

**Russell Kelfer**

# **Moses: The Message of Manna**

**# 719-A**

**Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)**

**dtm** DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.  
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • [www.dtm.org](http://www.dtm.org) • [dtm@dtm.org](mailto:dtm@dtm.org)

# The Message of Manna

If you want to get a group of Christians' attention, one of the best way is to talk about food. We believers seem to relate well to food. Our fellowships are centered around times of food. We call them "food and fellowship", but the fellowship is often a by-product. Our times of discipleship often take place in a coffee shop or restaurant, and rather than take up space without paying our way, we just order two or three hamburgers (apiece) to salve our consciences. We also have food on the brain when it comes to conviction. Just eat a piece of pie à la mode in front of one of your thinner than thou fellow believers, and the guilt overwhelms you. You may have lied, lusted and been lazy that day, but the thing that convicts you is the pie. We are, for the most part, sensitive to food.

I think one reason is that the first sin took place in a cafeteria. Eve was shown a whole food line full of goodies and was told she could have all she wanted of any she wanted....except one. And of course, Satan immediately challenged that until that one thing was the only thing she wanted.

So we're going to talk about food. I think I already have your attention. We are going to take a look at what was considered by some to be a dietary deficiency and the dilemma we discover from the discontentment that developed. This is another lesson from the Living Legend of Moses. It is entitled, "The Message of Manna". Our primary passage will be Exodus 16. However, we will walk through other passages in Numbers, Deuteronomy and the gospel of John. Here is the outline:

- I- The Drama (Exodus 16:1-36)
- II- The Discontentment (Numbers 11:10-30)
- III The Delusion (Numbers 11:31-34;  
Psalms & Deuteronomy passages)
- IV- The Discovery (John 6:26-58)
- V- The Decision (John 6:59-69)

## The Message of Manna

First we will look at The Drama itself. The setting is just beyond the Red Sea. You will remember it was here that the God of eternity delivered an entire nation supernaturally. Also supernaturally, and almost simultaneously, He completely demolished those who pursued them. That same nation, awed at the power of their God, had stopped to celebrate, as Moses, the bashful prophet, became the first Hebrew Bill Gaither. We read about it in Exodus 15 where he penned his first gold record. Read it sometime when you have a few minutes. It is a beautiful pattern of praise to a sovereign God. The first stanza went like this:

*“I will sing unto the Lord  
for He hath triumphed gloriously.  
The horse and his rider  
He has thrown into the sea.”*

It is a song of triumph to God, and the whole nation paused for a season of worship and praise. Surely now they will never again long for the slavery of Egypt. Right? Surely now they will never again question the provisions of God. Right? Wrong. For three whole days they trusted. Three days into their journey, after the most significant celebration in history, their water supply started to run low. When they did find water, it was too bitter to drink. You guessed it. Exodus 15 describes their reaction.

And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

And he [Moses] cried out to the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, which when he had cast the tree into the waters, the waters were made sweet: (Exodus 15:24,25)

We see God’s children fill their Thermos bottles and live happily ever after. Right? Wrong. We see here a pattern of things to come. The children of Israel are typifying the Christian whose eyes are not on God’s perspective. They sing, “Praise the Lord!” and really mean it so long as God performs miracles. They praise God so long as He is tangibly meeting all of their physical needs. Does this sound familiar? God would periodically and intentionally prove or test them by taking something away to see if they were trusting Him for who He was or for what He gave them. Does that sound familiar? When the test came, these fickle followers would murmur and complain. They would fling their fists at Moses and at God and long for the life they had led in Egypt. Does that sound familiar? Always then, a God of mercy

## The Message of Manna

would somehow meet their needs and teach them spiritual truth in the process about the things that really matter. Does that still sound familiar? That is because the process hasn't changed. Only the names have been to changed to protect the not so innocent.

Indeed, part of the purpose of this lesson is to hold up for us the mirror of God's Word so that we can see how murmuring, shortsighted Christians look, and in particular, how they look to God. We will begin our story of the ungrateful Israelites in Exodus 16:

And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month 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. (Exodus 16:1-3)

Here we go again with another unreasonable round of rebellion. Now note it was the whole congregation of the children of Israel who murmured. It was not a select group of grumblers, but the whole nation. Listen to these believers bellyache: "Woe is me, Moses. We wish we were dead. (I bet Moses did, too, at times.) At least back in Egypt we had a lot to eat. Sure, we were enslaved to an enemy of God and didn't have the pillar of fire to lead us at night or the cloud by day. Sure, we would have missed the miracle of the Red Sea and the celebration of victory and the miracle of the waters. Sure, we would have missed knowing the God of eternity the way we know Him now; but Moses, we ate better back then. Isn't that what really counts, Moses?" Then comes their angry accusation: "We know that you and God conspired against us to lead us out here so that we would die." It is a good thing that God's patience is not like ours. We would have tossed a bolt of lightning and a tornado and would have a few toasted Hebrews. But not our wonderful God. They were hungry, so God feeds them.

