDENTIAL**LY (through nature), and Ⓜ God working **DIRECT**LY (outside of nature).

- God's PROVIDENTIAL action: Quail.** Scripture mentions that this happened twice during the wilderness journey.
  - ✓ Exodus 16:3, 8, 12-13 – This was a *gracious* response to Israel's complaining – though their complaining *deserved* the punishment of death. (Verse 13: "quail"; other verses: "meat.")
  - ✓ Numbers 11:4, 13, 18, 21, 31-33 – This was about two years later, after they had witnessed God's gracious kindness. Some were *still* complaining about God *not* giving them what they wanted. This time, God gave them a taste of quail (undeserved), along with a taste of judgment (deserved). (Verses 31-32: "quail"; other verses: "meat.")
  - ✓ These events could be explained by *natural processes* – see Numbers 11:31 and Psalm 78:26-29.

Manna was a *temporary* provision, until they could get to the promised land. It would have lasted only *two* years; but their *ongoing* complaining, rebellion and unbelief stretched the time to 40 years!

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- God's DIRECT action: The manna.** Some of the things related to this event could be explained by natural processes (God's *providential* work); but many things can't. These point to God's *direct* interaction with people – something people often call "supernatural." \*
  - ↳ We will look at several of these details.

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**1. "MADE IN HEAVEN."** We looked at this last time, and noted that this was something that *could not* be explained naturally.

He rained down manna for them to eat;  
He gave them **grain from heaven.**  
Man ate **the bread of angels**;  
He sent them food in abundance.  
Psalm 78:24-25 (BSB)

\* ("Supernatural" is a difficult word to use, because people use it to refer to all kinds of things that are *not* related to God... and are sometimes *incompatible* with God – angels, demons, false gods, the occult and so much more.)

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**2. THE WAY IT CAME: IN A REPEATING CYCLE.** This pattern repeated itself without fail for nearly 40 years!

- ✓ God said he would send it six days in a row, then NOT send it on the seventh day. This pattern would repeat itself for the entire time that manna came – every seven days for nearly 40 years.
- ✓ This seven-day cycle would start on the very first day God told them to gather it (which was one month after they left Egypt), and then would continue to the very day they reached the land of Canaan (when other food became plentiful). Then it would stop and never occur again.

Consider this: Manna came from heaven. Providing it was "heaven's work." And heaven honored the "6-days-work / 1-day-rest" pattern that God instituted during the creation week!

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Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain down **bread from heaven** for you. **Each day** the people are to go out and **gather enough for that day**. ... Then **on the sixth day**, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be **twice as much** as they gather on the other days."

Exodus 16:4a, 5 (BSB)

**Every morning** each one gathered **as much as was needed** ...

On **the sixth day**, they gathered **twice as much** food ...

Exodus 16:21a, 22a (BSB)

"For six days you may gather, but **on the seventh day**, the Sabbath, **it will not be there**."

Exodus 16:26 (BSB)

Many of the people were unwilling to trust God's instructions... and they disobeyed. We will look at this later.

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**3. THE AMOUNT THAT EACH PERSON COLLECTED.** This pattern repeated itself without fail for nearly 40 years!

**Two issues:**

- Ⓐ **How much they were to collect** – 1 omer per person daily; except 2 omers per person on day 6.

An "omer" is an ancient unit of measurement. Its suggested size is in the range of 2½-4 quarts (2-3.5 liters). It was a sufficient amount for one person's daily food requirements.

"This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Each one is to gather **as much as he needs**. You may take **an omer** for each person in your tent.'

On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much food—**two omers** per person ...

Exodus 16:16, 22a (BSB)

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- Ⓑ **How much each person ended up with**, after they collected it.

So the Israelites did this. Some gathered more, and some less.

When they measured it by the omer, **he who gathered much had no excess**, and **he who gathered little had no shortfall**.

Each one gathered as much as he needed to eat.

Exodus 16:17-18 (BSB)

- Most likely, there was nothing miraculous involved in this part of the matter. People would *have* to gather more or less, depending on the number of members in their family. Plus, when they got done collecting it, those with too much could share with those with too little. *This is how the apostle Paul interprets this passage, in 2 Corinthians 8:14-15.*
- [There is an ancient tradition that interprets this as God miraculously "equalizing" the amounts each collected: No matter how much or little they collected, it amounted to one omer, when measured. Such an interpretation is *not* required by the text.]

