

17 Preparing for Jericho – Part 3

A Quick Review of Previous Preparations

God never sends His soldiers into battle unprepared. He always works *in them*, to cleanse, remind, encourage, and move toward maturity. It is *after that*, and only after that, that His people are ready for battle. And then God is ready to work *through them*.



So far, we have looked at five steps in preparation. In this chapter, we look at the sixth. It concerns the provision of manna that Israel had been living off of for the last thirty-nine years.

Inner Preparations Before Israel Could Go Into the Promised Land					
The Power of Encouragement and Exhortation	Miraculous Provision: The Parting of the Jordan River	A Memorial So They Would Never Forget	Circumcision Renewed: Cleansing and Sanctification	The Passover Renewed: Worship and Celebration of Salvation	Manna: The Principle of Provision Continued

6. Manna Ceased ... but the “Manna Principle” Continued

For forty years, God provided Israel with manna every day. But once they entered the Promised Land, things changed. *“Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year”* (Joshua 5:12).

The history of manna in the wilderness takes on a new dynamic when we consider it was part of God’s preparation and training of a new generation of soldiers sent to conquer the seven nations of Canaan.

The feasting and abundance in the “*Land flowing with milk and honey*” was the reward of the soldier once he had defeated his enemies. However, before he could defeat the armies of Canaan, he must defeat the cravings of his flesh, or the abundance of the Promised Land would defeat him. Manna exposed the uncontrolled cravings of their fathers who wasted their life in vanity and died in defeat not receiving their inheritance (Psalms 78:24-33). The wilderness boot camp preceded the battle, and the battle preceded the bounty. Victory over their own cravings made them fit soldiers to have victory over their enemies.

Even though the manna ceased before the battle of Jericho, the lessons learned from manna in the wilderness needed to become the “*Manna Principle*” for each new generation. God works in the same way with each of us. He **humbles us** and **tests us**, to make us dependent upon Him and His Word. And it’s a good thing.

*And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. **So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD** (Deut. 8:2-3, emphasis mine).*

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Born to be Soldiers

The name Spartan has become synonymous with an elite soldier who was trained to be disciplined, fearless, sacrificing, and fierce in battle. Spartan soldiers examined young babies. Those who were strong were destined to become Spartan soldiers; the weak were to become slaves. At the age of seven they were taken from their homes and entered military school.

There they had to endure great hardships to make them strong and prepare them for difficult days on the battlefield. They were deprived of food to learn to adapt to hunger. They faced the extremes of weather both hot and cold. They built their muscles and military skills by constant training and fighting with one another. They endured pain, lack of sleep, exhaustion, hunger and thirst. Spartans believed that excess and luxuries weakened the soldier. When the Spartan male turned twenty, he was tested for fitness. Passing this fitness test was required in order to become a citizen, which also meant becoming a soldier of Sparta.⁵

⁵ Sources: Adapted from, *Ancient Greece*, History Wiz; *The Spartans Physical and Military Training*, Thomas Hickman, Longwood University.

There was a big contrast between the Spartan's training and God's military training. The Spartans spent their time training the world's toughest and most skilled warriors. Israel did not. There is no mention of training with the sword, spear, bow and arrow, or horse and chariots. There is no mention of training the body through wrestling or strength exercises. The focus was not on the physical strength of the soldier, but upon the spiritual strength of believing and obeying God. The training was based on the study and meditation of the Word of God that gives faith.

The manna principle helped in the soldier placing his focus, not on his stomach's appetite, but upon the discipline of denying those appetites and meditating on God.

Sons Become Soldiers

The wilderness journey from Egypt to the Promised Land had many purposes: God redeeming His people, revealing His Laws, statutes, and judgments, and developing the Tabernacle, offerings, and priesthood, were just a few in the process of preparing Israel to be a great nation.

However, we've been focusing on the process of slaves becoming sons, servants, and soldiers in the conquest of Canaan. The wilderness journey provided a new generation their boot camp experience, in which a disciplined army was forged like a sword in a fire.