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 [test] them,

## The Message of Manna

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 to the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out of Egypt:

And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? (Exodus 16:4-7)

So God decided to meet their needs. For a while, they would have quail every evening. Quail dropped from the sky. That was a temporary provision. But for more than forty years, every morning, God would rain down bread from heaven. The weatherman would announce, "The forecast for tomorrow is cloudy with scattered manna dropped from heaven." Thus, the drama unfolds and Moses makes this insightful statement in verse 8 that describes much of our complaining against others: "You are not murmuring against me. Don't kid yourself. I am only repeating the words of God. Your argument, Israel, is with the Living God." Now look at verse 9:

And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the LORD: for he hath heard your murmurings.

And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I AM is the LORD your God.

And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoarfrost on the ground.

And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not [did not know] what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. (Exodus 16:9-15)

## The Message of Manna

So God met their needs with one purpose, “That ye shall know that I AM the LORD your God.” For a while God fed them both quail and manna. He did this because in their spiritual infancy they couldn’t trust Him without both. But after a time, how long we don’t know, God removed the meat from their diet and left them only manna. The primary reason, we shall see later in this lesson, was to glorify His Name. Now manna was small, round, white and sweet. If it wasn’t gathered as God commanded when the sun came out, it melted. God, who had spiritual lessons tucked in every phrase, gave them a list of how to use it. It was very simple.

1- Each person was allotted an omer which is three quarts and a pint. They were allotted this each day for five days. We see this in verses 16-18.

2- The amount was for that day only. Anything they tried to hoard or keep over would spoil. We see this in verses 19-21.

3- On the sixth day, every person was to gather twice as much to have both for that day and for the Sabbath. We see this in verses 22-30.

4- What they gathered for the Sabbath would not spoil, but would keep until the next day supernaturally.

5- All the baking of bread for the Sabbath had to be done on the day before.

These were the five rules that God gave them. But you can just imagine that at every point the children of Israel tried God to see what would happen if they bent the rules. First they tried hoarding more than a day’s supply. However, it would always spoil and the Scriptures tell us that it smelled awful, so they were always found out. Then they tried gathering it on the Sabbath because they didn’t think Moses would see them, but lo and behold, there was nothing there just the way Moses said. God shook His head, so to speak, in verse 28 and said, “How long will you refuse to keep My commandments?” He knew the answer but He asked the question anyhow.

Now the response of the children of Israel on first seeing these little wafer-like miracles was, “Man ha,” or “What is this?” So we read in verse 31:

And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna:

And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD

## The Message of Manna

commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. (Exodus 16:31a,32)

God instructed Aaron to take a gold pot to put the manna in and it would be kept for ensuing generations. God supernaturally did that. The children of Israel did eat manna for forty years until they came to an inhabited land, the borders of the land of Canaan. So Moses kept a sample for future generations and Jehovah freeze-dried it because it kept for all of those years supernaturally and never spoiled. Again, this is symbolic and represents our salvation. But for more than forty years, four-hundred and eighty months, three thousand, three hundred and sixty days, the children of Israel ate manna, supernaturally provided by God.

Now let's let the hourglass of Israel drop a few grains of sand and see how the children of God took to the process of receiving God's bakery of blessings day after day. There we will see the discontentment. Turn to Numbers 11. If you are looking for a memory verse, the first part of verse one is a good one to memorize. It goes like this:

And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uppermost parts of the camp.

And the people cried to Moses, and Moses prayed, and the fire was quenched.

So he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.

