

Exodus Chapter 16

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[0 : 0 0] from 1 Samuel and chapter 7. The Israelites had been under attack from the Philistines from a far superior force to them and if you just looked on it humanly you would have expected the Israelites to be defeated but God miraculously helped them and they were able to defeat the Philistines and we read there then that Samuel took a stone and he set it up between Mizpah and Shen and he named that stone Ebenezer which means a stone of help saying thus far has the Lord helped us and that word Ebenezer appears in our opening hymn tonight and I thought I'd just read that verse to show where it comes from and what it means because it's quite possible isn't it particularly if we're unfamiliar with church things that we we sing something and we think well what's all that about well now perhaps we've got an idea of what it means when we hear when we sing in that second verse here I raise my Ebenezer hither by thy help I'm calm so I'd sing that together number 704 come thou fount of every blessing well let's pray together let's pray heavenly father as we gather together tonight in and through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we would come and we would raise our Ebenezer's Samuel was aware of the Israelites having been miraculously helped by you in order that they weren't destroyed by the Philistines and father we want to thank you that you have been our help through all our days right up to this point in our life we thank you that that is true of this church we thank you that you were behind its founding and you have kept it week by week month by month year by year but not only as a congregation of your people here together but also as individuals those of us here who are Christians Lord we can testify that you have kept us throughout our life perhaps some of us can look back and see the way in which you wonderfully kept us from harm even before we became Christians and then since then you continue to keep us because the more we get to know our hearts we realize that we couldn't exist a day or a week close to you unless Lord your grace was in our life was in our life Lord we are prone to wonder prone we feel it but you are so good and so gracious to us and Lord because you have kept us thus far we have tremendous encouragement to believe that you will continue to keep us however many days that you give us on this earth and then you will bring us safe into the harbor you will bring us into heaven not because of anything that we have done not because of anything that we are but because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done on our behalf and all that he is we thank you that it is his righteousness that has been imputed to us and when you look down on us you see his righteousness we thank you for that we recognize that you are a holy majestic God it is you who

has brought this creation into being we recognize your moral perfection and we realize how far we are from that and yet father we thank you for your gracious faithfulness that you are true to your promises and that you have promised all who repent of their sins and trust and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ then our punishment is taken has been taken by him and we need not fear the judgment so thank you for that Lord thank you for today thank you for Sunday the Lord's Day the day on which the Lord Jesus rose again from the dead and we thank you that though we live in an increasingly secular world that still the vast majority of us can be free to be able to meet together on the Lord's Day and we don't take that for granted we pray Lord that that might be maintained and kept so thank you for today thank you when we can set aside other things that rightly take up our thinking during the week and we can meet with one another but above that Lord we can meet with you and as we thank you for the day father we want also thank you for this Advent season this time that runs up to Christmas father we know that the day itself in the year is not necessarily significant but Lord it is so significant to celebrate God with us the Lord Jesus Christ who is always the eternal son of God becoming a son of man so that sons of men might become sons of God oh Lord help us to rejoice in that this month and Lord may we overflow with joy about it so that others would catch something of that

Lord may this Christmas time be a time when some come to know you for the first time so Lord we bring our praise and we bring our prayers to you in Jesus name amen in Jesus so I'm going to read the passage from Exodus first of all then we're going to sing then we're going to read the second passage before I come to speak so we're in Exodus and chapter 16 and if you have the church Bibles you're on page 73 so Exodus chapter 16 on page 73 and we're going to read the whole of the chapter the whole Israelite community set out from Elam and came to the desert of Sin which is between Elam and Sinai on the 15th day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt in the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron the Israelites said to them if only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt there we sat round 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 then the Lord said to Moses 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 instructions 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 and Aaron said to all the Israelites 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

Moses also said 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're not grumbling against us but against the Lord then Moses told Aaron said to the entire Israelite community come before the Lord for he has heard your grumbling while Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community they looked towards the desert and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud the Lord said to Moses I have heard 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 that I am the Lord your God that evening quail came and covered the camp and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp when the dew was gone thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor when the Israelites saw it they said to each other what is it for they did not know what it was