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**4. THE IRREGULAR (AND CYCLIC) PATTERN IN HOW IT WENT BAD OR ROTTED.** This pattern repeated itself without fail for nearly 40 years!

**Once collected, how long did it last?**

- **Here is another example of how it was impossible for manna to be a naturally-occurring material.**

- Ⓐ **It would last ONLY one day:** For five days, any excess that was collected would *rot* during the following night. (To us, these 5 days would have been Sunday through Thursday.)

- ✓ They had to do this for 5 days in a row, each week for 40 years:

Then Moses said to them, "**No one may keep any of it until morning.**"

Exodus 16:19 (BSB)

- ✓ If they kept it overnight...

... it became **infested with maggots and began to smell.**

Exodus 16:20b (BSB)

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- Ⓑ **It would last for two days:** On day six (Friday), they were to collect *twice as much*, and any excess that was collected would NOT rot during the night after it was collected.

- ✓ On the seventh day (Saturday), no additional manna would be provided.

- ✓ They had to do this once a week, on the same day, for 40 years:

On the sixth day, they **gathered twice as much food** ...

"So bake what you want to bake, and boil what you want to boil. Then **set aside whatever remains and keep it until morning.**"

So they set it aside until morning as Moses had commanded, and **it did not smell or contain any maggots.**

Exodus 16:22a, 23b-24 (BSB)

[From these things, the people would learn about the Sabbath, and also learn an example of how to prepare for the Sabbath: "Plan ahead!"]

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- ☉ It would last apparently for many centuries: One jar full was gathered for future generations to see, and apparently it did not rot.

✓ This occurred one time:

Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Keep an omer of manna **for the generations to come**, so that they may see the bread I fed you in the wilderness when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'"

So Moses told Aaron, "Take a jar and fill it with an omer of manna. Then place it before the LORD to be preserved **for the generations to come.**"

And Aaron placed it in front of the Testimony, to be preserved [= i.e., for safekeeping] just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Exodus 16:32-34 (BSB)

- ✓ The jar was apparently lost, along with Aaron's rod that budded, by the time that Solomon's temple was built – 1 Kings 8:9 / 2 Chronicles 5:10.

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#### 5. The way that it permanently *stopped* at the exact time it was no longer needed.

- ✓ As soon as food became available for them in the land of Canaan:

And **the day after they had eaten from the produce of the land, the manna ceased.** There was no more manna for the Israelites, so that year they began to eat the crops of the land of Canaan.

Joshua 5:12 (BSB)

- ✓ There would be food needs in the future – *famines*, as judgment for Israel's sin. But never again would there be manna. (During those judgments, *repentance* was more needed than *food*.)

#### [5a. Most likely, the *location* where the manna fell "followed" the people, as they journeyed through the desert.]

- ✓ Scripture doesn't say; but it's unlikely that it fell across the entire Sinai Peninsula for those 40 years!

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#### How long did it keep coming down from heaven?

- **When it started:** They had left Egypt on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the first month. Their complaining occurred on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the second month; and the manna probably came the next day.

On the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left the land of Egypt, ...

Exodus 16:1a (BSB)

- **When it ended:** About the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, 40 years later.\*

The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land where they could settle; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.

Exodus 16:35 (BSB)

We cannot calculate the *exact* number of days, because they followed the *lunar* calendar, which does not match today's *solar* calendar. To keep the two calendars close, they would occasionally add an extra month.

\* (Based on statements from multiple Scripture passages, including Joshua 5:10-12.)

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#### FINALLY...

#### 6. The fact that God told them *in advance* these various details.

When God says, "I will do it," it occurs exactly the way he says it will.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, **I will** rain down bread from heaven for you. Each day the people are to go out and gather enough for that day. In this way **I will** test whether or not they will follow My instructions.

Then on the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, **it will** be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

Exodus 16:4-5 (BSB)

- ✓ This chapter contains a variety of statements which tell us that "God said..." This teaches us a basic principle that we ought to learn (unlike many in Israel):

**"When God speaks, we are to pay attention!"**

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#### How did Israel respond to this event and God's instructions to them?