And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel, also wept again, and said Who shall give us flesh [meat] to eat? (Numbers 11:1-4)

"When the people complained, it displeased the Lord". That is quite a statement. There is the problem, a discontented spirit. "God, is this all you have in store for me? The same thing day after day after day?" You may not have said that, but some of us have. God's anger was kindled and the people cried and Moses prayed, then the fire was quenched. Over and over the pattern goes. In verse four they wept again. This time they moaned that their diet was too limited. They wanted meat. You can almost envision key Hebrew leaders marching around with placards that read: "Manna Banana, We want meat. Give us something

## The Message of Manna

different to eat”. Or you could tune in KJEW television and catch their popular program, 59½ minutes as Barbara Waltersfield interviews a militant striker. “Just what is bothering you, Isaac?” she asks, “You have plenty to eat. In fact, you look a little paunchy to me.” The sharp tongued interviewer laughs and says, “What is the matter with manna anyhow? You want maybe French toast?” The militants answer and state their case in verse 5:

We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic:

But now our soul is dried away: and there is nothing at all, beside this manna before our eyes. (Numbers 11:5,6)

What memories these guys have. Forgotten were the bricks and the straw, the taskmasters, the plagues, and the persecutions. All they remember is a mid-east smorgasbord. “We remember the fish, the trout almandine. We don’t even get fish sticks over here. Just manna. We remember the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, the garlic.” Yuck. What a diet. It is a wonder to me that they didn’t drive these guys out of Egypt years before. All they had to do is breathe, and the leaves fell off the trees. That is all they could think of. The sight of one more day of manna they couldn’t handle. Verse 7:

And the manna was as coriander seed and the color was the color of bdellium.

And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.

And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man at the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; and Moses also was displeased.

And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou been afflicted on thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou hast layest the burden of all this people on me?

Have I conceived all this people? have I who begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child [a nursing



## The Message of Manna

infant], unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers?

Whence should I have flesh to give unto this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh [meat] that we may eat.

I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy [burdensome] for me.

And if thou art deal thus with me, kill me I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight, and let me not see my wretchedness. (Numbers 11:8-15)

So God was angry. Moses embarks on another pity party. “Why me, Lord? Why me? Lord, these people are more than I can bear. I never promised to be a nursemaid to two million babies. They want Big Macs, Lord, and You are giving them Waverly Wafers. Where on earth can I get enough meat to satisfy this mob, Lord?” You can almost hear God say, “Not on earth, Moses, not on earth.” So Moses completes his tirade with these words, “Lord, if this is my lot in life, I want to die.” I think I have heard that before, too.

Isn't it good that God doesn't take us literally when we pray like that? Instead, God just orders Moses to gather together seventy of the elder men of Israel. He transfers some of Moses' burdens to them. That will be a good study for another time, but not in this lesson. Then God says, “Moses, these people want meat. I will tell you what I am going to do. I will give them what they want until they don't want it anymore.” It was smorgasbord time. Quail au-gratin. Quail hollandaise. Quail omelets. Quail burgers. God was going to give them quail until it came out of their nostrils. It was not for a day, not for a week, but for a month.

Now Moses was still somehow in one of his spiritual down cycles. You may know what I am talking about because some of your friends get that way. He still thought that it all depended on him. “God, there just aren't enough grocery stores out here to serve up this much food. I can't do it, Lord,” Moses complained. He was right, he couldn't do it. But God wasn't asking him to do it. In verse 18, God unveils His menu for the next month, a quail buffet:

And say unto the people, Sanctify yourselves [set yourselves apart] against tomorrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us

## The Message of Manna

flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye will eat.

Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days;

But even a whole month, until it comes out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that you have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, and saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?

And Moses said, The people, among who I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month.'

Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to be suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to be suffice for them?

And the LORD said to Moses, Is the LORD'S hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not. (Numbers 11:18-23)

“Of course you can't do it, Moses, who asked you to do it? Has My arm fallen off, Moses? Do you think I can't do what I say? Stand back, Moses, it is going to rain,” God replied. He was about to deal with a spirit of discontentment and an ungrateful spirit. Watch how He does it.

And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and they fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on each side, as it were a days journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth.

And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and gathered the quails: he that gathered least ten homers: each and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague. (Numbers 11:31-33)

Now it says that each person gathered the equivalent of one hundred and five bushels. That is six thousand, seven hundred and twenty quails for each person. That meant in all, about twenty billion quails. They were four feet deep throughout the camp and for several miles outside the camp. Can you fathom what it would cost for twenty billion quail? They were worth a

## The Message of Manna

lot. But they were worth a lesson to God; and remember that the cattle on a thousand hills are His. The food shortage doesn't bother God. The food shortage is always for a purpose, not because of a short supply. That is true today of food and it is true of oil and it is true of everything. God has enough, but He is rationing some things to bring about His will.

