

The Bread of the Mighty

by H.J. Vine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of appropriating Christ as our daily bread, representing spiritual sustenance and strength to walk the wilderness of this world.

Scripture: Exodus 16:15, Deuteronomy 8:3, 1 Kings 19:8, Psalm 78:24, Matthew 4:4, John 6:32, John 6:63, Revelation 2:17, Revelation 21:8

Topics: "Christ Our Bread", "Spiritual Nourishment"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the significance of manna in the Bible, drawing parallels between the provision of manna to the Israelites in the wilderness and Jesus Christ as the true Bread from heaven. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing and appropriating Christ in our lives, highlighting the necessity of spiritual nourishment and dependence on God's Word for sustenance. The sermon delves into the symbolism of manna, representing Christ's heavenly nature, purity, and life-giving properties, contrasting it with the temporary nature of earthly sustenance. It concludes with a powerful message of eternal life through partaking in Christ, the Bread of life, and the transformative impact of His divine provision.

Transcript

"He rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them the corn of heaven: man did eat the bread of the mighty; He sent them provision to the full" (Psalm 78:24-25, N.Tr.).

As the Israelites journeyed through the wilderness to the land of God's purpose, they were fed with the corn of heaven, with the bread of the mighty. And the saints of God now, as we accept this world as a wilderness and pass through it to the glory, are fed with the wonderful food which fulfils this type, "the true Bread from heaven" (John 6:32).

What is it? asked the Israelites when they saw the manna for the first time, for they knew not what it was (Ex. 16:15). Therefore this bread from heaven was called manna, which means, What is it? and when the Son of God, the heaven-sent Antitype of the manna, stood before them centuries later, they knew Him not. Although He was promised like the manna. When He told them He was the Bread from heaven, they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we have known? how then does he say, I am come down out of heaven?" The Bread of life was there, and they knew Him not.

There was a time in the early morning when the manna did not appear; but there was also a time in the morning when it did appear. Later in the day came a time when it disappeared; and if any was kept till the

next day, it became ill-savoured and wormy.

In the early morn, before the manna appeared, the dew lay all around the host; and although the manna fell upon this refreshing dew (Num. 11:9) it was not until the dew had "gone up" that this small round thing was seen (Ex. 16:14).

When the air is full of invisible moisture, holding in that state as much water as it is capable of doing, it is what scientists term at "dew-point." After sundown the surface bodies of the earth cool rapidly, and the richly laden atmosphere in contact with them deposits the dewdrops. This is the distilling medium, by which, we are told, God bestowed on the face of the wilderness food for His people; and the corn of heaven, the bread of the mighty, appeared when the dew disappeared.

As the sun waxed hot, however, it melted, and it disappeared as the dew had done earlier with less heat from the same sun. Therefore it had to be gathered between the times of the dew going up and the sun becoming hot. Moreover, it was to be eaten the same day, or it became offensive and provoked God's displeasure. A remarkable exception to this was the sixth day. They then gathered twice as much, so as to be free for the rest of the seventh day before the Lord; and the food kept over for that day retained its freshness and sweetness. There was none on the face of the wilderness that morning.

The sixth chapter of John shows that the manna typified our Lord Jesus Christ, the true Bread from heaven. There is, however, this contrast, to which attention is called by the Holy Spirit: "The fathers ate manna and died: he that eats this Bread shall live for ever" (v. 58). As we further follow out the details of the type, the precious teaching concerning the Antitype will become clearer to us.

We saw that before the manna appeared the dew upon which it fell lay round about the camp. Before the light of day the dew was there. The dew signifies the blessed presence of God by the Spirit. "I will be as the dew to Israel" (Hosea 14:5), He said; and during the time of this world's night, during the period of the rejection of the Messiah by Israel, the Holy Spirit is here; and He is here specially in view of the ministry of Christ, the heavenly Bread. Souls, however, must pass out of darkness into light before they can appropriate that food. They must turn from Satan to God before they can feed upon Christ. The Spirit of God and the light of God are both here in view of this. At the beginning the Spirit brooded over the darkness and then at God's word the light appeared (Gen. 1:2-3).