- The entire "manna event" was designed to test Israel – to show whether or not they were willing to trust God [= the "spiritual" aspect of being *redeemed* from Egypt].

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain down bread from heaven for you.

... **In this way I will test whether or not they will follow My instructions.**"

Exodus 16:4 (BSB)

- Many of the Israelites did *not* trust God. *Their choices proved it, and they failed the test.* (Their redemption from Egypt was only *physical*.)
- *Worse than that, they decided to put God to the test.*

**They willfully tested God**  
by demanding the food they craved.

Psalms 78:18 (BSB)

**Do not test the LORD your God**  
as you tested Him at Massah.

Deuteronomy 6:16 (BSB)

- *Humans* (who keep failing) need tested; *God* (who never fails) doesn't!

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#### Many in Israel failed the test.

- **The whole event occurred *because* of their complaining.**

- ✓ They started by blaming *Moses* and *Aaron* for bringing them out of Egypt (although it was actually God who did it).

And there in the desert they all **grumbled against Moses and Aaron.**

"If only we had died by the LORD's hand in the land of Egypt!" they said. "There we sat by pots of meat and ate our fill of bread, but you have brought us into this desert to starve this whole assembly to death!"

Exodus 16:2-3 (BSB)

- ✓ Ultimately, this is a questioning of *God's* trustworthiness; because *he* is the one who made the promises about taking them to the land of Canaan (and taking care of them along the way). Moses and Aaron were just the visible "scapegoats."

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- **Then God, in grace\***, provided food (manna and quail). In this, he would show that he was the one who brought them out of Egypt, and that their grumbling was against him.

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "This evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the LORD's glory, because He has heard **your grumbling against Him**. For who are we that you should grumble against us?"

And Moses added, "The LORD will give you meat to eat this evening and bread to fill you in the morning, for He has heard **your grumbling against Him**. Who are we? Your **grumbings** are not against us but **against the LORD**."

Exodus 16:6-8 (BSB)

- ✓ In vs. 9-12, we read about God appearing (in a cloud) before the nation.

\* (Remember that "grace" refers to undeserved kindness or favor.)

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- **Then, in spite of all God's provisions, many continued to not trust God.** They did not trust his instructions.

- ✓ **On the first day:** God warned them (through Moses) to not keep any manna overnight. So what did they do? Some decided to keep some overnight – and it rotted.

Then Moses said to them, "No one may keep any of it until morning."

**But they did not listen to Moses; some people left part of it until morning**, and it became infested with maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

Exodus 16:19-20 (BSB)

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- ✓ **On the seventh day:** They had been told that there would be *no* manna, and that they shouldn't go out looking for it. So what did they do? Some decided to go out hunting for manna – and they found out that there was none to be found.

"Today you will not find anything in the field.

For six days you may gather, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, it will not be there."

Yet **on the seventh day some of the people went out to gather**, but they did not find anything.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "**How long will you [people] refuse to keep My commandments and instructions?**"

Exodus 16:25b-28 (BSB)

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**There were some who were willing to trust God and learn from the event.**

- In all of these things that God did, there was a *purpose*. God was teaching them something – in fact, several "somethings."

- ✓ But the immediate lesson had to do with the Sabbath principle.

"Understand that **the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why** on the sixth day He will give you bread for two days. On the seventh day, everyone must stay where he is; no one may leave his place."

So the people rested on the seventh day.

Exodus 16:29-30 (BSB)

- ✓ We have noted in the past that this "rest" did not mean passively doing nothing all day. Rather, it was a rest from their daily activities – a time to take their focus *off* daily work and to direct it toward God.

- ✓ It's OK to focus on obtaining "daily bread," and to pray for it, as Jesus instructs (Matthew 6:11). *But there are some things that are even more important.* That's what the Sabbath is all about.

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## Today... Our Mission:

### Realize!

We don't need to find a natural explanation for *everything* that happens! It's OK if we can find an explanation; it's OK if we can't. (The idea it's needed for *everything* comes from atheistic naturalism.)

### Learn!

Pay attention to *Israel's* experience... and learn what they *failed* to learn!

Now these things happened to them as **examples** and were written down as **warnings** for us ...

1 Corinthians 10:11a (BSB)

**We can trust God, whether or not we can explain what he does!**

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