Moses said to them it is the bread the Lord has given you to eat this is what the Lord has commanded everyone is to gather as much as they need take an omer for each person you have in your tent the Israelites did as they were told some gathered much some little and when they measured it by the omer the one who gathered much did not have too much and the one who gathered little did not have too little everyone had gathered just as much as they needed then Moses said to them no one is to keep any of it until morning however some of them paid no attention to Moses they kept part of it until morning but it was full of maggots and began to smell so Moses was angry with them each morning everyone gathered as much as they needed and when the sun grew hot it melted away on the sixth day they gathered twice as much two omers for each person and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses he said to them this is what the Lord commanded tomorrow is to be a day of Sabbath rest a holy Sabbath to the Lord so bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil save whatever is left and keep it until morning so they saved it until morning as Moses commanded and it did not stink or get maggots in it eat it today Moses said because today is a Sabbath to the Lord you will not find any of it on the ground today six days you are to gather it but on the seventh day the Sabbath there will not be any nevertheless some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it but they found none then the Lord said to Moses how long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day no one is to go out so the people rested on the seventh day the people of Israel called the bread manna it was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey

[12 : 22] Moses said this is what the Lord has commanded take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the wilderness when I brought you out of Egypt so Moses said to Aaron take a jar and put an omer of manna in it then place it before the Lord to be kept for the generations to come as the Lord commanded Moses Aaron put the manna with the tablets of the covenant law that it might be preserved the Israelites ate manna for 40 years until they came to a land that was settled they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan we'll turn to the New Testament now and see where Jesus fulfills what we've just read in Exodus so we're going to read from John chapter 6 which is on page 1070 1070 in the

church Bibles we read from verses 25 to 35 and then from 41 to 48 so John 6 verse 25 when they found Jesus on the other side of the lake they asked him

Rabbi when did you get here Jesus answered very truly I tell you you're looking for me not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill do not work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give you for on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval then they asked him what must we do to do the work that God requires Jesus answered the work of God is this to believe in the one he has sent so they asked him what sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you what will you do our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness as it is written he gave them bread from heaven to eat Jesus said to them very truly I tell you it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven for the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world sir they said always give us this bread then Jesus declared

I am the bread of life whoever comes to me will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty and then just moving on to verse 41 at this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said I am the bread that came down from heaven they said is this not Jesus the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know how can he now say I came down from heaven stop grumbling among yourselves Jesus answered no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them and I will raise them up at the last day it is written in the prophets they will all be taught by God everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me no one has seen the Father except the one who is from God only he has seen the Father very truly

I tell you the one who believes has eternal life I am the bread of life may the Lord bless his word to us let's sing together before we come to consider God's word 757 guide me O thou great Jehovah I wonder if any of you know people who are always able to see the worst side of any situation I worked with somebody a few years ago and I used to travel with him by car to work we were teachers and as you can perhaps imagine one of the days that teachers quite look forward to is the last day of the summer term the children look forward to it the teachers look forward to it just as much but on this last day of the summer term

I was getting into the car with this guy with Roger and he looked miserable I said what's up with you Roger you know it's the last day of summer term he says yeah I know he said you know I've been counting off the days for the last six or seven weeks till we got to this day he says now all I can do is count off the days till we come back always able to see the worst of any situation and I sometimes think that Roger would have fitted in very well with the Israelites in the desert of sin that we just read a little bit earlier in Exodus and chapter 16 those of you who are here this morning we looked at the Passover wheat meal and we looked at the miraculous way in which God had brought them out of Egypt and that was in Exodus chapter 12 then in Exodus 14 there was if anything an even greater miracle there they were faced with the Red Sea in front of them with the Israelites coming behind them apparently trapped but the Lord made a way through that sea and they came through it safely out of Egypt out of slavery and if you look at chapter 15 it's full of praise

