

Manna from Heaven

Exodus 16:1-15 John 6:1-13, 47-58

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The great salvation story of the **Old** Testament is the story of the **Exodus**¹. Quite honestly, you can never learn too much about the **Exodus**. The **Exodus** is the story of God rescuing the Israelites from slavery to the Egyptians. So many things in the New Testament go back to the **Exodus**. The **Exodus** foreshadows the work of Jesus, the Savior of the world, who rescues us all from slavery to sin and death.

The story of the Exodus begins with a flurry of miracles!

It all began with the 10 plagues on Egypt; the 10 Plagues were miracles meant to show Pharaoh and the Egyptians the power and strength of the one, true, and only God. The last of the 10 plagues was the death of the firstborn; and how God saved His people through the **Passover** meal. After the death of his own firstborn son, Pharaoh finally let the Israelites leave; and they were now on their way to the Promised Land. In *another* stunning miracle, the Israelites cross the Red Sea on dry ground. Almost immediately, in *another* grand miracle, the Egyptian army that chased after them is drowned in the same Red Sea. A short time later, God worked *another* striking miracle as He provided water from a Rock for them to drink in the desert. Every single day and night, the Lord *continually worked* the miracle of His presence as a *pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night* as He led, guarded, and protected the Israelites in the wilderness. *There was a flurry of miracles*² *at the beginning of the Exodus!*

But in spite of all these miracles, the Israelites continually *grumbled and complained*. They were not content nor were they satisfied. They thought **slavery in Egypt** was better than following Gd to the Promised Land. They cry out to the Moses and the Lord, *grumbling and complaining*. They think that God is going to let them starve to death in the wilderness.

¹ The story of the Exodus is recorded in the Old Testament book of Exodus, the first 20 chapters.

² One thing to note about all of these miracles is that they are public: **ALL** Israel saw the plagues, the Red Sea open to dry ground, the Egyptians being drowned, water gushing from a rock, and the pillar cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. In these miraculous signs, God wanted His people to know that He loved them, provided for them, and protected them. He wanted them to trust in Him; the very thing they would not do. ☺

Thankfully, God is **patient** with them just like He is patient with us. In His **kindness**, He **hears** their prayers and **answers** them! Through Moses, God works yet *another* mighty miracle: He sends quail to them for meat in the evening, and Manna to them for bread in the morning³. **Moses fed God's People Manna and quail on their journey to the Promised Land.** *It was a tremendous miracle where God provided Bread from Heaven!!*

Now jump ahead 1,500 years.

Jesus is in a wilderness area, like Moses and the Israelites were. There are 5,000 men people following Jesus, not counting their families. The people are hungry; there is little food to be found. Like Moses⁴, Jesus will feed God's People. Like in the Old Testament times, God will provide *Bread from Heaven*.

The miracle of **food in the wilderness** connects Jesus to Moses; and is meant for people to **listen and believe** what He says.

The day after the Feeding of the 5,000, Jesus preached about that miracle. In that sermon, He said this:

[Jesus said,] For the bread of God is **He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.** ... Then Jesus declared, "**I AM** the **BREAD OF LIFE**. He who comes to Me will **never go hungry**, and he who believes in Me will **never be thirsty**." John 6:33, 35

Jesus is the Bread of Life that we all need. The "Bread of Life" is an image of salvation! God feeds His People so that they will never go hungry and never be thirsty! God gives His People "bread" so that they will not die. **Jesus is the Bread of Life that we all need.**

³ Can you imagine the scope and magnitude of this miracle? The Bible says there were 600,000 men on the Exodus journey, not counting their families. This could easily be 2 or 3 million people (or more!) that God is feeding! Can you imagine how many quail there were? Can you imagine what the ground must have looked like covered with Manna to feed that many people? The magnitude of the miracle is immense! This is another public miracle where God is showing His people that He loves them and provides for them. The Lord is trustworthy and faithful, so that they put their faith in Him!

⁴ Remember the prophecy of Dt. 18:18, where a "prophet like Moses" will appear. Jesus is that prophet, but greater than Moses. Jesus is the Messiah, God Himself, who has come into the world to save all people. Like Moses in the Old Testament, Jesus speaks the Word of God; and like Moses, Jesus too will feed God's people. The Feeding of the 5,000 — which is recorded on all four Gospels — is a Messianic miracle that connects Jesus to the Old Testament prophecies and foreshadows His New Testament Messianic work of salvation.

