

Message Nine

**The Change of Diet to the Heavenly Christ
as the Unique Food for God's People**

Scripture Reading: Exo. 16:1-36; Num. 11:6-9;
John 6:31-35, 48-51, 57-58

I. The heavenly Christ is the reality of the heavenly manna sent by God to be the daily life supply of His chosen people—John 6:31-35, 48-51, 57-58:

- A. Christ is the heavenly bread as the bread that came down out of heaven—vv. 31-32, 41-42, 50-51.
- B. He is the bread of God as the One who is of God, who was sent by God, and who was with God—v. 33.
- C. Christ is the bread of life as the bread with eternal life, with zoe; the bread of life refers to the nature of the bread, which is life; it is like the tree of life, which also is the life supply that is “good for food”—vv. 35, 48; Gen. 2:9.
- D. He is the living bread; this refers to the condition of the bread, which is living—John 6:51.
- E. He is the true bread; He is the true food, and all other foods are merely shadows of Him as the real food; the reality of the food that we eat daily is Jesus Christ—v. 32.

II. “As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me...It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life”—vv. 57, 63:

- A. To eat is to take food into us that it may be assimilated organically into our body; hence, to eat the Lord Jesus is to receive Him into us that He may be assimilated by the regenerated new man in the way of life.
- B. We live not *by* Christ but *because of* Christ as our energizing element and supplying factor; we live Christ in His resurrection, and we live Christ by eating Him—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:19-21a.
- C. We eat the Lord Jesus as our spiritual food, receiving Him as the Spirit who gives life, by eating His words of spirit and life, receiving His words by means of all prayer—Jer. 15:16 and footnote; Eph. 6:17-18:

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1. His spoken words are the embodiment of the Spirit of life; He is now the life-giving Spirit in resurrection, and the Spirit is embodied in His words.
2. When we receive His words by exercising our spirit, we get the Spirit, who gives life—cf. *Hymns*, #612.

III. The deep truth in Exodus 16 is that God wants to change our diet to a diet of Christ as the real manna sent by God the Father for us to be reconstituted with Christ and to live because of Christ in order to make us God's dwelling place in the universe; there is no matter in the whole book of Exodus more crucial than this:

- A. Although God's people had been brought out of Egypt into the wilderness of separation, they were still constituted with the element of Egypt, signifying the world; God's intention was to change their element by changing their diet in order to change the nature of His people; He wanted to change their being, their very constitution, to make them a heavenly people constituted and transformed with the heavenly Christ.
- B. For forty years God gave the children of Israel nothing to eat but manna (16:35; Num. 11:6); this shows that God's intention in His salvation is to work Himself into the believers in Christ and to change their constitution by feeding them with Christ as their unique heavenly food, thereby qualifying them to build up the church as God's dwelling place; in fact, after being reconstituted with Christ, the believers themselves become the dwelling place of God—cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6; Rev. 21:2-3.
- C. God's way to deal with the flesh of His people is to put it aside and to not feed it; for this reason He changes the diet of His people and sends them food that their flesh does not like; the people of Israel abhorred the heavenly taste of manna and lusted for the worldly taste of the Egyptian food—Num. 11:5-6.
- D. The Egyptian diet denotes all the things that we desire to feed on in order to find satisfaction; America is the leading country with respect to the Egyptian diet, the worldly entertainment; whatever we desire, hunger, and thirst after is the diet according to which our being has been constituted.
- E. On the one hand, the heavenly manna nourishes us and heals us; on the other hand, it eliminates the negative things in us.

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- F. How marvelous it was that God gave the people nothing except manna; this indicates that He gave them nothing except Christ; may the Lord take away the desire and hunger for anything other than Christ!
- G. By feeding on manna, God's people eventually became manna; our constitution must be rearranged through the eating of Christ so that the church as the dwelling place of God may be built up; may the Lord change our diet so that we may be reconstituted with Christ and become God's dwelling place—Matt. 16:18.
- H. Along with the change of diet, we need a change of appetite; the Lord Jesus said, "Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto eternal life"—John 6:27:
 - 1. By food, we mean anything we take into us for our satisfaction; Christ Himself is the only food that does not perish; this food abides unto eternal life.
 - 2. Whatever satisfies, strengthens, and sustains us is our food; the unique food that we take for our sustenance, strength, and satisfaction must be Christ alone.
 - 3. All those who have been regenerated need to change their diet for a change of appetite; God's intention is to cut off the worldly diet and to limit us to a diet of heavenly food, which is Christ.
 - 4. We all should be able to say, "The Lord is the only One who satisfies me. Apart from Him, I have no satisfaction. I am daily strengthened and sustained by Christ. He is the only food on which I rely."
- I. The unique food that we take for our sustenance, strength, and satisfaction must be Christ, and the one unique ministry in the New Testament conveys Christ as the unique food for God's people—Num. 11:5-6; cf. Acts 1:17, 25; 2 Cor. 4:1; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Cor. 3:6.