[19:02] Miriam and Moses are singing songs of praise to God for what he has done for them and yet here we come to chapter 16 a whole month later later and are they still full of songs of praise no they are grumbling I wonder if you noticed in the reading how often that word grumbling came it comes in verse 2 it comes twice in verse 7 it comes twice in verse 8 it comes again in verse 9 six times in that opening paragraph the people were grumbling against Moses and Aaron and against God it's certainly a bit of a saying isn't it up in Yorkshire I'm not sure how widely spread it is but you know people will say to somebody oh how are you doing at the minute and you'll say oh I mustn't grumble you'd have never heard that in the desert of sin they were grumbling all of the time let's consider first of all what the causes were for their grumbling because to be fair they didn't have cause to grumble but they did have cause to be concerned three F's just to help us stick it in our memory they had a food problem they'd come out of Egypt they'd come through the sea but they were a vast tribe by now they probably almost certainly had animals with them that they brought out of Egypt but they would have been very wary of killing them they eat because what were they going to live on then in the future so there was a genuine problem but the second death and this was really their problem and the cause of their grumbling was their forgetfulness

God had shown his love for them in remarkable ways God had shown his ability to provide for them that he could take them out of Egypt that he could take them through the sea and protect them but

all of this is forgotten in the current situation and as I say it's only a month since they came through that situation but you know before we become hypercritical of them don't we need to look at ourselves as well because I don't know about you but I can be just like that as well that when a particular tough situation arises in my life I can totally forget about how

God has helped me in the past I can forget about my Ebenezeres my stones of help we're so like that we can spiritually forgetful can't we so they had a food problem but they were forgetful and they also suffered from a false memory syndrome you see how they talk about their time back in Egypt there we sat round pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted totally neglecting the fact that they had been slaves who were forced to do whatever Pharaoh told them to do and had no freedom at all and as one writer Alan Cole put it very succinctly slaves do not eat much meat so they were looking back but they were looking back through rose tinted glasses into really a false situation it hadn't been like that for them in

Egypt at all so there were the grumblers any of you who know that the guardian paper will know that the musical Les Miserables the guardian always called the glums and you know that's them here isn't it the glums but certainly we've had three F's we almost have three G's here and that is to look at God's response to them and God's response is so gracious he doesn't leave them to rot in the desert he doesn't punish them or send them back to Egypt he actually as he'd always planned to do he gave them what they needed despite their grumbling despite their faithlessness and I'm so glad that this passage is here in the Bible because I just find that so helpful to me that we see the graciousness of God he doesn't treat us he doesn't treat me as I deserve but he treats me out of the goodness of his heart he could easily have said to those people you deserve nothing for your grumbling after I've done so much for you but he doesn't he's so gracious to them not just gracious but generous he doesn't just give them enough he gives them more than their need he says there in verse 4 the promise them

I will rain down bread from heaven you know it won't just be a meager sustenance that just about keeps you alive but I will give to you generously and he did so and he kept doing so right through the years they remained in the wilderness so God was gracious he was generous and I did say it was almost three G's this incident is also pedagogical there's a G in the middle of it what does that mean pedagogical it means that it was teaching them a lesson it was teaching them about himself the manner in particular was designed not only to provide but to teach teach what it taught them to depend on God they were to gather their daily bread

[26 : 15] I wonder if you picked it up in the reading they could collect enough for the day but some of them thought ah we'll be clever about this we don't fancy going out every morning so what we'll do is we'll collect more than we need and then we won't have to go out the next day but God ordered it so that if they if they collected more than was their need the manna didn't last the next day it rotted and was full of maggots so you might say oh well that's it that's just the life shelf you know the shelf life of manna but miraculously on the day before the sabbath God said to them now on that day go out and do collect twice as much because I don't want you to go out and work on the sabbath day so they did that and remarkably when they did that the manna didn't rot on the sabbath day and they could eat it into the second day of course there were some people who still thought they were better than God and they went out on the sabbath looking for it and there was nothing there for them to take by the way it's lovely you know we get used to words don't we in the bible and we just say oh yes the name of this food is manna you know that's what everybody must just that that was the name of it just like we have wheat or corn flakes or whatever it is but you know the word manna in hebrew you know what it means it means what is it so the food was called what is it because when they looked at it they didn't know what it is they'd never seen it before but all of that the way in which

God gave them enough for each day twice as much before the sabbath what it shows is that that manna couldn't be manipulated by the men and women God was in charge God was in control and they had to learn that and it was not essentially the manna and the quails that fed them no Moses it was God who fed them and they had to learn that and to remind them of that they were told that later in their life as a nation they were to put a jar of manna alongside the ten commandments in the ark of the covenant so they would look at that and they would remember how God kept them through the wilderness well then you might think what has that got to do with