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Manna was part of the soldier's daily rations. Once they learned the lessons of manna that their fathers refused to learn, they were ready for battle. Humbled and tested by manna, the soldier learned something about his own selfish desires. Allowing him to suffer hunger, he was made to hunger for spiritual food. Once the soldier submitted to the will of God and God's daily provision, he was in a position of contentment with anything God provided. Contentment brought rest and peace in his wilderness journey, unlike his fathers who hated another day in the wilderness. He could be entrusted with more, because he no longer lived for "bread alone."

Moses, Joshua, and Caleb were content with manna because they were content with God. However, manna revealed that the generation who came out of Egypt still had Egypt in them – they were living for their bellies and not their souls. God would raise up a new generation in the wilderness who would learn the lessons of manna and would be content with God.

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This generation of soldiers was better equipped to face the giants and fortified cities of Canaan. They did not spend their manna years in vain. They were ready to obey God's unusual commands on the battlefield, not relying on their own strength or common sense. When God told them to march around Jericho in silence for six days, they didn't question or complain. They simply obeyed. When God said, "*Shout*," on the seventh day, they were again ready to simply obey – and the walls of Jericho came tumbling down before them.

Manna Was Part of the Preparation for Victory at Jericho

The renewal of the covenant of circumcision, the revival of the Passover, and now the lesson of the manna were all part of God's preparation for victory at Jericho and the conquest of the Promised Land.

Manna served God's purpose and now the soldiers entered a new dynamic and began to enjoy their inheritance as they ate of the abundance and variety of the Promised Land. It is important that we stop and meditate on the fact that "*then the manna ceased*." It is filled with history, purpose, and principles for the soldiers of Christ.

The History of Manna

The food was good in Egypt. Israel loved it. It is no surprise that when they left Egypt, they began complaining about food.

Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Ex. 16:1-3).

God showed His miraculous power in Egypt and at the Red Sea. He promised that He would lead them to inherit the Promised Land. God expected them to trust Him and exercise faith when tested. Instead, ***they complained against God***.

God provided for them through a daily supply of a new food. It fell from the sky and was called *manna*. It was a supernatural provision: enough to feed everyone. No one lacked. It appeared every morning for six days, but not on the Sabbath. It would melt in the heat if not gathered early in the morning. It could not be preserved for a second day, for it bred worms if not eaten the same day. However, there was an exception. On the day before the Sabbath, a two-day supply was gathered, and it miraculously lasted for two days without rotting (Exodus 16:15-26).

One clear purpose of manna was to provide for nearly two million people in the wilderness. Without this provision, it would have been impossible for Israel to survive for their long journey.

God never intended for manna to be Israel's food supply for forty years. Its purpose was temporary: **to test, to teach, to train**, until they came to the abundance of the Promised Land. Had they responded in faith to God's preparation and revelation period in the wilderness, the provision of manna would have ceased in less than two years. But they tempted God ten times. Their final failure came at Kadesh when they refused to fight for their inheritance in the Promised Land. Because of their unbelief, God had that generation die off over the next thirty-eight years.

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In spite of their rebellion, God did not withdraw His provision of manna from them. God raised up a new generation of soldiers, raised on the ration of manna in the boot camp of the wilderness.

Manna and the Soldier's Cravings

God saw what was in Israel's heart. God led them to a place where there was no food. He purposely allowed them to hunger and then fed them with manna. Why? To humble them and to make them know what their heart was like. God saw their flesh, rebellion, and their lustful cravings, which they did not confess to God. Had they learned the lesson from manna about their cravings, they would not have fallen into false worship of the Golden Calf.

Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" (Numbers 11:4-5)

From Israel's perspective, their desire for a greater variety of food was reasonable. They had grown tired of manna and came to despise it. Remember that, while Israel was sick of manna, men like Moses, Joshua, and Caleb, seemed to learn the lessons of manna and were grateful to God for His heavenly food. It was all a matter of perspective and faith.