IV. We need to see and experience the characteristics of Christ as our unique food, our daily manna, for our metabolic transformation:

- A. Manna is a mystery—Exo. 16:15; Col. 2:2; Isa. 9:6; Eph. 3:4; John 3:8:

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1. The Hebrew word *man hu*, from which the word *manna* derives, means “What is it?”—Exo. 16:15.
2. Just as we cannot analyze or explain manna, we cannot analyze or explain the Lord Jesus; to the people of the world, Christ is the real manna, the real “what is it?”
- B. Manna is a long-term miracle; manna was sent every morning, and it had to be gathered every morning; this indicates that we cannot store up the supply of Christ but that the experience of Christ as our life supply must be daily, morning by morning; as our food, Christ will last for eternity—vv. 4, 21; cf. Matt. 6:34.
- C. Manna is from heaven; on the one hand, the Lord Jesus is “the bread out of heaven”; on the other hand, He is “the bread of God,” the One who came down out of heaven to be our food—Exo. 16:4; John 6:32-33, 51.
- D. Manna comes with the dew, which signifies the Lord’s refreshing and watering grace brought in by His fresh compassions; grace is God reaching us to refresh us and water us—Exo. 16:13-14; Num. 11:9; Psa. 133:3; Lam. 3:22-23; Heb. 4:16; Psa. 110:3.
- E. Manna comes in the morning, indicating that it gives us a new beginning through our living contact with the Lord—Exo. 16:21; cf. S. S. 1:6b; 7:12; John 5:39-40; Rom. 6:4; 7:6.
- F. Manna is small; Christ was born in a manger, and He was raised in the home of a carpenter in a small, despised town; this indicates that the Lord did not make a display of His greatness but preferred to be small in the eyes of man—Exo. 16:14; Luke 2:12; John 6:35; cf. Judg. 9:9, 11, 13; Matt. 13:31-32.
- G. Manna is fine, indicating that Christ is even and balanced and that He became small enough for us to eat—Exo. 16:14; John 6:12.
- H. Manna is round, indicating that as our food Christ is eternal, perfect, and full, without shortage or defect—Exo. 16:14; John 8:58.
- I. Manna is white, showing that Christ is clean and pure, without any mixture—Exo. 16:31; Psa. 12:6; 119:140; 2 Cor. 11:3b.
- J. Manna is like frost, signifying that Christ not only cools and refreshes us but also kills the negative things within us—Exo. 16:14; Prov. 17:27.

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- K. Manna is like coriander seed, indicating that Christ is full of life that grows in us and multiplies—Exo. 16:31; Num. 11:7; Luke 8:11.
 - L. Manna is solid (implied in the fact that the people “ground it between two millstones or beat it in a mortar; then they boiled it in pots”—Num. 11:8), signifying that after gathering Christ as manna, we must prepare Him for our eating by “grinding, beating, and boiling” Him in the situations and circumstances of our daily living—cf. 2 Cor. 1:4; Eph. 6:18.
 - M. Manna’s appearance is like that of bdellium, indicating the brightness and transparency of Christ—Num. 11:7; Rev. 4:6, 8; Ezek. 1:18.
 - N. Manna’s taste is like that of cakes baked in oil, signifying the fragrance of the Holy Spirit in the taste of Christ—Num. 11:8; Psa. 92:10.
 - O. Manna’s taste is like that of wafers made with honey, signifying the sweetness of the taste of Christ—Exo. 16:31; Psa. 119:103.
 - P. Manna is good for making cakes, indicating that Christ is like fine cakes good for nourishment—Num. 11:8; 1 Tim. 4:6.
- V. The open manna is manna that we have not eaten, whereas the hidden manna refers to manna that we have eaten, digested, and assimilated—Rev. 2:17:**
- A. “Do not think that it is impossible for you to be an overcomer. You can become an overcomer by enjoying Christ as manna. Eat the open manna, and Christ will become the hidden manna. This hidden manna will constitute you into an overcomer”—*Life-study of Exodus*, pp. 459-460.
 - B. Whatever we eat, digest, and assimilate of Christ will be an eternal memorial; what we shall recall concerning Christ in eternity will have two aspects: the aspect of the enjoyment of Christ as our reconstituting element and the aspect of Christ as the supply to make us God’s dwelling place in the universe—Exo. 16:16, 32.
 - C. Just as the manna in the golden pot was the focal point of God’s dwelling place, so Christ as the manna eaten by us is the focal point of God’s building today—Heb. 9:3-4; Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19.