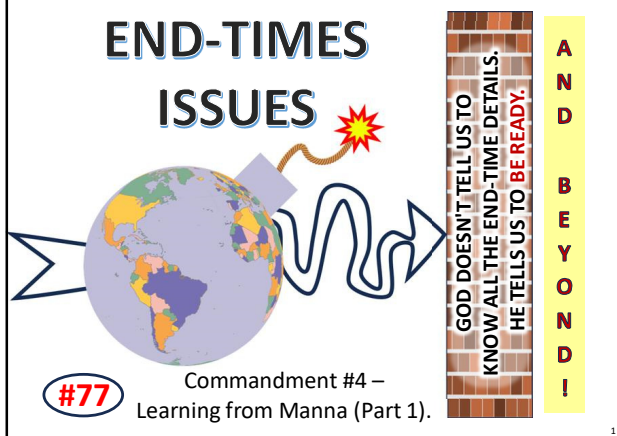


END-TIMES ISSUES



1

AND BEYOND I

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

#77 Commandment #4 – Learning from Manna (Part 1).

GOD USES PHYSICAL THINGS TO TEACH US ABOUT NON-PHYSICAL THINGS.

MANNA is one of those "physical" things that God has used.

[He] fed you with **manna**, which you didn't know, neither did your fathers know; **that he might teach you ...**

Deuteronomy 8:3b (WEB)

- God uses manna to teach about the **Sabbath**, as well as **a variety of other issues**.
- Understanding the **physical aspect of the manna** is part of the issue. *This is our focus today.*
 - ✓ We could call this the **"scientific aspect" of manna**. We can look at the information given in Scripture, and analyze and compare it to other things we observe in creation.
 - ✓ In this specific case, we discover that certain aspects of the "manna event" *cannot* be explained by natural processes. They must depend on God's working *outside* those laws.

2

- God created the "laws of nature" to be the environment for humans to live in; but he himself is not controlled by those created laws.

- ✓ He can use the "laws of nature" to accomplish his purposes, often in totally unexpected ways. We call this the *providential* work of God in creation; and it's the normal way he works.
- ✓ He can also work *outside* those limitations, if he wants. We often call this work of God "miraculous"; but the Bible's concept of "miracles" refers to a *demonstration of God's power* – whether or not he uses the laws of nature to do it.
- ✓ Though God can use "miracles," he does not have to do so. In Scripture, events that do not comply with the laws of nature are found to have occurred randomly throughout Israel's history. But there are only *three time periods* where they appeared in a cluster – specifically, in the following time periods:
 1. Moses and Joshua (13th century BC).
 2. Elijah and Elisha (9th century BC).
 3. Jesus and the Apostles (1st century AD).

3

There are TWO types of "science" in today's world.

- **Atheistic naturalism** is the *philosophy* that many people use to dictate how they interpret science. It is a "presupposition" that rejects the intrinsic connection between God and creation.
- These people suppress their innate awareness of God and his moral law (Romans 1:18-23+, 32; 2:14-15), and reject what Scripture teaches us about the relationship of God to creation. They treat God like a "superstition" or "opinion" – as though the true God were no different than the gods that people have invented.
- The end result of this view: *They arrogantly dismiss anything in science that doesn't fit their philosophy*. And since they reject the God whose very nature *defines* right moral conduct, they have very little moral restraint in *how they apply* science. They have no interest in doing *everything* for the honor and glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31; etc.); and they often apply science in ways that dishonor God and hurt people. (Their "morality" is whatever they want it to be.)

4

- **Genuine science** is willing to recognize and work with things that *can* be explained through *natural* causes, as well as those that *cannot* – i.e., special acts of God.
- It is also willing to recognize the information that **God** has revealed about creation (in Scripture), and the implications of that information. This may result in interpreting certain things differently than the atheistic naturalist does. But doing so enables him to better understand reality *the way it is*. After all, it's the *same* God who gives us both his *Word* and his *creation*. This means we don't have to "adjust" the facts to fit an *invented* "reality."
- Down through history, there have been *many* Christians who were scientists. But just like in other areas of life, there are more *unsaved* scientists than saved ones. The unsaved ones try to downplay or suppress what the saved ones do – or at least remove the "God factor" from having any influence on the information and its significance, and how it should be applied to life.

