**Manna: “Bread out of Heaven”**

**Introduction**

**Question:** Why did Jesus describe Himself as *“the bread of life”* in John 6:35,48?

**Context:** In John 6:1-14, Jesus feds 5000+ with five loaves and two fish, and had twelve baskets of *“fragments”* left over.

Because of the sign, the people wanted to *“take Him by force”* to make Him King, v.15.

He slipped away alone, later then crossed the sea on foot, vv.16-21.

The next day some of the multitude crossed over in boats and found Him at Capernaum, on the other side of the sea, vv.22-25.

Jesus immediately accuses them of seeking Him just *for more bread,* vv.26-27. These things led to the exchange recorded in John 6:28-59. Since Jesus based much the rest of what He had to say on this occasion on their remark of v.31 regarding *“manna in the wilderness”* and *“bread out of heaven,”* it might be profitable to go back and look a little closer at **Ex.16** where *manna* first appeared.

**I. Manna’s First Appearance, Exodus 16**

**Context:** Israel had seen God through Moses part the Red Sea, and they had walked through on dry land, Ex. 14:1-25; and had seen the Sea released and closed up on the Egyptian army and their chariots, Ex.14:15-31.

After the ensuing celebration (apparently led by Miriam and the women, 15:1-21), Moses led the Israelites into the wilderness of Shur **three days**, but they found no water, v.22. When they came to Marah, there was but bitter water, which God *sweetened* for them, vv.23-25a. But this was part of God’s *testing* of them, vv.25b-26.

After camping at Elim (where there was both *water* and *date palms,* v.27), they set out again toward Canaan. A *month and a half* (16:1) after leaving Egypt, the journey isn’t “fun” anymore, and the songs of rejoicing and triumph have fallen silent. The people *“grumbled against Moses and Aaron,”* 16:2. Their chief complaints were about the *meat* and *bread* that was available to them in Egypt, but is now conspicuously absent, v.3.

**God’s Solution**: He would provide *bread* (manna in the morning) and *meat* (quail in the evening), vv.4-12.But, this was also a ***test***from God, cp.15:25-26 with 16:4-5. The *test* was of their:

1. *willingness to work-* it had to gathered and prepared, vv.4a,14,15, 23 > 2Thess.3:10; God tested their **Effort;**
2. *trust-* it had to be done *daily,* and could not be gathered in excess or advance, except on the sixth day, v.4b-5,16-19, 20-30 > Matt.6:11; God tested their **Faith;**
3. *obedience-* if they didn’t obey the instructions, the *blessing/sustenance* became *curse/filthiness* (*white* to *putrid*), vv.19-21 > Matt.7:24-27 (see also 2Pet.2:20-22; 2Thess.2:10-12); God tested their **Fidelity;**
4. *spiritual understanding-* on the sixth day, two days’ worth could be gathered and prepared, and the left-over would not ruin or have worms as it was to be used for the Sabbath when no manna would be found in the field, vv.22-26, 27-30; God tested their **Spiritual Understanding;**

All with ***manna!*** God tested Israel’s ***effort, faith, fidelity****,* and ***spiritual understanding***with ***bread from heaven!***

**II. Now, let’s go back to John 6 and reconsider our original question:**

**Why did Jesus describe Himself as *“the bread of life”* in John 6:35,48?**

He provides needed *spiritual sustenance,* v.32;

He *came down from heaven,* v.33;

He requires *effort,* vv.34-35a;

He requires *faith,* vv.35b-36;

He requires *fidelity* (even as He gives it), v.37; and,

He requires *spiritual understanding,* vv.38-40.

**III. Conclusions**

When we think of, or perhaps even speak of, *“manna from heaven,”* we usually have in mind an unexpected “gift” from God that we certainly needed, but did not “work” to attain. Such does not fit the “manna” in Ex.16 or John 6!

Jesus, just like *manna,* is the ***sustenance*** we all need.

He is **available to all,** as was the *manna.*

But as not everyone passed *the test* God gave with the *manna* in the wilderness, not everyone will *eat the bread come down from heaven and live,* John 6:41-51.