



"It's not great talents that God blesses, but great likeness to Jesus."
—Robert Murray M'Cheyne

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Manna and the Preparation Day (Part One)

One of God's fundamental qualities is His perfect providence. He provides everything that we truly need, such as food, shelter, protection, instruction, forgiveness, and grace. Because another of His fundamental qualities is [goodness](#), everything that He provides can only be considered as ultimately good for us. We may not think of it like this all the time—especially when He provides a good trial—but at least intellectually, we know it is true.

One of the good things that [God](#) has provided is the [Sabbath](#). The Sabbath is a gift—especially to those who have been called. It was made on account of *all* mankind ([Mark 2:27](#)), and thus anybody who keeps it holy will receive some benefit. But for those whom God has called into a relationship with Him, the Sabbath is, and brings about, an additional blessing.

When God blessed, sanctified, and hallowed the seventh day ([Genesis 2:3](#); [Exodus 20:11](#)), it was after He had formed from the dust of the earth the very pinnacle of His physical creation. The physical creation was finished, but God's sanctification of the next day shows that physical man was not complete. The spiritual dimension was missing. God set apart the seventh day to show that His spiritual creation is now taking place.

The Sabbath day is so central to God's purpose that He gave extra instructions to help us fully receive and benefit from this weekly gift. We say that "time is money," but the fact is that time is even *more* precious than money. If we really have to, we can almost always make more money. However, every person is limited in the amount of time he has, whether in a day, a week, or his life. Because of how precious time is, God wants us to make the most of the Sabbath, that time that is transcendently better than the rest of the week. Thus, in His providence, He gave us the Preparation Day, which sets the stage so that we can properly receive the gift of the Sabbath.

The first mention of the Preparation Day occurs at the same time that the Sabbath was re-taught to the children of Israel in Exodus 16:

Then the LORD said to [Moses](#), "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." . . . Then [Moses] said to them, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'" So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none." ([Exodus 16:4-5](#), 23-26)

God commands the Israelites to gather their food for the Sabbath on the sixth day, so there would be as few distractions on the seventh day as possible. The Preparation Day, then, is the day to complete all our cleaning, cooking, business transactions, etc., so that the ordinary and the mundane activities of life do not detract from this time that God has set apart.

With Israel, God was dealing with a carnal people, so His instructions deal primarily with the physical aspects of preparation. Physical preparation for

the Sabbath helps us to receive and make proper use of this holy time. Note that God gave this principle to Israel even before the [fourth commandment](#) was actually spoken at Mount Sinai.

However, there is spiritual preparation to be done as well, a fact that Israel did not have a heart to understand. They did well just to obey the letter of the law even nominally. We, though, are called to look at the spirit—the essence—of the principle in addition to applying it physically.

Jesus, in John 6, tells us what the manna actually represents:

Therefore [the people] said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 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. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to [the world](#)." Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. . . . I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. 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." ([John 6:30-35](#), 48-51)

These verses define the real spiritual manna about which we need to be concerned. It is not only the Bible; it is Christ Himself. True Christians should desire Jesus to dwell within them and not just His words. For us, then, the essence of the instruction in Exodus 16 is to ingest, to invite in, or to assimilate the Person of [Jesus Christ](#) on a daily basis. He is the "daily bread" that we are told to ask for in the model prayer ([Matthew 6:11](#); [Luke 11:3](#)).

Thus, manna, the "bread from heaven," is linked to ingesting Jesus Christ to gain spiritual nourishment and sustenance. This is done, not only through

Bible study, but also through [continual prayer](#) and seeking His involvement throughout the day. In short, eating manna symbolizes strengthening our relationship with God so that we can receive His attributes.

God fully intended the Israelites to eat the manna every day, as it was their only staple. But the unique instruction in Exodus 16 deals with *gathering* twice as much on the Preparation Day. They did not *eat* twice as much then, but they had to expend *twice the effort* on that day to ensure that they had enough to eat on the next day.

If we look at this spiritually, we, too, have to ingest Jesus Christ every day through prayer, Bible study, and experiencing life with Him. On the sixth day, however, we need to "gather" twice as much, expending twice the effort to ensure that we have enough of the bread from heaven to eat on the Sabbath. Part Two will expand on what this gathering entails.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Providence of God \(Part One\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Providence is the protective care of God, yet the providence of God also touches on the pains and sufferings of persecution. To the elect whom God foreknew, all things- pleasant or unpleasant- happen for ultimate good (Romans 8:28). Tragic things, calamities, trials, anxiety, evil, and curses happen to Christians too, as well as blessings, in order to become fashioned and molded into the glory of God's image. As Christ learned from the things He suffered (Hebrews 5:8), we must also develop patience, refrain from murmuring, and realize that "time and chance" no longer apply to those whom God has called. Whatever it takes to bring God's purpose to pass, we need to develop the humility, obedience, and faith to accept.

From the Archives: Featured Article

God Our Provider

by Charles Whitaker

The story of the building of the Tabernacle of Meeting in the wilderness displays God's remarkable providence in doing His work. He provided everything the Israelites needed to do the job, and they responded eagerly - in fact, so much that God had to stop them from giving more! Charles Whitaker asserts that Christians can apply this example to Christ's promise to build His church, once again providing all that is needed to finish His work.

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