From God's perspective, they were not humbled before Him or grateful for His provisions. They tested God by rejecting manna and asking for meat to satisfy their cravings. This manifest their sinful flesh, but they did not see it. They did not believe in God nor trust in His salvation.

And they tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy. Yes, they spoke against God: They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock, so that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people?" Therefore the Lord heard this and was furious; So a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation. Yet He had commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of heaven, had rained down manna on them to eat, and given them of the bread of heaven. Men ate angels' food; He sent them food to the full. (Psalms 78:18-25).

Asking for meat and being full did not satisfy their cravings because food was not their main problem. It was their sinful hearts. Manna exposed their cravings and lack of contentment in God. God's desire was that they might humble themselves before Him and cry out for a new heart. Instead, manna only made them more miserable. When they refused to believe God, He let them live their lives in emptiness.

So they ate and were well filled, for He gave them their own desire. They were not deprived of their craving; but while their food was still in their mouths, the wrath of God came against them, and slew the stoutest of them, and struck down the choice men of Israel. In spite of this they still sinned, and did not believe in His wondrous works. Therefore their days He consumed in futility, and their years in fear. (Psalms 78:29-33).

Manna helped them understand the true nature of the flesh. We must learn that our lusts are not subdued by having our passions satisfied. Lust is like a fire that is never satisfied. The more fuel you give it, then the more it will burn.

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Soldiers of Christ must humble themselves before God and become dependent upon Him daily. When we trust God, we can be overcomers; otherwise, we will be overcome.

Joshua Learned the Lessons of Manna

God often teaches us through the lives of biblical characters. When we compare the first generation, who complained about manna and wasted their lives in the wilderness because of unbelief, to the second generation who learned the principles that God was teaching Israel through manna and grew in faith and were prepared for victory, we see a stark contrast.

That generation that came out of Egypt never saw that the lesson of manna was to help get Egypt out of them. Manna was never the problem. The problem was their ungodly flesh.

Their problem was bigger than the giants, the wilderness, the food, and the heat. Their problem was an uncircumcised heart and an unbroken will. No wonder they wanted to return to Egypt. No wonder they so quickly made a Golden Calf to worship.

In sharp contrast to that generation was the leadership and example of Moses, Caleb, and Joshua. They had the same manna and the same trials of faith in the wilderness, but they responded to God in faith, rather than question His leadership.

Joshua's task was to train the next generation in faith. True faith leads to gratitude, and gratitude leads to worship, that leads to contentment in God. Those characteristics include:

- Expressing gratitude for the provision of God in the desert.
- Marveling at the supernatural power of God to supply bread from heaven and water from the Rock.
- Trusting the continued faithfulness of God even when the people were unfaithful.
- Understanding the Sabbath day supply of manna that, unlike the other six days, did not rot.
- Daily submitting to and receiving what God in His wisdom had provided.

We have a choice with manna. We can be like the first generation, who let daily manna drive them to despair. Or we can be like the new generation who was content with what and how God provided.

God could have provided an Old Testament version of the Golden Corral buffet restaurant, complete with a full banquet for Israel, but He chose not to. A full smorgasbord with a variety of foods would not have satisfied the cravings of the flesh.

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Joshua bowed his will to the will of God. He had been humbled, tested, and made to know his weak flesh. He learned there was a difference in living for the pleasure of God rather than the physical pleasures of this world. He learned to hunger for God and His will and to feed his soul on the Word of God.

If Joshua had not responded to the test of manna properly, he never would have trusted God's plan to conquer Jericho. In contrast, if you had asked the ten spies what they thought of the manna, my guess is that they would have complained and inquired about starting a Golden Corral franchise. Manna was a test from God. If they would not give a good report about God's provision of daily manna, then they would not give a good report about the Promise Land. The manna did not change the man. Rather, it revealed the man's character and faith.

