

June 8, 2008

## Heavenly Food

Three weeks ago we began a journey through the Old Testament book of Exodus; a journey that focuses on how the God of covenants fulfilled His promise to be the God of His people. In the first week we saw Him call Moses to be the deliverer of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt. It was during that call that God gave us His name Yahweh which in English means I am. Very simply His name means He is God or I am God. The second week God visit the people in the form of ten plagues. Ten plagues that showed He is God, ten plagues that decimated the Egyptians physically and emotionally, ten plagues that led to His peoples' deliverance. Last week we saw God deliver His people from the Egyptian army by giving them a single path through the Red Sea, which He had parted. We also saw that though we may be surrounded by sin and hard pressed on every side He has also given us one path to salvation the path of His son Jesus Christ. Just as the children of Israel had to do nothing but sit still and believe we too must simply believe Jesus is truly the Savior.

Today we picked up the Israelites path on the eastern shore of the sea. The Israelites who are on an emotional high following the Red Sea deliverance. But that quickly faded. After traveling for three days their water supplies were diminished however, they could see water on the horizon. Can you imagine the disappointment they must have felt when they arrived? They were parched, dry throats scratchy, they dipped their cup into the pond and the water was bitter so bitter they couldn't swallow it. It's this disappointment that seems to be the final straw that breaks their optimism. They cry out to Moses, "What are we to drink?" Three days of journey, approximately sixteen miles a day and they're out of water. They are at the point of no return they can't turn back. If they try to return to Egypt they would die in the desert from thirst. Who knows when they'll find water again? This is a desperate time so they are truly down, they are truly desperate and they cry out to Moses. Now just for a little side note here this place that they called Mara, which means bitter in Hebrew, was probably what we today call Ain Hawarah. The soil in this region abounds in soda and the water that flows from the spring is salty and very bitter, to this day they avoid the spring because it is so bitter. The people cried to Moses, Moses prayed to God and God quickly answered. He showed Moses a piece of wood and told him to throw it into the water. Moses did and the water became sweet and the people were satisfied. Then with

their thirst satisfied God teaches the people He says to them in 15:26, If you listen carefully to the voice of God and do what is right in His eyes if you pay attention to His commands and keep all His decrees I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians for I am the Lord who heals. I am the LORD who heals you.”

Interesting isn't it? Moses is told to use a piece of wood to remove the bitterness to make the water sweet to heal the people yet again this is a foretaste of the things to come. God did this to give us an image of what is to come. Through the word of the cross God would heal us and take away the bitterness of sin replacing it with the sweetness of forgiveness and eternal life. But God is not done. The people continue on their journey they go another seven miles and they come to a place called Elam, a true oasis, this day there are springs, trees and a pond where there now sits a resort. The people stop and set up camp from the time of the last plague a month passes by and they are tested again. They have plenty of water but now their food reserves are gone and they are hungry. They begin to grumble we see in Exodus 16:3 they say, “If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt there we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” Basically they're saying God has let us out here to die in misery if He wanted to kill us why didn't he just kill us in Egypt at least we weren't hungry there. But as I said God is using this as a test for the people and as for a teachable moment. No sooner do they complain to Moses than God gives an answer to Moses He says, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you the people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day in this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instruction. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days. So Moses goes and tells the people. In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord because He has heard your grumbling against Him. Who are we that you should grumble against us? You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning because He has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us but against the Lord. And then God gets into act. There probably were some who doubted Moses and Aaron; there were probably some who didn't like this when he's saying that they're grumbling against the Lord so God gives His stamp of approval. We see in verse 10, “While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community they look towards the desert and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in

the cloud. The cloud that led the cloud now begins to glow its as if God is saying listen I am behind this. And then he tells Moses, "I hears the grumbling of the Israelites tell them at twilight you will eat meat and in the morning you will be filled with bread then you will know I am the Lord your God." This is the third time God makes reference to this. You will know that I am the LORD your God. That evening just as God said quail came into camp and they had feast. In the morning there was a fine layer of flakes of bread or manna that they could gather.

God promised He would provide and He did. God also promised that He would continue to provide. All the Israelites had to do was trust Him. Evidentially some of them didn't trust the Lord so they gathered as much manna as they could and they stored it they failed the test. Those who did had a rude awakening the next morning it was rotten it smelled it was filled with maggots. God will provide it's a message that continues throughout scripture and a message that's continued to be preached today and it's a message that God continues to fulfill. It's a message that Jesus himself tied into. Every day the Israelites were reminded of God's provision as the manna and the quail came this filled their bellies and they were satisfied for the day. Jesus goes the next step he says in our Gospel that he is the living bread or the bread of life. If we feed on him, in other words if we put him into our lives if we make him a part of us as much as the food as we eat, then he will fulfill our spiritual hunger. We will be satisfied for all eternity because his blood has paid the price of our sin. You might say how do we feed on Christ? Well John tells us in Revelation when we fed on His word, the Bible and make it a part of our lives, its when we digest his word and make it the thing that guides us it is when we gather and celebrate communion, it is whenever we submit to him, recognize that we are nothing without him and we put our total trust in him that is when we truly are fed with heavenly food. That is when we truly begin to dine at the heavenly banquet table.

In our Savior's name, Amen.