When the light shone over the camp of Israel, and when the dew had gone up, the manna, the meat of the mighty, appeared on the face of the wilderness. The dew deposited and the light discovered this bread from heaven. The Spirit and the light have Christ in view. The heavenly and spiritual character of our food is indicated by the fact that it fell upon the dew, and not upon the ground.

We also saw that the manna disappeared when the sun waxed hot: it melted. In the sanctuary and in the home it was still stored up; but it was not seen publicly when the sun shone in its splendour over the earth. Nor did it appear at all on the day of rest, the seventh day. These striking facts proclaim that when our blessed Lord shines out as the Sun of righteousness, and reigns in supreme splendour over the earth in the Millennium, when that day of rest shall have come, the thousand-year day, there will no more be seen on the face of the wilderness the heavenly man in lowliness. Indeed the very wilderness itself will be changed, it will then become full of blossom and bloom like a garden; and the once humbled Christ will be King over all the earth. Greatness and glory will then publicly appear, rather than lowliness and humility. Not that there is any change in our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The surroundings and circumstances are changed, but not Jesus. Moreover, the manna was stored within, though it was not seen publicly without;

and in that coming day of glory and rest of which we speak, those that are within shall have the high honour of partaking of the "hidden manna" (Rev. 2:17).

"There on the hidden Bread

Of Christ--once humbled here--

God's treasured store--for ever fed,

His love my soul shall cheer."

We must, however, remember that this is the time for us to gather and appropriate the manna, that we may walk well and worthily through the wilderness. It is strength-imparting food. It is the mighty's meat.

The manna had to be all eaten on the same day that it was gathered; an exception being made on the sixth day in view of the seventh day of rest. If it was kept over on ordinary days till the next, it became ill-savoured and loathsome. The unregenerate who professes to be a follower of Christ and takes upon his lips the words that He spoke when He was on earth in lowliness and humility, but does not assimilate Christ into his being and life, having no real hunger for the heavenly bread, never having felt his need of the Saviour as an undone sinner, answers to this. He is professedly a Christian, but as he does not appropriate Christ as his life, therefore Christ in His grace and lowliness does not characterize his own life. Consequently, as it was with Israel of old, the name of the Lord which he professes becomes loathsome to men; for, instead of the true character of Christ, pure, fresh, and sweet, being seen, that which is corrupt and offensive appears, the ill savour of a corrupt Christianity.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is always a sweet savour to God; and when received He is a blessing to man. But how sad it is to see those who profess to be followers of the once humbled Christ cause by their disobedience an ill savour before God, and to see that same disobedience have a corrupting influence amongst men. It is always thus with the sin of man, it breeds corruption. The result in eternity is, "their worm dieth not."

May it be ours to have grace and diligence to both gather and appropriate the daily manna; to feed upon Christ Himself who came down from heaven to be our food. "He that eats this Bread shall live for ever." This is our wilderness fare. This is the mighty's meat.

When the wilderness wanderings were over for Israel, and they entered the land of God's purpose, they fed on the fruit of the land. "And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn (produce) of the land" (Joshua 5:12). The natural fruit of that wealthy country was already gathered and garnered for those who entered, but even in its development it grows up to meet man. With manna it is different. It is miraculous; and not natural to the place where it is given. And we have to get up and also to get down to obtain it. Energy is needed. In many ways it stands in contrast to the produce of the land, which was typical of Christ in glory; the manna being Christ in the wilderness.

To the renewed taste of the believer the manna is indeed both sweet and precious. The diligence of getting up and getting down to gather it is well rewarded. Moreover, the strength which this food of the mighty imparts, is such as to enable us to walk the wilderness of this world with unwearied step. As "honeyed wafers," the sweetness of our blessed Saviour gladdens our souls; and as fresh "oil," the energy of the Holy Spirit revives and renews us daily with the ministry of Christ. It was in this same wilderness, on his way to the same Horeb, that weary Elijah received a special cake from God; and, we are told, He went

in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God (1 Kings 19:8). Surely that was indeed the mighty's meat. God gave him water also; and thus He did to Israel. In Exodus 16 and 17 we have the bread and the water. In John 6 and 7 the Antitypes of both are given for us, "the living Bread" and "the living Water." God has given us "provision to the full" (Ps. 78:25). The Spirit of Truth is here; the true light now shines; the corn of heaven is ours; we may well sing our songs of gladness therefore on our heavenward way.

