

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LESSONS FROM THE MANNA.

A Sermon

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“Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.”—Exodus xvi. 4.

It seems to us that it must have been a very difficult thing to supply food for the hundreds of thousands, I shall not be incorrect if I say the millions, who were in the wilderness; but, difficult as that was, the commissariat was not so difficult as the education. To train that mob of slaves into a nation under discipline, to lift up those who had been in bondage, and make them fit to enjoy national privileges, this was the Herculean task that Moses had to perform. And their God, who loved the children of Israel, and chose them, and determined to make them a peculiar people unto himself, undertook to teach them, and he used their food as part of the means of their education. Animals are often taught through their food. When they could not be reached in any other way, they have been instructed by their hunger, and by their thirst, and by their feeding. And the Lord, who knew of what a coarse nature Israel was composed, and how the people had degenerated from the old stock during their long bondage, took care to teach them by every means, not only by the higher and the more spiritual, by the typical and symbolical, but he also taught them by their hunger and by their thirst, by the supply of water from the rock, and by the manna which he rained from heaven.

We will try to see, to-night, what the Lord taught them, and we will do more than that; we will try to learn what they learned, and somewhat more. May the Holy Spirit himself be our Teacher, and as he has often taught us the divinest lessons by the bread and wine, preaching to our very hearts by what seemed the lowly ministry of food and drink, so may he, to-night, teach us by that angels' bread, wherewith Israel was fed in the wilderness long years ago!

First, I invite you to consider *how the Lord taught these people by his gift*; and next, *how he taught them by making this gift a test to them*; thirdly, I shall have to show *how he teaches us lessons as to temporal things*; and lastly, *how he instructs us as to our spiritual food*.

I. First, then, dear friends, let us consider HOW THE LORD TAUGHT THESE PEOPLE BY HIS GIFT.

He wanted them to know him; his great desire was that they should know Jehovah their God. If they knew God, they would know all else; for, after all, "the proper study of mankind" is God; and when man knows his God, he knows himself; but if he thinks that he knows himself while he knows not his God, he is greatly mistaken.

God desired, then, to teach them himself by the gift of the manna: and he taught them, first, *his care over them*, that he was their God, and that they were his people, and that he would lay himself out to provide for them. Think of the care that God had over them, over each one of them, for each man had his own omer of manna. No woman, no child, was forgotten. Every morning, there was the sufficient quantity for every man, according to his eating for that day. There was no more; and there was never any less; so carefully did God watch over each individual. The individuality of the divine love is a great part of the sweetness of it. God thinks of every separate child of his as much as if he had only that one. The multiplicity of his elect does not divide the loaf of his affection. He has an infinite affection for each one, and he will take care of the details of each chosen life. He will see your omer just filled, precisely, to an ounce. He will give you all you can possibly require; but he will give you nothing that you can lay by to minister to your pride.

And this care was shown every day. The Lord taught them the continuity of his remembrance by its coming every day. If he had sent one great rain of liberalities to refresh his inheritance, and had bidden them gather up the vast store, and carry it with them in all their journeyings, they could not so well have learned his care as when he sent it fresh every morning. Besides, they would have had the burden of carrying it, and they were free from that, for the heavenly supplies were always close at hand, exactly at the spot where they pitched their tents, and tarried. Every morning, there was the manna precisely where they needed it, and that without any man's shoulder being made raw by carrying his food in his kneading-trough. The Lord teaches you and me, in the same way, that he not only cares for each one, but cares for each one each day and each moment, tracking our footsteps, and meting out the full supply of the hour according as the peculiar necessity arises. "He is always thoughtful, always thoughtful of me," thou mayest say of thy Lord; "always thoughtful of all the brotherhood, of the whole company of the redeemed, but none the less thoughtful of each one because there are so many myriads to be cared for every moment of every day." Was not that a sweet lesson for the children of Israel to learn as they gathered their daily bread?

