

Manna and the Old Corn

Peace and Communion · Joshua 5

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This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever (John 6:58). And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year (Josh. 5:11, 12).

We are in a world that yields nothing for our souls, absolutely nothing; and all, who are taught of God, prove this. Surrounded as we are surely with abundant providential blessings, and many social and national mercies, yet as to our souls it is a dry and thirsty land, where no water is {Psa. 63:1}.

Such it was to our Lord, and such it is to us. We have, however, resources in God. He is to us the Fountain of living waters in and through Christ, in whom we have redemption through His blood, and in whom we are blessed in the heavenlies with all spiritual blessings. Our never-failing springs then are in Christ, who is our wine to cheer, our bread to stay, our living water to refresh, our sufficiency and strength; a free and exhaustless supply to faith, as He said, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink {John 7:37}.

Thus we walk by faith, not by sight; for though by grace we are brought into such nearness and acceptance in Christ, we are, however, set in constant and entire dependence on Him, whom having not seen we love. It is the sense of this that enables us to glory in the Lord. It has always been the lesson God would have His people learn; hence, if the psalmist exclaim, All my springs are in thee (Psa. 87:7),

we find one apostle writing, Our sufficiency is of God (2 Cor. 3:5),

while another says, Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James 1:17).

Again, if we take our place in company with Jesus, we hear Him instructing His cleansed ones to cling to Him in order to bear fruit; for without Me,

said He, ye can do nothing (John 15:3-5).

In this way, we can easily understand why the apostle characterized the servants of Christ as having nothing, and yet possessing all things (2 Cor. 6:10).

In looking over the history of the children of Israel, we notice, not only that they were a redeemed people, and frequently reminded by the prophets that Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt with a high hand, but that they were constantly to have the sense of it kept up by observing the passover. They kept the passover in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land of

Canaan. Again, it is plainly set forth, that wherever they might be, or in whatever circumstances, God made Himself known to them as taking the care of their sustainment, because He had redeemed them. He was their Sustainer as well as their Redeemer. If they were under the safety of the sprinkled blood, He gave them to eat the flesh of the lamb roast with fire, especially the head, the legs, and purtenance. Not only does this read to us typically the comforting lesson, that we are safe for eternity in virtue of the precious blood of the Lamb of God, but also that during this night of watching, and time of need, He who died for us is our strength, and that we should have communion with Him as to His mind, His walk, and affections. Again, when redeemed out of Egypt, and brought through the Red Sea -- place of death and judgment -- on new ground, they soon found themselves in a barren wilderness, removed from all visible means of subsistence, and therefore entirely dependent upon God. But this gave occasion for Him who chose them, and redeemed them, to prove His power and goodness in caring for them. Day by day, according to His word, He sent manna down from heaven for their support. We read that the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited: they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan (Ex. 16:35).

When, however, they set foot on the promised land flowing with milk and honey, (which sets forth our present position in Christ in heavenly places), they were still dependent on God, though, instead of manna, their food was the old corn of the land.

We are told that the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year (Josh. 5:11, 12).

While we may gather from these facts in their typical import, that every believer is set in the position of dependence on God, and that He is the Sustainer of our souls, yet it makes a vast difference, to our state of heart whether our habit is to think only of Christ as the Lamb who shed His blood for many, or as the manna -- the One who came down from heaven, or as the old corn of the land -- the One who ascended up to where He was before. Those who are thinking only of Jesus as crucified, limiting their thoughts mostly to what He did upon the tree -- blessed and most precious as it is thus to remember Him -- may be often reminded of the manifestation of divine love, sins borne

and suffered for, and peace made, thus assuring them of safety, and of being objects of divine grace; but such do not know deliverance from the world or from themselves, nor what it is to stand in liberty and joy in the presence of God. No doubt all our blessings are founded on the work of the cross, but Jesus is not there now. There was no singing in Egypt.