"Light divine surrounds thy going,

God Himself doth mark the way:

Secret blessings, richly flowing,

Lead to everlasting day.

God, thine everlasting portion,

Feeds thee with the mighty's meat:

Prince of Egypt's hard extortion,

Egypt's food no more to eat."

The special features of the manna itself only need to be indicated. They are so clear that the simplest believer, in the quiet of the presence of God, may easily see in them the characteristics of our blessed Lord plainly depicted as the heavenly One on earth. It was

(1) small, a tiny round thing;

(2) sweet, as honeyed wafers;

(3) lowly, seen upon the ground;

(4) heavenly, it fell upon the dew of heaven;

(5) fresh, as newly made oil;

(6) pure, as the coriander seed, white;

(7) precious, its eye being as the eye of the bdellium (mentioned only in Num. 11:7 and Gen. 2:12).

And as those who are fitted for the ministry of Christ today have ability to present Him in the excellent attractiveness of His varied perfections and adaptableness to our need, so then they served this wonderful food in a variety of ways. They ground it in mills, or beat it in mortars; they boiled it in pans or baked it, and made cakes of it to their liking; the qualities of which imparted, as we have said, the strength of the mighty.

The divine purpose in giving this wilderness food is distinctly stated for us by the Holy Spirit in Deuteronomy 8:3, "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 proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live." When our blessed Lord stood in the wilderness and was tempted of Satan, in answer to the first onslaught, He foiled the foe's

weapon with this same mighty sword of the Spirit (see Matt. 4:4 and Luke 4:4). Again we are told, God fed them with manna, "that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good in thy latter end" (Deut. 8:16). In this we see the end of the Lord in giving us Bread from heaven. We learn by it our entire dependence upon Him for the true words of instruction and sustenance. After speaking of Himself as the true Bread from heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ vitally connected the words which He spoke with that which was spoken, when He said, "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63, N.Tr.). At another time He said He was altogether what He spoke (8:25). He Himself was entirely what His precious words conveyed. The words expressed exactly what He Himself was.

In conclusion, we must point out that the adorable Antitype of the manna, the sent One and the sealed One of God, the Son of Man, Jesus, in His divine perfection, whilst fulfilling the wonderful type itself, yet necessarily passes beyond it altogether; and that in such a marvellous manner, it could be stated as a contrast: "The fathers ate manna and died: he that eateth of this Bread shall live for ever." Could anything outstrip the mighty result of appropriating Christ as here stated? Live for ever! Think of it! What miraculous food to cause the eater to live for ever! Marvel of marvels!

And this is given by a holy God for the life of those who were dead sinners! Oh, the grace and glory of it! Rejoice, my soul! Sing, my glad heart! Let my whole being bless the Lord! It is He who has uttered the words of spirit and life. Thou shalt "LIVE FOR EVER"! Yes, thou shalt LIVE! Not like the wicked, who exist eternally in a place and state called "The second death" (Rev. 21:8). Nay, thou shalt live for ever in all the gladness and glory of that which rightly connects itself with the thought of true life. Immortal, incorruptible, unfading, peaceful, joyful, loving, holy; thou shalt indeed live; yea, "live for ever"; thou shalt live with Jesus eternally.

It is not surprising then to find in John 6 that this meat of the mighty, this new and heavenly food, our Lord Jesus Christ, is unfolded for us by an eightfold description.

- (1) The true Bread (6:32).
- (2) The living Bread (6:51).
- (3) The life-giving Bread (6:51).
- (4) The life-sustaining Bread (6:35, 48, 50).
- (5) The satisfying Bread (6:35).
- (6) The enduring Bread (27:50, 58).
- (7) The heavenly Bread (6:33, 50, 51, 8).
- (8) The divine Bread (6:33).

Words fail to express the wonders of this bountiful provision so freely and graciously given to us.

"Jesus, the Bread of life, is given

To be our daily food;

Within us dwells that spring from heaven,

The Spirit of our God.

Lord, 'tis enough, we ask no more;

Thy grace around us pours

Its rich and unexhausted store

And all its joy is ours."

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