But Jehovah taught them, next, *his greatness*. He had taught them that in Egypt by his mighty plagues, and at the Red Sea, when he branded the breast of the waters with his mighty rod. But now he

gently taught them his greatness, his exceeding greatness, first, by the quantity of the manna. There was enough for them all. How much it required, I leave arithmeticians to calculate; I cannot go into that question to-night. But, remember, that quantity fell every morning for forty years. What a great God is he who could feed the canvas city of his chosen people for forty years at a stretch, and yet without his stores being ever drained! His greatness was also seen by the mode in which he fed these myriads. Usually our bread springs up from the soil, but these people were in a waste howling wilderness. Wonder of wonders, their bread came down from the sky! Shall men live on air? Will you sustain a population on mist, and cloud, and dew? Yet out of a seeming vacuum came a constant plenty. Every morning the earth was covered with the heaped-up food of all that multitude; and they had nothing to do but to go out and gather it. What a God is this whose marchings through the wilderness were so marvellous! Jehovah, thy paths drop fatness! Wherever thou dost put thy foot, the wilderness and the solitary place are glad for thee. If thou dost lead thy people through a desert, it is no desert to them. The heavens supply what the earth denies. Behold, the greatness of your God, ye who are fed by his care!

And, next, they learned *his liberality combined with his greatness*, for every day they were fed; but not fed as Joseph supplied the people in Egypt, when he took from them all their stores to buy the corn, and at last took themselves to be bondsmen unto Pharaoh, and their lands to be Pharaoh's freehold, that they might live. No; there was never a pretence of paying for that daily bread. The richest man had his omer filled, but he paid not a doit for it; and the poorest man had his omer just as full at the same price. There was "nothing to pay"; no manna-tax was ever exacted of the Israelite's hand. Oh, the liberality of God! His cry is, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk." Do you notice how Jehovah's invitation grows? He says at first, "Come ye to the waters," but he corrects himself before he gets through with it, and says, "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." The Lord is infinitely good, essentially. He is growingly good, experimentally. The more we trust him, the more we discover of his liberality. He "giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." He scarcely upbraided Israel despite their frequent murmurings, but the manna fell continually; and the abundance of it must always have struck the people. God's liberality never stinted them. Oh, yes, I have no doubt that it is quite right to weigh out the bread, and to weigh out the meat, so much bone and so much fat to be allowed to every prisoner in the gaol, and possibly to every pauper in the poor-house! But that is not God's way of going to work. Though we deserve to be in prison, and though we are all of us pensioners on his bounty, yet he gives each one his omer full. If a man has a large appetite, he may eat as much as he likes, and the manna seems to grow while he is eating; and if he has a small appetite, though he may have gathered much, yet still he will have nothing over. God supplied the manna bountifully, yet exactly according to the capacity of the receiver.

This brings me to say that the children of Israel also learned *God's immutability*, for they had been fed with manna all through the wilderness. Some old man may have said, "I remember going out the first time to gather my omerful. I was astonished at it; and my neighbours kept calling out, 'Man-hu? Man-hu? Man-hu?' They were all wonderstruck; they did not know what to call it; so they asked, 'What is it?' They called it, 'Man-hu?' And now," said he, "I have been out all these years. Thank God, I have never had a swollen foot, so that I could not go out to gather it. It has always been just as white, and just as round, and just as plentiful, and just as near my tent as at the first. I used to live over on the left side of the camp, and I moved to the right; but I always found that the manna was equally plentiful in every direction wherever I went. And it is so now," the old man would say, "it is so now; and it is just as sweet, and just as plentiful, and just as freely to be had for nothing by every man who chooses to go out and gather it. Blessed be God, he changes not, and therefore we sons of Jacob are not consumed! If he had changed, the manna would have failed us, and we should have been consumed with hunger." Jehovah still lives, O child of God! Thou hast just buried one very dear to thee, but the Lord liveth still; he never fails. It may be that thy income is getting shorter; the brook Cherith is drying up, and the ravens have not been with the bread and meat lately. Still Jehovah lives; and there is a widow over at Zarephath, who will have her commission to take care of the Lord's servant. Jehovah lives; his eye is not dim, his ear is not heavy, his arm is not short. Therefore trust thou in the unchanging God, and be not afraid. The manna shall fall from heaven till thou shalt eat the old corn in Canaan.

Do you not think, beloved, that from this gift the children of Israel also learned *God's wisdom*? If they were not sensible enough to know it, he had given them the best food that he could give them. In that hot climate, if they had eaten flesh-meat continually, they would often have been ill. When the Lord did allow them quails in answer to their cravings, while the meat was yet in their mouths they were taken with deadly sickness. It was unwholesome for them to have flesh-meat; this manna from on high was the best thing for people living in tents, journeying from place to place, over a burning sand, beneath a scorching sky. The Lord had adapted the food to the people; yet they said, "Our soul loatheth this light bread." The very name they gave to it showed that it was just the right sort of food for them, easy of digestion. God had adapted their food to their position in the wilderness; no doctor could have drawn up a dietary table that was equal in wisdom to the one prepared by God for his people while they were in that condition.

