

What Is It?

The Present Truth – April 4, 1901

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This is what the Israelites said one morning, when they awoke and found lying on the ground about their encampment a small round white thing, like a tiny seed, about the size of hoar frost.

They were very hungry, and God had sent them bread from heaven. They called the name of it "manna." The Hebrew word they need was "man-hu," meaning, What is it? "for they wist not what it was."

And Moses said, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat;" but their question gave the name to that bread from heaven, and they went on calling it manna—what is it?

Let us see how the Bible answers this question for us, and remember as we do so that what is true of this bread, is true also of all the bread that the Lord sends from heaven. Because this came to them in an unusual way, they were at first filled with wonder and curiosity. But after they became accustomed to it, they thought no more of it than we do of that which comes daily to our tables, or of the seed, the golden grain, that covers the ground at harvest time.

God's "mercies are new every morning," but because He does not forget us, people often forget Him. It would be well for us, every time we gather round our tables, or take any food at all, to ask with reverence the question that the Israelites did. And then, remembering that it is bread from heaven, think what God has told us about the bread that He gives.

Jesus answered this question, once for all, when after creating bread for five thousand hungry people in the desert, He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." And again, when taking bread from the Passover table, He said, "This is My body."

What, were the children of Israel in the desert really feeding upon Jesus Christ, and is that what we are doing when we take the food that He sends us?

Yes; that is what His Word tells us, and it is not possible that it could be otherwise, since He is the Fountain of life, and everything in this and all the worlds comes from Him. "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."

The Israelites "did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that went with them, and that Rock was Christ." When they ate the manna from heaven, and drank the water from the rock, they were feeding on Christ.

It is just so when you take any food that God gives you. All that He made for man's food comes from seed. But the plants which produce the seeds come from one Seed, by whose life all things live. That Seed is the Divine Word which went forth into the earth in the beginning to cause everything to grow.

The Word "without whom was not anything made that was made," was Christ. It was He who said, "Let the earth bring forth," and in that Word the Spirit of His life went forth into the earth, and He gave it a body as it pleased Him, in all the fair forms that clothe the earth with verdure, beauty, and fruitfulness,—the soft grass, fragrant herbs, stately trees, and delicate blossoms, through which He still creates food for us to-day.

Then is not all the food that He gives us, like that with which He fed the Israelites, "spiritual meat"? It is; for His Word is Spirit and life. Yet we can take it, so many do, as in fact most of the Israelites did—without receiving any spiritual good or blessing from it.

"Spiritual things are spiritually discerned," or seen. So if we are not spiritually minded, we cannot discern the Lord's body; we cannot see that

"There lives and works

A soul in all things, and that soul is God. . .

The Lord of all, Himself through all diffused,

Sustains and is the life of all that lives. . .

Happy who walks with Him; whom what he finds

Of flavour or of scent in fruit or flower,

Or what he views of beautiful or grand

In nature, from the broad, majestic oak,

To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,

Prompts with remembrance of a present God."

If we do not see this, we get, in the bread that He gives, only the outward form that feeds and strengthens our bodies for a time.

But when the Spirit of God fills our hearts (and He has promised to give this to all who ask Him), we can then see Him in everything else. We can discern Him, and feed upon Him, in the food that He gives us; we can hold sweet communion with Him in every meal, and receive through the Spirit the gift of His everlasting life.

"I am the bread that came down heaven, that a man should eat thereof and not die."

"Let manna to our souls be given,

The bread of life sent down from heaven."