So here is one of God's prescriptions for a discontented spirit. Give them what they want until they drown in it. Then through it they will find the will of God. Think about that, beloved. Think about the times you told God you just had to have something. And you complained and complained and prayed for it until finally God gave you that promotion or that relationship or that house or that car or that something, only to find out that the very thing you had to have became your downfall. But you never would have learned the lesson, had God not finally given you what you asked for.

They thought God was answering their prayer, that He suddenly awakened and discovered He had been overlooking a great need in their lives, a need for quail. But they were missing the point. From God's perspective they had all they needed and He was teaching them contentment and dependence. The Psalmist paints a picture of it in retrospect in Psalm 78:

He [God] wrought wonders before their fathers, In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.

He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; And he made the waters stand up like a heap.

Then He led them with the cloud by day, And all the night with a light of fire.

He split the rocks in the wilderness, And gave them abundant drink like the ocean depths.

He brought forth streams also from the rock, And caused waters to run down like rivers.

Yet they still continued to sin more against Him to rebel against the Most High in the desert,

And in their heart they put God to the test by asking food according to their desire.

Then they spoke against God; They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?"

"Behold, He struck the rock, so that waters gushed out, And streams were overflowing; Can He give bread also? Will He provide meat for His people?"

## The Message of Manna

Therefore the LORD heard, and was full of wrath, And a fire was kindled against Jacob, And anger also mounted against Israel;

Because they did not believe in God, And did not trust in His salvation.

Yet He commanded the clouds above, And opened the doors of heaven;

And He rained down manna upon them to eat, And gave them food from heaven.

Man did eat the bread of angels; He sent them food in abundance.

He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens; And by His power He directed the south wind.

When He rained meat upon them like the dust, Even winged fowl like the sand of the seas,

Then He let them fall in the midst of their camp, Round about their dwellings.

So they ate and were well filled; And their desire He gave to them.

Before they had satisfied their desire, While the food was in their mouths,

The anger of God rose against them, And killed some of the stoutest ones, And Subdued the choice men of Israel.

In spite of all this they still sinned, And did not believe in His wondrous works.

(Psalm 78:12-32 NAS)

God gave them what they wanted even though what they wanted was not what they needed. Oh, the price we pay for demanding things of God, demanding circumstances that aren't God's best. He alone knows what we need. Psalm 106 says it this way:

Nevertheless, He saved them for the sake of His name, That He might make His power known.

Thus He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up; And He led them, through the deeps, as through the wilderness.

So, He saved them from the hand of the one who hated *them*, And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.

And the waters covered their adversaries; Not one of them was left.

Then they believed His words; They sang His praise.

They quickly forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel,

## The Message of Manna

But craved intensely in the wilderness, And tempted God  
in the desert.

So, He gave them their request, But sent wasting disease  
[leanness] among them. (Psalm 106:8-15 NAS)

God gave them quail in exchange for spiritual blessings. They demanded meat, thus exchanging quail for the blessings that come from trusting and believing the Living God. They never even knew what God was trying to do through that manna. To them, God either had a limited food supply or a warped sense of humor. It never dawned on them that He had a deeper purpose. The deeper purpose was explained in Deuteronomy 8:

All the commandments I command you this day, do.

And remember the way that I led you these years in the wilderness to test you and prove you and to find out what was in your heart.

He humbled you and caused you to get hungry and He fed you with manna which you knew not, neither did your fathers know, that He might make thee know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Deuteronomy 8:1-3 paraphrase)

There it is, God had a plan. He caused the hunger in order to supply the manna, which had to be from God because they had never seen it before. The manna was not caviar, and there was a reason there was no variety. The reason was that He might make them know, “that a man is not what he eats, but a product of his relationship to the Word of God.” Man lives in two worlds, a physical world and a spiritual world. The two compete for our attention. That is why Jesus told his disciples that none of them can serve two masters. We will love one and hate the other or cleave to one and despise the other. The manna was God’s provision for His children’s physical needs in a way to draw maximum attention to their spiritual needs: to the Word of God.

So manna is the paint on the artist’s brush that paints a portrait of the provisions and the priorities of God. Satan doesn’t understand that. In Matthew 4, Jesus was tempted in the wilderness and was hungry. Satan approached Him with a temptation to misuse His power. He told Jesus to turn the stones into bread. It seemed to be harmless. It seemed to be an acceptable alternative, on the surface. But Satan’s goal was to focus God’s power on the temporal, and Jesus saw beyond that. He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 to Satan, And He answered and

## The Message of Manna

said,

It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

This is a good verse to give to Satan when he tries to focus our spirits on using God to meet physical wants at the expense of spiritual needs.