And he showed his wisdom, too, in the quantity provided, it was always the right measure. "He that gathered much had nothing over;" the manna seemed to shrink to the right quantity. "He that gathered little had no lack;" the manna seemed to swell and increase so that there was exactly enough to an ounce for all those multitudes. Oh, the infinite wisdom of God! How I have often admired his promptness to a moment, his exactness to a drachm, for with him there

are no more small mistakes than great ones! He never errs in any sense or way; but he hits the mark precisely in all that he does.

And then, once more, the Israelites must have learned *his goodness*, because he had not supplied them with tasteless food. According to the Apocrypha, which is not to be received as Scripture, but still is often valuable in some respects, each man tasted the manna according to his own liking. There was something about it that enabled the mouth to give its own flavour to it; and their marchings through the wilderness, and their weariness, would often add a sauce to it that made it exceedingly sweet to them. It was like wafers made with honey, not at all unpalatable. It was, as I have already told you, like fresh oil, by no means disagreeable to an Eastern. God did not give them beggar's food, spare scraps and broken victuals. He had said, "I will rain bread from heaven for you," and he kept his word. The least bit of heaven's bread must be delicious to the taste. "Man did eat angels' food," said the psalmist; and that cannot be bad food which falls from the table of cherubim and seraphim, such food as spirits might partake of if they might partake of any, light, and pure, and ethereal, and spiritual, as far removed from the grosser forms of materialism as food well could be, a godlike food for a godlike race if they had but been worthy of their destiny, and had been willing to learn what God was so ready to teach them.

II. Notice, dear friends, in the second place, HOW THE LORD TAUGHT THESE PEOPLE BY MAKING THIS MANNA A TEST TO THEM.

Their position was in many respects a very pleasant one. They had not to work for daily bread, they had only to go out and gather it. There it was, but here is the point for us to observe. *It was given every day*; they never had any store. A man who gathered manna for twenty years might say, in language that I have often heard, "I ain't a bit forrarder, I am just where I was twenty years ago," as if it was not getting forwarder to be twenty years older, and to have had twenty years of mercy. Yet there was no store of manna; all up and down the wilderness there was not a single bank in which people could put their money, there was no such thing as a dividend to be received by anybody, and nobody could be laying up anything. Each Israelite had what he wanted for the day; he kept on having just so much and no more, and this was a test. Could he endure that test?

And then, again, as there was no store for the whole of them, and they did not get any richer, so there was no opportunity for greed, for *it was given to every man*. He who thrust out his two hands to rake up the manna, when he returned to his tent, had an omerful for himself, and his wife, and his eight children, but he had not any more. He thought the next day, perhaps, that he would sweep away by the half-hour together if he could, as long as the dew was remaining, and get an extra quantity; but when he examined it, he had exactly as much as he and his family could eat, and no more. The rest was all gone, evaporated, and nothing was left over and above what he needed; and his poor palsied neighbour, who could only get a little together in his basin with his hand, found that, somehow, he had enough, for God made it to grow in the basin, and when he looked at it, there was just enough for the day's supply.

"Oh!" says one, "I should like that." Well, I agree with you; I should like that. How long would you like it? I dare say, about as long as these Israelites did, and you would begin grumbling just as they did. Here was God's test of them: every day, and no store; every man, and no greed. It is so with grace; God gives us as much grace as we want, but there is nobody here who has any grace laid up. Oh, yes! I heard one person say that she had so much grace that she had not sinned for months. Ugh! I thought I smelt something. I did not say anything; but I remembered what manna does when it is kept, and there I left the subject. I hope none of you think that you have more grace than you need, because you have not. You may, possibly, have as much grace as will last you through to-day; but you will need as much as that to-morrow morning, if not more. Oh, yes, I know that you have an iron safe, and you go and rattle your keys, and you say, "Look here; I have grace enough locked up for the next six weeks." Go again, and you will be glad to run away from the stench, for you will find that you have locked up so much pride, and nothing else. We do not want dying grace till we come to die; be satisfied to have living grace while you live. You do not want grace to preach to-night, dear friends; you want grace to sit and hear. That may, perhaps, require as much grace as I need for preaching; but do not you ask for my grace, as I will not ask for yours. Eat your own manna. Do eat it; do not lay it up, it is not meant to be stored up, it must be eaten. This gift of the manna, every day for every man, was a test by which the Lord taught the children of Israel.

