



"There are few things more lacking in the average Christian life of today than resolute, conscious concentration upon an aim which is clearly and always before us."

—Andrew MacLaren

27-Nov-09

Manna and the Preparation Day (Part Two)

In last week's essay, we traced the connection between manna and "the true bread from heaven," [Jesus Christ \(John 6:32\)](#). We also saw that, from the instruction concerning the manna in Exodus 16, we are to "gather" twice as much on the sixth day, the Preparation Day, as on the other five work days of the week to ensure enough bread from heaven to ingest on the [Sabbath](#).

What does "to gather" mean in this case? We do not normally use this verb in relation to the Son of [God](#). However, one application is found in the [book of Daniel](#), where a time of the wearing out of the saints is mentioned ([Daniel 7:25](#), KJV). Near the end of the book, it speaks of people "running to and fro" ([Daniel 12:4](#)), which can mean that the people are "at their wits end." Each of us has felt worn out and at our wits end, as we are living through Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock*, when the pace of life is so fast and the complexity so great that both our *time* and our *attention* are precious commodities. Our focus is continually being pulled in many directions at once, and this wears us out. We simply do not "multitask" nearly as well as

we might like to think. Further, each time we shift gears, it takes us longer to get up to speed in that new gear. This weariness only multiplies as we are forced to focus on more things.

Consider this principle in light of [Matthew 6:33](#): "Seek first the [kingdom of God](#), and His righteousness." The most important focus in our life is God and His project of forming us into His image ([Genesis 1:26](#)). This has to compete with potentially hundreds of other projects throughout any given day. Some are good, or at least necessary and some are time-wasters and energy drains. Yet, they all compete, and at times, our focus on God takes a back seat.

God understood these limits of man, so He created a space of time when essentially nothing was *allowed* to compete with Him. Time, though, is only part of the equation; the other part is focus, being mentally present. Any high-school student knows that he can spend a lot of time reading a textbook, but unless he is truly *focused* on the material, he will not get much out of it.

God, then, instituted a prelude to His holy time, a day when, even though we still have to work, we are intended to gather our thoughts, to begin turning our attention, and to focus in twice as much on what life is about, not merely of what it consists. This way, when that sanctified time arrives, we are not still mentally at the office, or still solving the problems of the day, the last week, or of the next one. The Preparation Day is a day of "gathering" what relates to eternity so that we can properly ingest the spiritual manna on the holy day without distraction.

In the New Testament, all four gospel accounts make mention of the Preparation Day, but in reference to [Passover](#) day rather than the sixth day of the week ([Matthew 27:62](#); [Mark 15:42](#); [Luke 23:54](#); [John 19:14](#), 31, 42). Passover is an annual preparation day for an annual Sabbath, the first day of Unleavened Bread. When we eat the unleavened bread that night, we are symbolically taking in this bread from heaven—the true manna. A look at the preparatory aspects of the Passover can reveal some of God's intent for the weekly Preparation Day.

Even though Passover day is still a common work day, it is nearly impossible to shake the gravity and significance of not only what was

experienced the night before, but also of the upcoming Feast. The Passover ritual helps us to reorient our minds. It may not be a holy day, but it feels like one because our thoughts have been gathered and focused on the spiritual dimension in anticipation of [the holy days](#). The Passover puts us in the right frame of mind so that we can be mentally present when the holy time arrives.

It is not exactly the same for the weekly Preparation Day, because when something is repeatedly frequently, it loses some of its impact. However, knowing that the Passover is the epitome of Preparation Days, it can help us to use the weekly preparation day to reorient ourselves mentally and spiritually so the Sabbath does not come upon us abruptly.

The [Days of Unleavened Bread](#) are an annual memorial of God's deliverance from physical and spiritual Egypt, but the lesson would not be complete without the Preparation Day of the Passover right before. In the same way, the weekly Sabbath is also a memorial of God's deliverance from physical and spiritual Egypt ([Deuteronomy 5:15](#)). But the lesson is not learned nearly as well if we do not take advantage of the weekly Preparation Day by beginning to turn our focus.

There are two major themes of the Sabbath in the [Old Testament](#), drawn from the two different versions of the [fourth commandment](#) in [Exodus 20:8-11](#) and [Deuteronomy 5:12-15](#). One theme is liberation from captivity: from Egypt for the physical Israelites, and from [Satan](#), [sin](#), and [this world](#) for the spiritual Israelites. The other theme is the fact that God is Creator, not only of the physical world but also of the spiritual.

The Sabbath demonstrates these two principles in two ways. On the one hand, the Sabbath is a *memorial* of these things, a weekly reminder that we have been redeemed—we have been liberated—and now God's spiritual creation has begun within us. On the other hand, the Sabbath is also a *means* by which these things take place. That is, we have been freed from spiritual captivity, but if we want to remain free, we need to pay special attention to the Sabbath. The Sabbath also reminds us that God's creation is continuing in the spiritual realm, but what is to occur on the Sabbath is a means by which that creation takes place.

We are to ingest the spiritual manna—that is, work to further our relationship with God—each day, but it is on the Sabbath that it is especially helpful to us because it is a time when nothing else should compete for either our time or our attention. By ingesting that Bread from heaven, we are taking part in the spiritual creation through taking on the [image of God](#). We truly are what we eat, and eating the true Bread from heaven causes us to develop His attributes. The Preparation Day is what helps to get us ready—focused—to do our part in that spiritual creation.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Be You Thankful](#)

by John O. Reid

As the examples involving people healed of leprosy show, we must be thankful to God as He intervenes in our lives. The thankful Samaritan was not only cleansed from leprosy, but he was also made whole, receiving a close relationship with God. When we neglect to become thankful, our hearts harden, bringing about alienation from God. Gratitude is the glue that cements our relationships with God. As the Psalmist David repeatedly thanked God for His lovingkindness, we should also thank God for the lovingkindness that He continually expresses toward us. We need to treasure our special calling, giving us insights to which most of the world is not privy. We should be thankful even in difficult times, realizing that while most of the world flounders in hopeless confusion, we have the precious gift of God's truth.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Eating: How Good It Is! \(Part One\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The Bible frequently uses analogies from physical life to explain spiritual principles. Food and eating are no exceptions. In fact, there are over 700 references to eating in Scripture. The lessons we can learn from them must be important!

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