The actual problem isn't the "science," but the **atheistic naturalistic philosophy** that the world uses to *interpret* (or even to *cancel*) science.

5

What about miracles?

- Genuine science doesn't have to *ignore* or *deny* them! That would be unscientific (and dishonest)!
 - ✓ It just has to recognize *what occurs*, and acknowledge that it does *not* function according to the known laws of nature.
 - ✓ If we recognize that God is involved in *all* aspects of reality, then we can acknowledge anything that happens, *whether or not we can explain it by means of "natural laws."*
 - ✓ In Scripture, we can see that God works two ways: **providentially** (most of the time) – using the laws of nature, sometimes in amazing ways; and **supernaturally** (not often) – as seen in accounts of miracles that are recorded in Scripture. [Being in Scripture, we don't have to question whether or not they occurred.]

The Bible's concept of "miracle" is a "work of power," not "something that breaks the laws of nature." This means God can demonstrate his power *with*, or *without*, using the laws of nature!

6

HOW DO WE EXPLORE THE "SCIENTIFIC" ASPECT OF THE BIBLE?

It's no different than trying to understand anything else in life!

① We need to try to be accurate, carefully avoiding misrepresentations.

- This may require us to do further study on issues we don't know.
- Some inaccuracies may not cause serious harm; *but some do.*

EXAMPLE: Misrepresenting the size of the manna might not cause serious spiritual harm.

- Most artist's renditions make the manna pieces very large – like the communion wafers that some churches use, or small cookies. *This is probably because the actual manna would be too small to be visible in most pictures.*

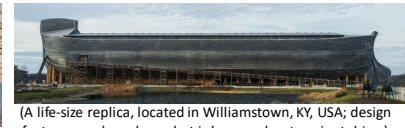


IN THE SKY and IN THE CONTAINERS

7

EXAMPLE: Misrepresenting the size of the Noah's ark is a serious matter.

- When the ark built by Noah is drawn to look like a bathtub toy, it communicates the idea that the ark account is a story (or fable) that shouldn't be taken seriously.
- When made to look like a boat that is capable of doing *all that God designed it for*, we learn about the seriousness of sin (= the reason for the flood), as well as God's gracious preservation of human and animal species! We also learn the need to heed God's warning about the future judgment.



(A life-size replica, located in Williamstown, KY, USA; design features are based on what is known about ancient ships.)

8

② Scripture doesn't use "scientific language"; it uses "normal" language accurately.

HOW THE BIBLE WOULD SAY IT:

THIS IS A
Dandelion
PLANT.



HOW THE ATHEIST MIGHT SAY IT:

ITS PROPER
SCIENTIFIC
NAME IS
**Taraxacum
officinale.**

THE BIBLE IS SO
UNSCIENTIFIC
THAT WE CAN'T
TRUST IT!

③ Scripture gives us the information we need on a matter; but not necessarily all that we want.

- There may be details that are unclear or not mentioned.
- We may be able to learn more, through further study (in Scripture or in creation); but if the information is *really* necessary for the Bible's message, *it will be there.*

9

④ Some descriptive words may be difficult to understand.

- There may be times when the description of something is not 100% clear. But the issue tends to be our understanding, not the text itself.

EXAMPLES: ✓ Some descriptive words may be difficult to define.
✓ The species we know may be different.
✓ We tend to come with preconceived notions that we have to "unlearn."

- Issues like this are often resolved by further study. Sometimes just comparing translations will resolve questions!
- Every major teaching in Scripture is documented so well, and in so many passages, that there is no serious question about them.
- In these other issues, we can often narrow-down the possibilities to a small number – and often all of them will be legitimate possibilities that don't contradict the text.
- It's OK to say, "I don't understand!" (It's not OK to say, "I don't understand; therefore the Bible is wrong!")

10

⑤ One's attitude toward Scripture will influence one's conclusion.

- If we recognize that Scripture is from God and is consistent in its message, we will find things that go against the views of the world. They may say that the Bible needs to change; we will view these things as areas where we need to change our thinking.
 - ✓ This may involve *moral* issues. It may be a matter of how we respond when Scripture doesn't agree with the standards we have invented.
 - ✓ It may be that perspectives on certain science issues have changed.... And we need to understand *the Bible's* perspective.