So was *that Friday storing*, when they said to themselves, "We get into the habit of gathering our food every morning, but here comes this Friday, when we have to gather twice as much." I do like consistency, always doing the same thing; but here is a command to do twice as much once a week, here is a law that shifts a bit. I like systematic theology; but here is a sliding seat. Here is a double supply for Friday, and I have to store half of it up. So one man did not store it up when he was told to do so, and another man tried to store it up when he was told not to do so. Thus the Lord tested and tried them. It is a wonderful thing, that testing to which God puts us. Sometimes, when we think that we have such a surplus of faith in him, he just tests us, and we find that we have not any. The grandest life is a life of dependence upon God, for that is true independence. If you wholly depend upon God, then have you risen to independence. He who has nothing but what God gives him day by day, has a competence. He is the man who has saved most who has least, for he is saved from the worry of taking care of it. If he is still dependent upon God's providence, and faith can keep her hold, he is the best-off man after all. You said that you envied the Israelites. Ah, well, you may; but you want faith, or else what might be a theme of envy becomes a subject of discontent. So I leave that point.

III. My time has pretty well gone, so I will only hint at what I would have said had there been time. Observe, HOW THE LORD TEACHES US BY THIS MANNA AS TO TEMPORAL THINGS.

First, he teaches us that *our supplies depend upon him*. Where did all the manna come from? It all came from God. Child of God, all

thy supplies must come from God. Learn thou that. Whatever the second causes, whatever the intermediary sources, all thou art to have will come whence all thou hast had has come, namely, from God.

Learn, next, that *our supplies are sure to faith*. If the manna did not fail for forty years, neither will the Lord fail to supply thy needs. Thy God will give thee thy livery, if thou art his servant. He will give thee thy daily rations also, if thou servest him. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." He who carves for himself will cut his fingers, and get an empty plate; but he who waits for the great Host of all the chosen family to carve for him shall have enough, and that of the best. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

But learn from the children of Israel that *our supplies will have to be gathered and prepared by ourselves*. God sent the manna from heaven; but the people had to go out every morning, and get it in; and when they had gathered it, we read that they used to beat it in mortars, or grind it in mills, and bake it in pans, and make it into cakes. God is not the patron of idleness. He will have his people work; and his rule is, "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat," a rule he often carries out with those who are idlers. But, beloved, we thank God for opportunities for diligence. Though labour came at first as a curse, God has turned it into a blessing.

And, once more, *our supplies ought to content us*, for the children of Israel had enough for all their needs. They had no superfluities; but they had all-sufficiency. They had no luxuries; but yet if they chose to think so, their daily mercies became luxuries to them. Oh, that God might teach us to trust him as to temporals!

IV. Now for my last point, and I beg your patience for a few minutes only. HOW THE LORD TEACHES US BY THIS MANNA AS TO OUR SPIRITUAL FOOD. Here also I will only give you hints.

Every day you and I ought to go forth and find food for our spiritual life. Ah, but have you all received spiritual life? Some of you, it may be, are dead while you live, without God, and without Christ. May the Lord quicken you by his life-giving Spirit!

But if you have spiritual life, you must feed it, and *God will give you manna from heaven*, that is, Christ himself, with which to feed your soul. He is that Bread of life which came down from heaven, and you must feed on him. Take care that you go diligently to work to get this spiritual food. The Israelites were up betimes to gather the manna which fell morning by morning. Be not idlers with the Word of God; search it. Get up early in the morning to read your Bible if you cannot do it at other times. Steal from your sleep a happy hour to read the Scriptures. Diligently and earnestly seek the Lord, for he has said, "They that seek me early shall find me."

Then, as I hinted in the reading, *the manna was always encased in dew*. They took care to gather this, for then it became sweet dew to them. May the Word of the Lord always have a dew upon it to you! The critic takes God's Word, and he treats it as the sun did the manna. He pours a dry heat upon it, and it evaporates, and it is gone. Oh, those critics! What a mass of manna they have evaporated altogether!

But the child of God takes care that he loses nothing of what God has revealed. Every word is precious to him ; ay, every jot and tittle ; and under the bedewing influences of the Holy Spirit he gathers Christ fresh constantly, ever new ; and he finds his flesh to be meat indeed, and his blood to be drink indeed !

Again, *the manna was to be sought continually*. So must your spiritual food. Do not try to live on last year's manna. Stale experiences are poor food. I know no dish that is worse than cold experience ; you need to have a daily realization of the things of God. Hourly feed on Christ ; for the food of years past will be of small account to you. Continually go about the meadows and feed, ye sheep of the Lord ; go again and again to the still waters, drink and be satisfied.

