

Exodus 17

(Exodus 16:35) And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

The LORD provided “bread from heaven”. For forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the LORD provided this bread. No matter where they went, it was there in the morning. For forty years of murmuring, complaining, rebelling, and disobeying, the LORD still provided bread each morning. This is a perfect picture of grace – getting what you don’t deserve. Given what they did, their journey was also one of mercy – the LORD withholding what they did deserve destruction.

Last week, someone asked about sacrifices, 1) did they sacrifice their animals they brought with them and (2) did they eat what was sacrificed.

The fact is that the Bible doesn’t reveal any information about the wilderness sacrifices before there was a Tabernacle it does not say if they did not—or could not—eat the animals from their flocks. The only known instance of each family eating the sacrifice was with the Passover lamb.

The fact that the Bible is unclear about it doesn’t mean that people shied away from their opinions:

1. Perhaps the Israelites didn’t sacrifice certain animals because they learned the ways of the Egyptians who revered certain animals. Didn’t they worship a golden calf?
2. Perhaps they didn’t really have enough animals to sacrifice and then eat. There were over 2 million people (or so) so how much meat would they need?
3. The Israelites were herdsmen and shepherds. Their herds and flocks could have been intended for trading or selling with they got to the Promised Land.
4. Also, it is unclear as to how sacrifices were managed. That is, were they done for all the Israelites as in corporate sacrifices or were they done by the individual families?

We will see in a couple of chapters that at Mount Sinai, Moses was commanded to build an altar of earth or with uncut stone. It was to be used as a place for the sacrifices to the LORD. This was before the Tabernacle was built.

So, God provided meat and bread out of His love for His people and out of an abundance of grace towards them.

We do know that near the end of the 40 years in the wilderness, Moses taught them the following:

Deuteronomy 8:2-5 And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. **(3) So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man**

lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. (4) Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. (5) You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you.

So, the bread was a lesson. The bread the LORD gave them would allow them to live but the true bread was every word that came from the mouth of the LORD! This was to be as important because the Word nourishes the spirit life as the bread does the physical life.

Interestingly, nearly 1500 years later, Jesus had to deal with this same issue. Many sought Him for what He could do for them.

In [John 6](#), we see Him feeding the 5000+ followers. A short time later, Jesus had to admonish them for seeking Him for food that only satisfies their physical hunger and not the true bread from Heaven. He was about to explain the True Bread...that was something greater and more important than their bellies!

[John 6:26-27](#) Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. (27) Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

And incredibly, once again they asked for a sign! And they told Him,

(31) "Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD FROM HEAVEN TO EAT.'"

So Jesus, knowing how much they revered Moses responds:

[John 6:32-33](#) Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. (33) For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

After expressing their desire for the bread from God, Jesus says to them in verse 35

[John 6:35-36](#) "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. (36) But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe.

Jesus, the Bread of Life, explains that He came down from Heaven and that all who believe in Him would have everlasting life and be raised in the believers Resurrection. He tells that those who genuinely believe, will never be cast out!

[John 6:47-51](#) Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. (48) I am the bread of life. (49) Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. (50)

This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. (51) I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

I can imagine the looks on their faces when He then said:

John 6:53-58 "Most assuredly, 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 eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. (55) For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. (56) He who eats 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 he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. (58) This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever."

This caused an uproar and many disciples were among those who never followed Him again! Why? Because like the Israelites in the wilderness, these Israelites were what we call today, "Belly Jews". They only go to synagogue if there's something to eat or something that will provide them with a material blessing.

In Chapter 17, we are going to see the same thing played out again, but this time, it's with their thirst.

(Exodus 17:1) Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but *there was* no water for the people to drink.

Who led them to a place where there was no water to drink? **The LORD!** Moses had to remind them even when they came to the end of their 40 year journey:

Deuteronomy 1:32-33 Yet, for all that, you did not believe the LORD your God, (33) who went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day.

Every step they took, every direction they turned was by the leading of the LORD. Each situation was to purify them so that the Egypt that was in them could be burned away so that all that remained was their God!

It happened in the days of Isaiah:

Isaiah 31:1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, *And* rely on horses, Who trust in chariots because *they are* many, And in horsemen because they are very strong, But who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, Nor seek the LORD!

And it will happen again as things get closer to the End. Will the church repent of its self-reliance, of its seeking for that which Jesus can do for them in the here and now?

Anyway, their next stop was at Rephidim. But there was no water there! So, the people did what they

did best.

(Exodus 17:2) Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink." So Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you **tempt** the LORD?"

(Exodus 17:3) And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "**Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?**"

The people complained to Moses who told them that they were really testing the faithfulness of the LORD! Once again they accused Moses and God of trying to kill them again, this time with a lack of water!