Example: In the Bible, "stars" were "bright points of light"; to us, they are "fiery balls of hot plasma, often millions of miles in diameter." Using *the Bible's* definition, planets are "wandering stars," and Jesus could hold "seven stars" in his hand.
- In contrast, if we view Scripture as a collection of opinions that "evolved" down through the centuries, with many modifications, then we can change or ignore anything we want.

11

NOW FOR OUR "MANNA EVALUATION"!

- Manna was something that had never been seen before, even though many of the Jew's ancestors (and others) had spent time in the desert. *There were also miraculous aspects that cannot be explained by natural processes. (To be examined next time.)*

He gave you manna to eat, which **neither**
you nor your fathers had known ...

Deuteronomy 8:3b (BSB)

- Many people have tried to explain-away manna's miraculous aspects.
 - ✓ Some try to explain-it-away by claiming that manna was a naturally-occurring substance, perhaps a plant or insect secretion. They *willfully ignore* the testimony of Scripture (which includes a number of issues that *cannot* be explained "naturally."
 - ✓ Others treat the text as fiction (perhaps written centuries after the event). Or they may downplay the intelligence of the people who experienced it (perhaps describing them as ignorant or superstitious, or at least misunderstanding what was happening).

12

Basic information.

- In many passages, it is called **food** (Psalm 78:25) that was given to them by the LORD (Exodus 16:15; etc.)
- More specifically, it was **bread** (Exodus 16:15, 31) that did not have its origin on earth (i.e., where *plants* grow). It was described as "the bread of angels" (Psalm 78:25) that was "rained down from heaven" (Exodus 16:4; Psalm 78:24; etc.).
- When we see the word "bread," we may be thinking of wafers or biscuits or loaves of bread; but it was actually like **grain** – though not grain as we know it. It was "grain from heaven." *They had to make the bread!*



He gave them **grain from heaven**.
Psalm 78:24b (BSB)

13

How did it get its name?

- One suggestion is based on their questioning of what it was!

WHEN IT
FIRST
ARRIVED:

When the Israelites saw it, they asked one another, "**What is it?**" For they did not know what it was.

Exodus 16:15a (BSB)

The Hebrew for "What is it?" is: **mān hû**.

LATER:

Now the house of Israel called the bread **manna**.

Exodus 16:31a (BSB)

The Hebrew for "manna" is: **mān**.
(We use the Greek translation for "mān": **manna**.)

- Other suggestions: ① An Arabic word that refers to something "thin" or "fine" (which would describe its appearance). ② An Egyptian word for "food."

Regardless of word origin, it was something miraculously provided by God, to sustain the Israelites throughout their desert journey. (It's an interesting question... but it doesn't matter if we don't know the answer.)

14

Where did it come from?

- God sent it.

- Several passages describe it as "bread **from heaven**," because it "rained down" *from* heaven.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain down **bread from heaven** for you.

Exodus 16:4a (BSB); see also Nehemiah 9:15; John 6:31.

- It's also described as bread **given to them by God**.

So Moses told them, "It is the **bread that the LORD has given you** to eat."

Exodus 16:15b (BSB)

Don't make excuses! Many people try to explain it away as a naturally-occurring substance. Scripture's description indicates that it was NOT A NATURALLY-OCCURRING SUBSTANCE. If it were, it would not have behaved the way it did (which we will describe next time).

15

- It's also described as being grain **from heaven**, the food of **angels**, etc. But it also mentions **clouds** and **rain**.

- "Heaven" *and* "sky"? How does this work?

- This passage is not an attempt to describe its exact point of origin. It was coming from "up there" and it came down with the heavy dew.

Yet He commanded the **clouds** above and opened **the doors of the heavens**.

He **rained** down **manna** for them to eat; He gave them **grain from heaven**.

Man ate the **bread of angels**; He sent them **food** in abundance.

Psalm 78:23-25 (BSB)

- The issue: Today, we use the word "heaven" in a different way.

The verses just before this passage describe the people as *complaining, not trusting God, and prone to sin*.
Even so, God is faithful. He promised to take Israel to the promised land, *and he was going to do it!*

16

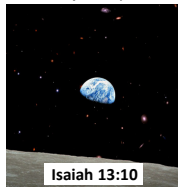
Today, our "heaven" concept is different.