In this salvation metaphor, **SIN** is seen as starving to death. It's not physically "starving to death" because of lack of food; but spiritually starving to death because of a **lack of righteousness** and a **broken relationship** with the One, True God. **Life without Christ is a famine that will kill you.** There is no life apart from Jesus. **A life without Christ is *spiritually* "starving to death" and "dying of thirst"!**

Jesus uses the image of hunger and food to teach us the Gospel. Jesus said that He is the **"Bread of Life"** that came down from Heaven and gives life to the world. Jesus Himself gives eternal life to the world through His work of salvation. There is no other place to find eternal life; there is no other "Bread from Heaven."

- ⇒ Only Christ's **perfect life** can give you **righteousness** in God's eyes.
- ⇒ Only Christ's **sacrificial death** can **forgive your sins and reconcile you** with the One, True, and Only God.
- ⇒ Only Christ's **resurrection** can **save you from death and give you eternal life.**
- ⇒ Only Christ can **eternally satisfy** your body & soul, spirit & life.

Jesus promises, **Whoever trusts in Him will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Him will never be thirsty.** Jesus is **"Manna from God"** for all of us!

Jesus is God's Manna for you!

*Jesus is the "Bread of Life"
who comes down from heaven
and gives life to the world
through His life, death and resurrection!*

This image of **Jesus as the Bread of Life** points us back to the Israelites of the Old Testament. The Manna God provided for the Israelites in the wilderness teaches us about Christ⁵ --- Jesus is God's Manna; He is "Bread from Heaven" that gives life to all people.

⁵ This is the proper way to interpret Scripture. The "Christological interpretation of Scripture" is how Jesus teaches us to understand the Old Testament; He says in John 5, for instance, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; but it is they that bear witness about Me." In a similar way, Jesus here in this story of Feeding the 5,000, is saying that the Manna in the Old Testament was pointing forward to Himself, as He is the "true bread from Heaven." Understanding the Christological interpretation of Scripture is extremely important, and the proper way to view Scriptures.

Jesus as the “**Bread of Life**” also points us forward into the New Testament times, and specifically to Holy Communion. One way to think about Holy Communion is that of **Manna from Heaven**. In Holy Communion, Jesus the “**Bread of Life**” actually gives you *Bread for life*!

Holy Communion is your Manna!

In Holy Communion, *Christ the Bread of Life* gives you of Himself in the bread and the wine of the Lord’s Supper. Jesus feeds His People food and drink on their way to Heaven!

We believe, teach and confess that “*in, with, and under*” the Bread and the Wine of the Lord’s Supper is the Body and Blood of Christ. Jesus clearly said,

Take and eat, **this is My Body**”
Take and drink **this is My Blood**”

The **cup** of blessing that we bless, is it not a *communion* in the **blood** of Christ?
The **bread** that we break, is it not a *communion* in the **body** of Christ?
1 CORINTHIANS 10:16

One way to think about Holy Communion is that of **Manna from Heaven**. This is the Manna that God provides for you in His Son Jesus: so that you will live forever!

- † This is the Body and Blood of the crucified and risen Savior that forgives your sins
- † This is the bread and the wine that gives you eternal life
- † This is God giving you the certain hope of the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day
- † This is where God promises to abide in You and you abide in Him.
- † This is where the Lord Jesus assures you that He is with you always, even to the ends of the age.

Just like Jesus provided food for the Israelites on their journey to the Promised Land in the Old Testament times; so too the same Jesus provides food for you on your journey to the Promised Land of Heaven. Jesus is the “Bread of Life”, who feeds you *Bread from Heaven* in Holy Communion so that you will live forever!

Now, sustained by this **Sacramental food**, this “**mysterious**” food, we live holy lives through faith in Christ. We faithfully love and worship the Lord our God; we consistently help and serve our neighbors. Our words and our actions bear witness that *Jesus is the “Bread of Life” who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*

AMEN!

**Bread of Life,
Lord Jesus Christ,
who came down from Heaven to give us eternal life.**

We thank you for the faith to know and believe in You.

**You praise you for the gift of Holy Communion, which is
Manna from Heaven for us.**

**We pray that you sustain and strengthen us
as we journey in this life,**

**keeping our focus on
You, Your Holy Word, and on Your Kingdom.**

Amen!

Exodus 16:1-15

1 They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. 2 And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, 3 and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. 5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily." 6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, "At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, 7 and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against the LORD. For what are we, that you grumble against us?" 8 And Moses said, "When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him--what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD." 9 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, 'Come near before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.'" 10 And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. 11 And the LORD said to Moses, 12 "I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'" 13 In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. 14 And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. 15 When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat."

John 6:1-13, 47-58

1 After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. 2 And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. 3 Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. 5 Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" 10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12 And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." 13 So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.

47 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." 52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" 53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.