(Exodus 17:4) So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!"

Moses takes his case to the LORD. "I'm at my wits end with these people who are ready to stone me and go back to Egypt!"

(Exodus 17:5) And the LORD said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. (Exodus 17:6) Behold, **I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb**; and you shall **strike the rock**, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Many believe that Horeb is the same as Mt Sinai. Some believe that it is either another mountain or the name of the mountain range. Given all of the verses that refer to Horeb as the place where Israel received the covenant and where they got involved in that 'golden calf' thing, let's assume that it's the same mountain in a larger range of mountains. Horeb was first seen in chapter 3 where Moses first met the Angel of the LORD. There, Horeb was called the "mountain of God".

So, the LORD tells Moses to take some elders and the rod and start walking towards "the rock in Horeb". It is believed that the LORD was telling him to look for a rock on which the Pillar of Cloud stood.

Moses was obedient to God's strange request. He hit the Rock and water gushed out! So strange and miraculous was this, that it was a good thing the LORD told him to take witnesses!

(Exodus 17:7) So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the **contention** of the children of Israel, and because they **tempted** the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

Meribah: quarrel, provocation, and strife,
Massah: testing, temptation, or trial

Is the LORD among us or not? This is the essence of their complaint. If He's not then He's a liar; If He is, then He is abandoning us in our time of need and therefore, He's a liar!

Even though there was a Cloud and a Fire, even though there were quail and bread; even

though they had been freed from bondage and went through the Red Sea on dry land, they still questioned the LORD's faithfulness and presence among them! This is a people of the flesh. This is a people of gimme, gimme, gimme.

Life-saving and life-giving water flowed from the rock. And it met their physical needs. The true nature of the Rock was hidden from their understanding until about 1400 years later, a Man walked and taught the Israelites' ancestors. And He presented them the spiritual meanings of the bread and water.

Strangely enough, the first person to learn of the water was a Samaritan woman this Man met at a well. As He traveled from Judea to Galilee, He "needed" to go through Samaria.

John 4:5-8 So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. (6) Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. (7) A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." (8) For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

Now we know that the Jews didn't associate with the Samaritans and then add to that the fact that a man rarely spoke to a woman alone.

John 4:9-30 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. (10) Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

Jesus gets right to the point. Yes, He was thirsty but He had something to give her in return: Living Water! The woman doesn't understand, even asking if He was greater than their father Jacob whose well was passed down thru the centuries?

So Jesus tells her the Truth:

(13) Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

After some more back and forth about His water and her desire not to have to come back to the well anymore, He reveals that He knows the truth about her and she then thinks that He's a prophet. Then she says:

(26) "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." (26) **Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."**

Once again, the Spiritual meets the Physical. And for some, the gulf is as wide as it is deep. Jesus knew. And He called those who understood about real hunger and real thirst, blessed!

Matthew 5:6 Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

And, we know that Paul understood:

1 Corinthians 10:1-7 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, (2) all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, (3) **all ate the same spiritual food, (4) and all drank the same spiritual drink.** For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, **and that Rock was Christ.**

But let me read something that was written by Moses and listen to how it's truths apply as much for today as it did back then:

Deuteronomy 4:32-39 "For ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and *ask* from one end of heaven to the other, whether *any* great *thing* like this has happened, or *anything* like it has been heard. (33) Did *any* people *ever* hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live? (34) Or did God *ever* try to go *and* take for Himself a nation from the midst of *another* nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? (35) To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself *is* God; *there is* none other besides Him. (36) Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that He might instruct you; on earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire. (37) And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power, (38) driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land *as* an inheritance, as *it is* this day. (39) **Therefore know this day, and consider *it* in your heart, that the LORD Himself *is* God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; *there is* no other.**

This same LORD God, the Great I AM, came again when a Jewess named Miriam gave birth to Him whose Father was God. And this God:Man taught as One who had authority. His life revealed more about the Father than most understood because they constructed a religion of hedges that could not be penetrated to reach Him who loves and saves and gives eternal life. Their hedge of works was powerful and appealed to the Adamic nature to which unbelievers are held as slaves. All He ever wanted was for all of His creation to love Him and listen to His Voice and do the things that would keep them from harm.

And the Great I AM who came to redeem the world, including His people, died on the shame-filled cross - not for Himself, but for the transgressions of those who caused the nails to be driven into His body. His body and blood were freely offered to all but to those who believed in Him, the only begotten Son of God, He gave the right to become children of God. His body became bread and His blood became drink. Did He not say, "**Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. (55) For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.**".

Allow the Holy Spirit to minister to your minds and hearts so that you can remain in Him as a branch

is to the True Vine!