In the case of this manna, *the gatherers were pleased with littles*. It was a small, round thing, like coriander seed, or like the hoar-frost. So be very thankful to get a little bit out of God's Word. If you only find one new thought, one fresh idea, pick it up, and put it into the omer. A great many of these precious little things will make rare food for a hungry spirit. Get the food for your soul little by little.

You can imagine how they probably had to gather it. I suppose that *they went down on their knees to get it*, for it was always down low, just on the hoar-frost that lay on the desert sand. See them all stooping down to gather it up ; and the bulk of them, I think, were on their knees gathering it. That is the way to get the heavenly food, gather it on your knees, stoop low with humility, bend to the very ground in prayerfulness, and so gather up the coriander seed ; nay, I mean the heavenly manna, and go your way rejoicing.

And *it was always for immediate consumption*. Whenever you get a divine promise, go and pray over it, and use it at once. Whenever you see a duty, do it. Do not leave one single part of God's Word to lie void. If anything in the Word of God is impressed upon your mind, let it get into your very soul, and let it be carried out in your practice. Eat the manna as soon as you get it, and use to God's glory the strength derived from it.

Lastly, like the Israelites, *sometimes you will get double supplies*. There is a difference between us and the children of Israel, for we generally get a double supply on the Sabbath. Oh, how we ought to thank God for our Sabbaths, when the Lord is with us, or when he makes the manna to lie on the dew, and we come up to his house, and go away with our omers full ! Happy Sabbaths ! They become the marked days of the week, and we go from Sunday to Monday, and Monday to Thursday, and Thursday to Sunday again, thanking God that still the heavenly bread comes down to meet our rising prayers and thanksgivings.

God bless you, dear friends ! May he make his Word sweeter to us every day we live ! May we have good appetites to feed on it !

As for you who have never known the flavour of the heavenly food, I say again, as I said a few minutes ago, may the Lord quicken you by his own life-giving Spirit, for Jesus' sake ! Amen !

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

EXODUS XVI. 1—5, 11—36; AND NUMBERS XI. 1—10.

Exodus xvi. Verses 1, 2. *And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness :*

They have been only about six weeks in the wilderness, and already they are up in arms against their leaders. Remember that we have the same kind of people to deal with as Moses and Aaron had. The children of Israel were no better than any other nation; and I do not think they were any worse. We may take them as a fair average of human nature, which is a discontented, rebellious thing in the best of circumstances.

3. *And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*

They forgot all about the brick-making, and the whips, and the iron bondage, and they recollected nothing but the flesh pots of Egypt. Ah, me! how soon, when we escape from a great trial, we forget it! The present much smaller one seems far heavier than that which is past.

4. *Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.*

See God's answer to man's murmuring. They send up their complaint, and he promises to rain bread down from above. It is a blessed story on God's part all along; a rain of mercy for a smoke of complaining.

5. *And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.*

Now let us read at the eleventh verse.

11, 12. *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel :*

"I have heard them." God always does hear. Oh, his wonderful patience! If he took no notice of the murmurers, or punished them for their wickedness, we should have no cause for wonder; but he is long-suffering, even to those who do not deserve his pity.

12. *Speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.*

"There shall be no mistake about who I am. I will work this miracle in such a Godlike style, and on such a divine scale, that ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God."

13—16. *And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man,*

About two pints and a half, I think; according to some calculations, two quarts, or thereabouts. There would be more sustenance in it than in a half-quartern loaf of bread *per diem*: "An omer for every man."

16—18. *According to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.*

God meant it to be so; not every man according to his avarice, that he might save any of it; but "every man according to his eating." God took care that neither should feebleness be stinted, nor should greed have any excess.

19—22. *And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.*

He had told them that it would be so, but they evidently did not accept the message that he had delivered to them as the very Word of Jehovah their God; so that, when it was fulfilled, it struck them with wonder, and they "came and told Moses."

23. *And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said,*

How often could that answer be made to us! God hears our prayer, and we run and say, "What a wonderful thing! God has heard my prayer." "This is that which the Lord hath said." Is it a strange thing that what Jehovah has said is proved to be true, and is it a subject for surprise that he should keep his promise? You dishonour God when you talk after this fashion.