- Today: We define "up there" in terms of three things:** ① "sky" (with birds and clouds), ② "outer space" (with stars, planets, etc.) and ③ "heaven" (the location of God's throne, angels, etc.).
- In the Bible: The term "heaven" encompassed all three of these.** It was "up there," where humans could not reach. The context often shows us which of the three is being referred to; but sometimes, the distinctions may be blurred – after all, *all three are "up there."*

"HEAVEN" / SKY



"HEAVEN" / STAR, PLANETS



"HEAVEN" / GOD, ANGELS



17

How it came; how it disappeared.

- It came down from "heaven" with the dew that formed at night.
- In the morning, once the dew had evaporated, the manna was found where the dew had been; and it resembled hardened flakes of frost.
- During the heat of the day, it would melt-away.

When **the dew fell** on the camp at night, **the manna would fall** with it.

Numbers 11:9 (BSB)

... in the morning there was **a layer of dew** around the camp. When the layer of dew had **evaporated**, there were **thin flakes on the desert floor**, as fine as frost on the ground.

Exodus 16:13b-14 (BSB)

... when the sun grew hot, it **melted away**.

Exodus 16:21b (BSB)

18

It's color.

It was white like coriander seed ...
Exodus 16:31b (NIV)

★ Examining this issue leaves us with a question that we need to deal with:

Coriander seeds aren't white!

⇒ Here are 3 possible solutions for this "discrepancy"!

#1 – In the desert wilderness, the seeds may be lighter in color, because of the **bleaching effect of the sun**. Or it could have been a different species of the plant – one we aren't familiar with.

#2 – Their definition of "white" may have been different than ours. It may have included a range of shades that we would call "off-white" or "beige." (This is especially true of the more ancient cultures. Their color-range definitions did not always match ours.)

[The leaves of the grown plant are often called *cilantro*.]

19

It's easy to jump to conclusions when we don't know someone else's reasoning. But what about *our own* "peculiarities"?

Even today – in modern English – the words we use to describe colors *don't always match reality!*

The PURPLE Finch!

MALE: Red and white. FEMALE: Brown and white.

Consider the trouble we might have, if we tried to explain to someone from a different culture, *why* we call these "purple" finches!

20

#3 – There is probably an even easier explanation for the "discrepancy":

★ Most translators haven't studied seed colors! ★

• HOW WOULD THIS SOLVE THE PROBLEM?

- ✓ Ancient languages didn't use punctuation. Translators do, to make it easier for us to read.
- ✓ Many modern translations have a comma after the word "white" – which easily resolves our "problem." Those that are translated by people who *don't know seed colors* might fail to do this.

• Instead of saying: color = "white like coriander seeds,"
it just means: color = "white," and size = "like coriander seeds."

What if we couldn't reach a final conclusion to this question?
If we've become familiar with the nature of Scripture, we already know that it is *accurate* in what it says; and that it's just a matter that we haven't yet got an answer. *We can continue to trust God!*

21

Physical description, appearance.

- **Diameter** – like coriander seed, perhaps 3/16 inch (5 mm) in diameter.
- **Thickness** – thin flakes, comparable to frost crystals.
- **Color** – white or light-colored (probably not *pure* white).
- **General appearance** – like a resinous gum; perhaps gummy or waxy-looking; perhaps semi-transparent. [This refers to bdellium, a resinous gum that came from trees. Thick pieces can be yellow to quite dark in color; thin flakes can be nearly white to pale amber.]

Now the manna resembled coriander seed, and its appearance was like that of gum resin [= bdellium].
Numbers 11:7 (BSB)

it was like coriander seed, white ...
Exodus 16:31b (LSB)

... thin flakes on the desert floor, as fine as frost on the ground.
Exodus 16:14b (BSB)

Note: This translation accurately separates "white" from "coriander seed." (See previous comments about this translation issue.)

22

It had to be gathered. This involved work.

- It had to be gathered every morning (exceptions described next time).
- How much is an "omer"? Being an *ancient* unit of measurement, there is some uncertainty. Estimates range from about 2½-4 quarts (2-3.5 liters); but it was a sufficient amount for one person's daily food requirements.