As always, the manna miracle was to teach us, as well as them, more about the Living God. Let's look at what we can learn from manna. The message of manna teaches us truths about God's physical provisions.

### 1- Everything good comes from God.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from [God] the Father of lights, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (James 1:17)

### 2- From manna we see that God cares about every need we have.

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

...for your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. (Matthew 6:31,32)

### 3- Manna teaches us that God prefers to meet our needs one day at a time.

Therefore take no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought of the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:34)

Give us this day our daily bread. (Matthew 6:11)

### 4- Manna teaches us that God is more concerned with our needs than our wants.

But my God shall supply all of your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

### 5- From manna we learn that God's meeting our physical needs always has a deeper purpose.

He caused you to get hungry that you might know that man does not live by bread alone. (Deuteronomy 8:3 paraphrase)

### 6- We learn from manna that God's goal is to create dependence, not independence. He made you hungry so that He could feed you.

### 7- This last truth from manna is that God will give you what you ask for if you try Him, but He will give you what you need if

## The Message of Manna

you trust Him.

And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.  
(Psalm 106:15)

So this is part of the message of manna. But there is an even deeper truth in its message. It is a truth that causes all of the other truths to pale into insignificance. It is the portrait of the real bread come down from heaven. Thus as always, God's voice speaks and says, "Jesus!" Every word in God's Word says one word, "Jesus!" Manna is no exception. Let's walk with the disciples as they make life's greatest discovery. You will find it in John 6:26.

Jesus was ministering in Capernaum. He had quietly left the multitudes. They were frantic to be with Him because He had just fed them loaves and fish. They were impressed. They were impressed, not necessarily for who He was, but with what He had done. He had filled their stomachs. They saw in Jesus an eternal grocery store. But they missed the point. In verse 26, Jesus addresses the problem and gives the real message of manna.

Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, 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 [a person], which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

And Jesus said unto them, I AM the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.  
(John 6:26-35)

## The Message of Manna

The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I AM the bread which came down from heaven.

And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?

Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

(John 6:41-44)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

I am that bread of life.

Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

(John 6:47-51)

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

As the living Father sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

(John 6:56-58)

So there is the real message of the manna. God's bread for Israel was to draw an indelible portrait of God's real bread of life, the Lord Jesus Himself. Like manna in the physical realm, Jesus in the spiritual realm would teach us certain truths. Like manna, Jesus would teach us that He would be all that man would ever need. Like manna, Jesus would reveal Himself and meet our needs, but He would do it one day at a time. Like manna, Jesus' word would be ours for the taking, but the taking was ours to do. That is why we rise in the morning to take His word and gather it in and feed on Him. Like manna, Jesus would not impress the unregenerate mind. Like manna, Jesus would portray His Father's love and His Father's glory. Like manna, Jesus in this life offers but a foretaste of a greater feast, a banquet to come and an eternity to come when our fellowship will no longer be through a glass darkly, but face to face. Like manna, what Jesus



## The Message of Manna

offers is supernatural. Like manna, Jesus fills the hungry soul of every man. Like manna, Jesus is the bread of life and will not be forced upon you. Life is a series of choices. If we choose to cry out for the quail that the world offers, God will give us quail and send leanness into our soul. There is the message of manna. It leads to a decision. Let's continue:

These things said he [Jesus] in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?

What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

It is the spirit that quickeneth [makes alive]; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

And we believe and we are sure that thou are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

(John 6:59-69)

The discovery is that Jesus is the bread of life and only He can satisfy our real hunger. To feed on Him and to be fed by Him requires a crucifying of the hunger of the things that satisfy the flesh in order to magnify the hunger for the things which satisfy the spirit. For the flesh profits nothing. Not a little, not a lot. The flesh profits nothing. Zero. It is the Spirit that gives life. It is the words of God that feed the Spirit, Jesus said. Let go of your crying for quail and let the bread of life meet your needs. Man does not live by things, but by every word that God speaks. There is our problem: The things God wants for us in this life are spiritual. They are the bread of life. They are the fruits of the Spirit. The fruit of transformed lives is what matters. He can give us the bigger house, the newer car, the better job, the honor we

## The Message of Manna

are seeking, but do we want it if it is quail? No. Only if it is best. Otherwise, it will satisfy the wrong appetite and our spirits will turn lean when our circumstances turn fat.