care and blessing. Apart from Him, we are helpless. We can most truly say --

There are some, however, whose apprehensions of divine grace, and of the work of Christ, are beyond this. They know that Jesus who was crucified is risen, and that they are associated with Him whom the world rejected, and whom God raised from among the dead; they know too that they have life in Him who is out of death, and has triumphed over death and Satan. Such souls apprehend that they are rescued from this present evil world, and not of it, though they find themselves in a wilderness

of need and dissatisfaction, and that they are going on to their inheritance. But such mostly think of God's blessings coming down upon them in the wilderness, and, it may be, regard earthly prosperity as a mark of divine favor. They are dependent, like the Israelites, on periodical ministrations from heaven, and are satisfied to gather up now and then a little food. The one thought of a soul not delivered from the world -- still in Egypt -- is his safety from coming wrath. The one thought of a wilderness Christian is having God's blessing poured down upon him day by day; he looks for the manna. Both thoughts very important in their place; but in neither of these states of soul is the conscience at liberty, or the heart at rest. Sometimes singing, and at other times repining, wilderness Christians know that they have been sheltered by the blood of the Lamb, and brought out of Egypt with a high hand, through the sea of death and judgment, and they have seen all their fleshly enemies dead upon the seashore; but, with all, their thoughts are limited to God's blessing poured out upon them down here. Very blessed surely it is to realize God's delight in blessing us here; but to know what it is to have to do with the ever-living, ever-loving Son of God Himself, as in Him who is in the glory, is another thing.

It is when the believer enters by faith upon the newcreation blessings God has given us in Christ in heavenly places -- the true Canaan -- that he knows Christ Himself there as his Soul-sustainer --

Blessed as it is to contemplate the faithful care of God day by day in providing for His people in a barren desert, it is sweeter still to know that "the manna" set forth Jesus; for He said, I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever. . . . This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever (John 6:51-58).

Blessed as it is to think of Jesus as the One who came down, and gave His flesh for the life of the world in such matchless grace, yet the difference is most striking, as to our apprehension and enjoyment, whether we only think of Him as He was down here, or as He is up there. What the believer wants now day by day is the sustaining power and blessing of having to do with a living Person up there -- the Man in the glory. And no doubt the great cause of weakness and failure in believers is not that they do not sometimes remember the work of the cross, or that they forget that Jesus came down from heaven; but because they do not draw from, lean on, and abide in a living, faithful Christ in the glory, in constant dependence, obedience, and confidence. We need His continual upholding

"As weaker than a bruised reed, I cannot do without Thee; I want Thee here each hour of need, Shall want Thee, too, in glory."

the old corn of the land {Josh. 5:11}.

The Corn of wheat {John 12:24},

which fell into the ground and died, is alive again, and in the glory. He then finds that it is not merely the work of Christ on the cross for us, nor the blessing poured out upon us on our pilgrimage which should occupy us, important as they are, but a full Christ up there, a living Person in the glory, even Christ Himself, who finished the work, and through whom all our blessings have come. It is Jesus

glorified who is the old corn of the land,

to whom we are now to look as the commanding and absorbing Object of our hearts. It is not merely promises, nor even privileges, but liberty to approach God with boldness, because He is there in whom we are for ever blessed, whose blood ever speaks there for us. Oh the unspeakable blessedness of feeding on Christ as the old corn of the land

-- on Him, who is our life, righteousness, peace, and hope, and yet the One in whom are all our present and eternal springs and resources. And surely He is enough to fill and satisfy our minds and hearts. Known thus as an Object, He eclipses every other. Beauty then is seen nowhere else. All here is death and corruption apart from that living, incorruptible One. By the word and Spirit, which testify of Him, exercising our souls, we grow in acquaintance with Him, rise superior to old associations, and find ourselves in the circle of such love and dignity, as makes everything here seem poor and dissatisfying. The heart thus taken up with Him loses its relish for passing and fading things, and finds Him a satisfying Object, as He said, He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst {John 6:35}.