Jesus and what has that got to do with what we're going to do a little bit later this evening well hopefully as we read through John 6 you couldn't have helped but noticed the number of times that

Jesus said I am the bread of life I am the true bread that comes from heaven pretty shortly we'll be celebrating Christmas of course and even the youngest one here knows where Jesus was born that he was born in Bethlehem but I wonder if you know what the word Bethlehem means it means the house of bread Jesus the living bread from heaven was born in the house of bread the context of John 6 is interesting because it comes very very shortly after a bread making miracle

Jesus had just fed 5,000 men plus women and children from a tiny number of loaves and fishes but the crowds on the lakeside and the people in the Capernaum synagogue where he spoke later they just wanted more of the same they wanted greater signs to show to prove that Jesus was the equal of Moses and Jesus rebukes them for their materialistic thinking he said you come looking for me not because you're interested in me and who I am and my words of eternal life but because I fed you and you want to see more miracles and you want to see more physical bread John Piper reminds us

I thought he'd put this beautifully Jesus came not to bring bread but to be bread not just to bring bread but to be bread let me just show you in a couple of ways how Jesus is a superior provision to the manna in the wilderness wonderful though that was first of all manna in the wilderness sustained the body it kept them physically alive but Jesus can sustain can feed your soul your inner person that real you John Calvin said that manna is the corruptible food of the belly Jesus is true food for the soul and because of that manna could only provide temporarily it perished with time and the people who ate it perished with time but Jesus provision is eternal for those who feed on him

[32 : 36] Jesus said this himself in verse 58 of John 6 this is the bread that came down from heaven your forefathers ate manna and died but he who feeds on this bread on me will live forever well if that's the case what is it what does it mean to feed on Jesus it's one of those phrases you might hear in church one of those phrases that we use what does it actually mean what does it mean to feed on Jesus let me look at a couple of verses in John chapter 6 which Martin is just going to put up on the screen for us which I hope will help us with that verse 54 of John 6 says this whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise them up at the last day verse 40 says everyone who looks to the son and believes in him shall have eternal life and I will raise them up at the last day do you see how the second half of each of those verses is exactly the same it talks about you know how can we have eternal life how can we be certain that we will be resurrected at the last day it's exactly the same at the end of each verse but in verse 54 the person who has eternal life and is raised up at the last day is the one who eats

Jesus' flesh and drinks his blood in verse 40 it's everyone who looks to the son and believes in him so the two are the same to eat of the Lord Jesus to feed on the Lord Jesus to drink on him is the same as to look to him and to believe in him it's a metaphor for believing on the Lord Jesus Christ I'm going to throw in a free Latin lesson for you this evening August and the bishop of Hippo many many centuries ago said crede et mandu casti which means believe and you have eaten believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ and that is what it is to feed on him a little bit earlier the Israelites had said to Jesus what must we do to do the work that God requires I think they have this sense of you know give us a list of things that we have to do and we'll do it we'll earn our way to heaven we'll make ourselves right with God what do we have to do and Jesus says to them the work of God is this to believe in the one he has sent and I think you know that's why so many people find the gospel hard to take because it hits at our human pride if we were to stand in church and give a list of 20 things for people to do and they could earn their way to heaven I think a lot of people would say yeah go on I'm going for it but we're told no you cannot earn your way to heaven even if you were to live a sinless life from this day forward which you can't and I can't how would that redeem the days and the years that went before but no our only way to acceptance with God is to accept his provision and to feed on Jesus to believe on him so if you're not yet a Christian here this evening can I appeal to you to think about that and to think through I can't make myself right with God I need to put my trust in God's provision in Jesus' redeeming death and for those of us who are believers let us look to feed on him day by day to trust in him to believe in him day by day in a few minutes we're going to take the bread bread and drink the drink as Jesus called us on to do in remembrance of me and it's sometimes termed a means of grace and it is but there's nothing magic about the bread or the drink it is a means of grace to us as we take it by faith as we remember and look back to what the

Lord Jesus Christ has done for us the Lord Jesus the true bread who came down from heaven may we all be feeding on him and Peter's going to come now and lead us at the Lord's table