"This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Each one is to gather as much as he needs. You may take an omer for each person in your tent.'"

So the Israelites did this. ...

Every morning each one gathered as much as was needed, ...

(Now an omer is a tenth of an ephah.)

Exodus 16:16-17a, 21a, 36 (BSB)

The people walked around and gathered it ...

Numbers 11:8a (BSB)

23

Preparation & taste.

PREPARATION

The people ... ground it on a handmill or crushed it in a mortar, then boiled it in a cooking pot or shaped it into cakes.
Numbers 11:8a (BSB)

TASTE

Like pastry baked with fine oil (= maybe olive oil?).

Like wafers [= thin, round, pancake-like] made with honey.

It tasted like pastry baked with fine oil.
Numbers 11:8b (BSB)

[It] tasted like wafers made with honey.
Exodus 16:31b (BSB)

24

WHAT CAN WE LEARN, SO FAR?

(These six "lessons" are often part of broader themes found throughout Scripture, so they may be based, in part, on those broader themes.)

- ① **God provides what we need – though not necessarily at the first moment we decide we have a need.** Manna was NOT a naturally-occurring substance, but was provided directly by God. It would provide for their needs for approximately 40 years, before other provisions would become available. (Later, we will see that manna teaches about even *greater* needs than physical sustenance.)
- ② **Ungratefulness and discontentment is sin.** They had no food needs. The manna that God provided was versatile, could be prepared in a variety of ways, and tasted good. Yet in the years that followed, they would complain about the manna, *just like they complained about everything else*. Scripture teaches us much about *contentment*; and those who lack it need to *repent*. When God provides, we should be grateful and use his provisions, rather than complaining that we want everything *except* what God provides!

25

- ③ **The obligation to work.** The people had to gather and prepare the manna. Years later, in the promised land, they would be instructed to leave part of their crops for the destitute poor. But even then, the poor were required to do the work of harvesting and preparing it. Throughout Scripture, we find a condemnation of laziness and the expectation that *others* do the work for us. Today, we live in a society that often thinks it *deserves* free handouts; yet both Old and New Testaments call this attitude *sin*.

(Some of the things mentioned below might not seem to be "super-spiritual" insights. But they are ways of changing how we think. They can help us to develop the "renewed mind" of Romans 12:2. Some are also practical advice for interpersonal relationships.)

- ④ **It's OK if we don't know with certainty the answers to all the technical details in Scripture.** We might not know the exact origin of the word "manna"; but God makes sure that what we *need* to know (the over-all concepts that instruct us in life and godliness) can be understood.

26

>> The following two observations are connected. <<

- ⑤ **If something in Scripture doesn't seem to make sense, try to find out the reason for the statement, before jumping to conclusions about it!** We saw this, as we observed the Bible's concept of "heaven." By just observing the way the word is used in a number of passages, we can see that it refers to anything "up there, beyond where people can access." Knowing this, it's not a problem if the distinction between sky, space and/or heaven seems blurred. (Bear in mind that they lived during a time when airplanes and space ships didn't exist. Today, we *have* to define things differently!)
- ⑥ **Be careful about making fun of things you don't understand!** It's easy to laugh at others, when something they say doesn't sound right. But remember: We (who may think we're smarter than the one we're laughing at) may have our own issues! If we think the phrase "white like coriander seeds" is worth laughing at (though it is an easily-solvable "problem"), consider our use of the name "Purple Finch"!

27

- ⇒ We've shown that a variety of things can be learned, even from what some might think of as "mundane details" in Scripture.
- ⇒ There is a lot more to learn. This includes learning from things that CANNOT be explained by natural processes – the "God factor." Next time, we will look at some of the "unexplainable" things that occurred in the "manna event" – and what God teaches through them. But for today...

Our Mission – Learn and Apply

The more we study Scripture, the more we can *learn* from it – *if we are willing to accept it for what it is: God's Word!* (This learning can include anything from "how to think" to "how to live.")

But we also need to *apply* what we learn!

In doing so, we will grow in having a "renewed mind" (Romans 12:2); we will learn how to honor God in *all* that we do (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17, etc.); we will grow in wisdom (Ephesians 5:15-16); etc.

28

Credits (1)

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