He is enough for us; for not only is He almighty, but His love is perfect, and He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever {Heb. 13:8}.

He is able to sympathize with us; for He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and His compassions fail not. He ever lives to intercede for us, and always appears for us before the face of God. He is ever active and faithful in managing all our affairs for us up there, as the other Comforter does everything for us, and in us, down here. Well then might an inspired apostle enjoin us to set our minds on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and remind us at the same time that we

are dead,

or, have died with Christ, and that our life is hid with Christ in God {see Col. 3:3}.

We find that “the lamb” was eaten, the “manna” was eaten, the “old corn of the land” was eaten. What is the instruction to us in this? Is it not that as those were all types of Christ, that we should feed by faith upon Him? Not merely think of Him, read about Him, hear about Him, or speak of Him, but receive God’s revelation of Him into our hearts, for our sustinment and joy. They did not merely think of the flesh of the lamb, or look at it, or the manna, and the old corn, but they ate it -they felt they needed it, they partook of it, and thus received strength for walk and service. And so now. We may read a chapter in the Bible, or hear an orthodox discourse, and yet it may be sadly true of us, as it has been said of others, The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard {Heb. 4:2}.

No doubt it is by the written word of God that we have any knowledge of Christ; and the Holy Ghost, the Glorifier and Testifier of Christ, is Here to guide us into all truth, and to take of the things of Christ and shew unto us. So that, by the Spirit, through the Scriptures, the deep and wondrous glories of

the Person, work, relationships, offices, moral excellences, and fulness of Christ are brought to us, and our souls are strengthened by feeding on Him. It is the needful daily employ for every child of God. When Jesus said to Mary {rather, Martha}, One thing is needful {Luke 10:42},

it was the habit of sitting at His feet, and hearkening to His word to which He alluded. This was Mary's source of spiritual power. It was the good part which she chose. She was enabled to go forth from such a place of blessing, and let love have its own ready outflow, in breaking the costly alabaster box of very precious ointment, and pouring it upon Him, who was the conscious spring of all her blessing. Had Martha learned the same lesson, what failure and distress she would have been spared! Feeding on Christ then is communion. It is an unfeignedly dependent one having to do with Him, leaning upon Him, drawing from Him, as He is set forth in the Scriptures, and revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. When God's own testimony of Him is thus received into our hearts by faith, He is the food and strength of our souls. The more we feed on Him, the more we desire Him. If we are going out after the gratification of fleshly desires, we shall lose our relish for the sincere milk of the word. Fleshly lusts war against the soul. Where personal intercourse and communion with Christ are not practiced, there must be weakness and failure, even in those who have spiritual life. It is, therefore, of all importance for us, who have no visible sustaining power; such as "the lamb," "the manna," or "the old corn," that we hold tenaciously, that for spiritual health and activity our joy and strength are found wholly in personal occupation with Christ Himself. Dead, cold, formal exercises are short of this, and to be dreaded. Sitting at the feet of Jesus, and hearkening to His word, are as "needful" as ever; and this the most spiritual and advanced Christians know best, and practice most. May we be kept abiding in Him.

The children of Israel fed on "the lamb" during the night, on "the manna" in the wilderness early in the morning, but on "the old corn" of the land at every time of need; and these points read instructive lessons to us. The passover feast was the remembrance of the lamb slain, by whose blood they had obtained safety. It was eaten roast with fire {Ex. 12:8, 9},

which typically sets forth the suffering of death, which the Lamb of God endured for us. In "the manna," we have the One who came down from heaven the bread of God {John 6:33}, the bread of life {John 6:35}.

He said, The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world (John 6:51).

The manna was a small thing to man's eye, like hoar frost, and was to be gathered {Ex. 16:14, 17} before the sun rose, which would melt it; forcibly reminding us that the time for feeding on Christ is before the things of this old creation, however pure and necessary, have their effect upon us. The things of God should have their first claim on us. When Christ has the first place in our hearts, He will have every place. To begin the day in His strength is the secret of going through it well. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee {Psa. 84:5}.