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No wonder they saw the giants and walled cities as too great an obstacle. They were not operating on faith. They murmured at the manna, and therefore failed to learn the lessons of faith God was teaching them.

Manna was God's tool to get Egypt out of His people to prepare them for the abundance of the Promised Land. It was never God's intent to deprive His people of His bountiful blessings. He intended them to eat of the bounty of the Creator. However, God knew that, without seeing the enemy of their own selfish flesh and being broken through submission and humility, abundance would destroy them and turn them from God. Notice it was God's intent to give them abundance and they would lack nothing.

*For the LORD your God is bringing you into a **good land**, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, **in which you will lack nothing** (Deut. 8:7-9, emphasis mine).*

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God warned them not to forget His blessings and abundance when they were full and enjoying His rich abundance. They were to remember the principle: humbling precedes exalting.

When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God, ... who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end (Deut. 8:10-16).

God Continues to Use the Manna Principle in our Lives

I define the "Manna Principle" as any circumstance that God creates or allows in our life where:

- We have a need.
- We are humbled and tested.
- We are made to know our flesh, weakness, and need for dependence upon God.
- We learn that we not to live by bread alone but upon the Word of God as well.

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Joseph and the Manna Principle

Joseph's manna experience occurred in Pharaoh's prison, where he was humbled and forgotten. He had limitations placed upon his food, comfort, and liberty. This manna experience prepared him to be ready when God promoted him to rule Egypt and know no limitation to his power, wealth, and abundance. Because he had learned to discipline his appetites in prison, he could control his appetites in the palace where he had abundance.

David and the Manna Principle

God trained David for the throne. David had his manna experience hiding in caves from Saul. This prepared him for the throne and palace where he had no limitations on his abundance. David began his life with little and learned to be content. Therefore God entrusted him with much.

Solomon and the Manna Principle

Solomon was the richest of all the kings. He began well by asking for wisdom above wealth. God gave him riches as well. Later he let his appetites control him, and he turned from building God's kingdom to building his own.

When God is not enough in our life, then manna and all that God provides will never satisfy us and give us peace and purpose. For Solomon, manna was not enough; one wife was not enough; gold was not enough; great buildings were not enough; fame was not enough. Solomon was never satisfied. He always needed more.

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When the manna principle has been mastered, then God's Word satisfies our soul.

I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food (Job 23:12).

More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb (Psalms 19:10).

Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart (Jeremiah 15:16).

To have an abundance of food and possessions without having learned the manna principle will lead to bondage to material things. But God's will for us is to be free – free from bondage and free to worship Him.

Paul and the Manna Principle

God gave Paul a manna experience complete with a “*thorn in the flesh.*” We are never told what the “thorn” was, but it must have hurt. Humanly speaking, it must have limited Paul's effectiveness in ministry. But the thorn was like manna in that it humbled him and made him more dependent upon God. Paul asked three times for God to remove the it. But God said, “*No, my grace is sufficient for you for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*” Paul changed his attitude and began to glory in his infirmities. If Paul were in the wilderness, it would be like him saying, “*I just can't wait until tomorrow to eat my manna supplied by God. I delight in it.*”

And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Cor. 12:9).

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Paul and Silas converted their prison house into a house of praise because of the manna principle at work in their lives. They were able to sing praises to God all night long, even though their bodies were in chains (Acts 16).

Paul reminded the church of the manna principle. He taught that they were pilgrims passing through this life, and that their eternal citizenship was in heaven. He warned the church to be wary of those who set their minds on earthly things and who were in bondage to the pleasures of the world (Phil. 3:19-20).

I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:11-13).

Jesus and the Manna Principle

When Jesus was facing hunger cravings from his forty day fast in the wilderness, Satan came to tempt Him to satisfy those cravings by turning stone into bread. Jesus showed his knowledge and understanding of manna when He then quoted Deut. 8:3, *“Man shall not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.”*

When Jesus was tired and hungry from His journey to Samaria, the disciples went into the city to get food. While waiting, He brought the Gospel message to the woman of Samaria. Jesus told her, *“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”*

When the disciples returned with food, Jesus did not eat it. They wondered if someone else had given him a meal.