23. *To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD:*

And yet the Sabbath had not been instituted according to law, which proves that its foundation lay deeper and earlier than the promulgation of the Ten Commandments; it is bound up with the essential arrangement of time since the creation: "This is that which the Lord hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord."

23—27. *Bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the LORD: to day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none.*

They might have expected it to be so; but they would not believe, and as they would not believe, they must needs put the Word of God to the test. But it endures the trial; it is always true. Oh, that men would, in a believing spirit, test the Word of God, instead of doing it after this sceptical fashion!

28—31. *And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day. And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna:*

Or, "What is it?" It was something too wonderful to be understood; and they kept the expression of their wonderment as the name of their bread from heaven. When they first saw it, they exclaimed, "Man-hu?"

“Man-hu?” “What is it?” “What is it?” Thus it received its Hebrew name, *Manna*; but God called it, “Bread from heaven.”

31—33. *And it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.*

This production, which would not keep a single day under ordinary circumstances, would keep for two days to supply the needs of the Sabbath, and it would keep for generations as a memorial of God's goodness to his chosen people during their forty years' wanderings through the wilderness. We may be quite sure that Aaron would not have kept a stinking thing laid up before the Lord.

34—36. *As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. And 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. Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah.*

Now I want you to read in the Book of Numbers. Further on in the history of the children of Israel, when the people had been long in the wilderness, the same kind of thing happened again.

Numbers xi. Verse 1. *And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD:*

Interpreters cannot make out what they had to complain of. The curse of labour had been removed; they did not earn their bread with the sweat of their face, for it fell from heaven every day. They were at no expense for clothing; and though they journeyed, their feet did not swell. I suppose that they complained of the weather. It was too cold; it was too hot; it was too wet; it was too dry. They complained when they stood still; they were much too long in a place. They complained when they marched; they moved too often. In fact, they were very like ourselves; they often complained most when they had least to complain of. Discontent is chronic to our humanity; and I do not believe that the poorest are the most discontented. It is often the very reverse. When a man is put in a place where he has nothing to complain of, especially if he is an Englishman, he feels quite out of place. He must have something to grumble at, something or other to be a grievance, or else he is not happy. “When the people complained, it displeased the Lord.”

1. *And the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.*

He could bear their first murmurings, as they were new to the wilderness, they were hungry, they were thirsty, and the Lord pitied them. But now, when there was no reason for their complaining, his fire in terrible judgment visited his people, on account of their rebellion and murmuring against the goodness of God.

2—4. *And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched. And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them. And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting:*

All evil seems to begin there, among “the mixt multitude”, as it does among those church-members who are unconverted, and among those people

who try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, those who want to be Christians and worldlings, too.

4. *And the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat ?*

Even the true people of God caught the infection of the scum that was mixed with them, and they fell a-weeping, and said,—

5. *We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick :*

Fine stuff that to recollect! "Why!" say you, "you have read before something very much like that." I am reading another record; but there is no originality in grumbling; it is always the same old thing over again. You might well suppose that I was reading in the Book of Exodus, but I am not; there are many years in between. He who sitteth down with a discontented hand to paint a picture will paint the same picture that he painted before. There is no originality in the murmuring, although they put in a few new touches. Before, it was the flesh pots that they remembered; now, in addition to the flesh, there are these savoury vegetables, "the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick."

6. *But now our soul is dried away : there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.*

Here they pour contempt upon the bread of angels, upon the food of heaven, upon the benison of God. Oh, what will men not complain of?

7. *And the manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.*

A fine white colour, like a pearl.

8. *And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it : and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.*

At first they thought it was like wafers made with honey. Getting more used to it, they, perhaps, described it quite as accurately, but not quite so sweetly; they said it was like fresh oil, and there is no better taste than that. Oil, by the time it comes to us, has usually a rank and rancid taste; but in the oil countries it is delicious; and he who has bread and a drop or two of oil, will find himself not ill supplied with a dinner. "The taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil."

9. *And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.*

God took care to preserve his precious gift, encasing each single particle of it within a drop of dew, which gave it freshness. And when truth comes to us encased in the dew of the Spirit, how sweet is its taste! May it be so to us whenever we feed on Christ!

10. *Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent : and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly ; Moses also was displeased.*

And no wonder; meek man as he was, they vexed his gracious spirit by their perpetual murmurings.

As we read this sad story, let us, as in a glass, see ourselves; and let us deeply repent of our murmuring and complaining, and henceforth sing—

"I will praise thee every day!
Now thine anger's turn'd away."

Perhaps our next hymn (Number 697) will help us that way.