It is a good thing to see the face of the Lord Jesus by faith before we see another face; we thus have power, from intercourse with Him, before we practically enter upon the day's duties. What a precious

secret of blessing this is! How different when we make the things of this life, however important, the first concern of the day, instead of Him, who said, Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

The way the first part of the morning engages us, often tells the real state of our souls. If we are minding earthly things, they will assume increasing importance and gravity with us; but, if our minds are set on things above, the things of Christ, and His claims, will be the unerring standard of the value of everything. Feeding on Christ is a daily business, for the inward man is renewed day by day {2 Cor. 4:16}.

The manna, too, was to be gathered fresh every morning; if it were kept, it would breed worms and stink. It is the habit of dependence and communion with the Lord, daily drawing directly from Himself, and not trying to live upon past experiences and gifts, however rich and abundant. Oh, the unspeakable blessedness of personally feeding on Him! As we have noticed, the old corn of the land

might be eaten at any time. It was unknown till they possessed the land. It was unlimited as to supply. It sets forth to us a full Christ, risen and ascended. We see Him in heavenly places --

the land. We enter the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, and know Him there, as Head of the body, the church {Col. 1:18}, Head of all principality and power {Col. 2:10},

the glorified Man, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily {Col. 2:9}.

Thus knowing this blessed One in the glory, we have a full and never-failing supply of strength and blessing in Him, who is our righteousness and strength. We are accepted, blessed, complete, and seated in Him in heavenly places. We are therefore enjoined to abide in Him, to walk in Him, to be rooted and built up in Him. Wondrous place of blessing! Unspeakable privilege! Perfect acceptance, and nearness to God, in whom we have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places! May we go forward in the walk of faith as those who know that without Him we can do nothing, but as knowing also that we have strength for all things in Him that gives us power. (Phil. 4:13). Another point to notice is, that if Christ risen and glorified be looked to as the source of all sustainment, we cannot forget He was the One who came down from heaven, and died for us on the cross. We shall know Him in the glory as the Lamb as it had been slain. Hence we find that they not only ate of the old corn

when in the land the day after keeping the passover (Josh. 5:11),

but that the manna (Josh. 5:12)

ceased the day after they had eaten of the old corn. Here we see “the passover,” “the manna,” and “old corn” clustered together. We are told also that they did eat of the old corn . . . unleavened cakes, and parched corn (Josh. 5:11);

the cakes and parched corn forcibly setting forth the sufferings of Him who has been bruised for our blessing, and has been cut off under the fire of divine judgment for us. (Josh. 5:10-12) Thus let it be carefully noted that if we are really occupied with Christ ascended into heaven, we shall never forget how He came there, and what He did for us upon the tree. The reverse, however, does not hold good;

that is, souls may dwell frequently upon His sufferings and death upon the cross, and have little sense of personal intercourse with Him, and what He is for us and to us now on the throne. In fact some would teach us that the true place of a Christian is to be “always at the foot of the cross.” Such know Christ as a Redeemer, but not as their ever living Sustainer; and this may account for much of the weakness among so many of God’s children. Now while the death of Christ can never be forgotten, for it is the great manifestation of divine love, and all our present and eternal blessings are founded on it, still we know that He is not now on the cross, nor in the sepulcher, but at the right hand of the Majesty on high. We delight to remember Him. The passover was celebrated in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land, and we are to shew, or announce, His death till He come; and always bear about in our body the dying of Jesus. But, while we thus remember Him where He

was, we now see Him by faith where He is. Christ glorified is the Object of faith -We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour (Heb. 2:9).

Having to do with Him there, we have power to walk as He also walked here. We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

May we know day by day the precious reality of present sustainment and blessing, by feeding on Him who is now seated on the right hand of God, and who is soon coming to take us unto Himself!