But He said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.” Therefore the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work (John 4:32-34).

Our Response to the Manna Principle

We live in two dimensions: *the physical* and *the spiritual*. Meeting our physical needs is important ... but **mastering** them is even more important. We must learn that we are not living only for physical manna, which is necessary, but also for *spiritual manna*, which is eternal.

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How do we do that? I have two specific suggestions that I believe will help us apply The Manna Principle: (1) Learn to see God as a good Father; and (2) Learn to pray Scripture back to God.

First, the Fatherhood of God

Some of you may have a hard time with the concept of the Fatherhood of God because you had such a strained relationship with your earthly dad. Perhaps he had a really short fuse and got angry a lot. Maybe he was inattentive, or absent. And you’re still suffering the consequences of his poor parenting. Anytime you think of a *“father,”* you have incredibly negative thoughts. You’re projecting onto your Heavenly Father the limitations and failures of your earthy father.

Let me encourage you to stop seeing your Heavenly Father through the lens of your earthly one. Instead, start evaluating your earthly father by your Heavenly one. Maybe your earthly dad

didn't care and looked at you more as a nuisance. But your Heavenly Father can't stop thinking about you. He dances over you constantly with singing, and knows when a single hair falls from your head.

Stop seeing your Heavenly Father through the lens of your earthly one. Instead, start evaluating your earthly father by your Heavenly one.

Your earthy father may have been self-absorbed, but your Heavenly Father was so committed to you that He absorbed your pain on the cross to spare you the eternal consequences of your choices. So, go before the throne of God boldly and say, *"Dad, I have a need,"* and just tell Him what's on your heart without all the posturing or obsessing about needing to have the right words in prayer.⁶

There is a great picture of former President John F. Kennedy. The most powerful man in the world, the ruler of the free world, is sitting behind his desk in the Oval Office, reading some papers and probably deciding the fate of the free world. But underneath the desk is his son, three-year-old John Jr., peeking out from below, with a totally different relationship to the man behind the desk than anyone else in the world. If that three-year-old had spoken up at that time, he might have said, *"That's not the ruler of the free world. That's my dad ... and I need some Cheerios."*

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Second, Praying Scripture Back to God

Let me return for a moment to the concept of prayer, because it plays a key role in applying the Manna Principle. People often ask me how they can pray more effectively. Part of that answer is that they should learn to pray Scripture back to God.

What does that mean? Praying Scripture back to God is where you take God's Words and pray them back to Him.

Paul made it clear, *"All Scripture is breathed out by God"* (2 Timothy 3:16, ESV). To say that Scripture is God-breathed is to say it is inspired, or *infused with the Spirit*. The Greek word for *breath* is the same word that is rendered *spirit*.

⁶ Adapted from J.D. Greear's sermon, *Learning to Pray*.

Your prayer life won't be empowered by greater techniques or even by more fervent efforts. Your prayer life is empowered when it is infused with the life of the Spirit of God. You can pray God's word back to Him and, when you do, you are praying in the Spirit.

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So, I want to ground my prayers in Scripture. One thing is certain:

Our most powerful prayers are hyperlinked to the promises of God. When you know you are praying the promises of God, you can pray with holy confidence.⁷

1. Whenever you spend time in the Word, highlight verses that stand out to you. Go back and pray them back to God. Let your prayers start with the reading of Scripture.
2. Memorize Scripture. I love to listen to people pray who lace Scripture all through their prayers. Commit to memorize ten verses this coming year. As you memorize and meditate on those verses, the Spirit of God will bring them to your memory as you are praying. You'll find yourself bringing those verses into your prayers for yourself, other people, your church, and the battles you are facing.

⁷ Mark Batterson, *The Circle Maker*.