Be careful how you pray. God knows how much you can handle. If what you ask for means spiritual compromise, you don't need it. So you see, the real message of manna is that God isn't looking for soldiers whose allegiances are divided between the battlefield and the marketplace. Neither is He looking for Christians who are so enamored with this world's goods that this world's objectives have made them double-minded. That is why He admonishes us to: Set your affections on things which are above, not on things below. The Living Bible says, Let heaven fill your thoughts. Don't spend your time worrying about things down here. It is not that we don't apply ourselves to our jobs, our pursuits, our objectives, but they are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. Every task we perform, every goal we press toward ought to have engraved on it one word: JESUS. Our singular goal ought to be to glorify Him. Our pursuits ought to be to draw men to Him. Our objectives ought to be to honor Him, no matter the cost.

Jesus looks at us even today and says, "What are you laboring for? The meat that perishes? I AM the bread of life and he that eats of Me shall never die." In the light of that statement, what else in life matters? The message of manna is that Jesus wants all of us so that He can take all of Himself and pour Himself through us. It may mean laying aside lesser objectives. It may mean laying aside pursuits. It may mean dying to things that don't produce life. It is a tough message, the message of manna. That is why the Scripture records that from that time on, many of His disciples turned back and did not follow Him any more. Jesus didn't chase after them and throw Himself at their feet and say, "I need you. My program will die without you." He simply let them go. He then turned to the twelve who were left and said, "What about you, would you like to go with them?" That is the same kind of question He asks of us. Our answer needs to be the answer Simon Peter gave, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life and we believe and we are sure that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Lord, what else is there? Lord, who else is there? You alone are eternity. You alone are the Living God. Lord, we will follow You and nothing else and no one else forever."

The Message of Manna

THE MESSAGE OF MANNA

Oh, the message of manna,  
That bread from heaven sent.  
Oh, the truth within its taste,  
When all its power is spent.

For manna says our precious God  
Will feed us His own way,  
If we'll but trust Him, He'll provide  
Each morning for that day!

And manna tells us all we need  
Comes down from Heaven above;  
That everything God provides  
Is a token of His love!

And ah, does not that manna teach  
A deeper lesson still?  
That Jesus is the bread of life  
To whosoever will.

And does not manna speak aloud,  
"Ye have a choice to make.  
Long for the quail this world affords  
Or just My manna take."

Is not that manna's message  
In an era rimmed with strife?  
God does not want to be your food  
He wants to be your life!

For Focus and Application

1- How could the children of Israel have lost sight of God's provisions so quickly after such an incredible show of power? How does Satan work when God has just demonstrated His might? Think about Elijah. Think about Job. Satan's timing is designed to nullify God's miracles by introducing warfare to make us think that the miracle wasn't real or that God was just teasing us. God allows the enemy to do this because it gives Him a chance to test His children just the other side of success. Go back through your life and compare this pattern with your own experience.

2- What was their complaint in Exodus 16:1-3? What percentage of the people were murmuring? How could that be?

## The Message of Manna

How does a little spark set a whole forest ablaze? (James 3:5,6)  
What was wrong with their memories? How does Satan do that?  
What can we do to stop it?

3- When God gave them exactly what they wanted, they were satisfied. But as soon as their diet became monotonous, they rebelled again. Why? What Biblical principles can you recall that God reinforced by sending manna the way He did?

4- The first part of Numbers 11:1 is a powerful memory verse. It says, "When the people complained, it displeased the Lord." How do we sometimes disguise our complaining? Why was God angry? What qualities were obviously lacking in His people?

5- In Numbers 11:11-15, Moses dumped his frustrations on the Lord. That's the best place to do so. But what was at the root of Moses' complaints? Can you find other people in Scripture who mirrored his feelings? Look for words in Moses' tirade that indicate who and what he was focusing on. What was his final "appeal" to God in verse 15? Was it an appeal or a threat?

6- Reread Psalm 106:8-15. Personalize it. Replace the Israelites' experiences with your own. Ask God to forgive you for your lack of a grateful spirit. Ask Him to give you a remembrance that He met your needs that time because of His intense love for you, and whatever He does, is best for you.

7- The real message of manna has to do with who Jesus is. It has to do with coming to Him every day, dying to ourselves and feeding on His Word. What response did He get when He made that clear? How did He respond to that response? What is God looking for today in the church? What is He looking for in us? Dare we offer Him anything less?

**dtm** DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230  
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer