

PM Exodus 16:4

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[0 : 0 0] in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 8 and we're just going to read verses 1 to 6.
Deuteronomy chapter 8 verses 1 to 6.

The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers and you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness that he might humble you testing you to know what was in your heart whether you would keep his commandments or not and he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these 40 years know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son the Lord your God disciplines you so you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him we'll just read to there may God bless to us this reading please be seated our second reading is also in the old testament the book of exodus chapter 16 and this is entitled bread from heaven we'll read the whole of the chapter exodus 16 they set out from elam and all the congregation of the people of israel came to the wilderness of sin which is between elam and sinai on the 15th day of the second month after they departed from the land of egypt and the whole congregation of the people of israel grumbled against moises and aaron in the wilderness and the people of israel said to them would that we had died by the hand of the lord in the land of egypt when we sat by the wheat pots and ate bread to the full for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger then the lord said to moises behold i am about to rain bread from heaven for you and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day that i may test them whether they will walk in my law or not on the sixth day when they prepare what they bring in it will be twice as much as they gather daily so moises and aaron said to all the people of israel at evening you shall know that it was the lord who brought you out of the land of egypt and in the morning you shall see the glory of the lord because he has heard your grumbling against the lord for what are we that you grumble against us and moises said for the lord gives you in the coming in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full because the lord has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him what are we your grumbling is not against us but against the lord then moises said to aaron say to the whole congregation of the people of israel come near before the lord for he has heard your grumbling and as soon as aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of israel they looked towards the wilderness and behold the glory of the lord appeared in the cloud and the lord said to moises i've heard the grumbling of the people of israel say to them at twilight you shall eat meat and in the morning you shall be filled with bread then you shall know that i am the lord your god in the evening quail came up and covered the camp and in the morning dew lay around the camp and when the dew had gone up there was on the face of the wilderness a fine flake like thing finest frost on the ground when the people of israel saw it they said to one another what is it for they did not know what it was and moises said to them it is the bread

that the lord has given you to eat this is what the lord has commanded gather of it each of you as much as he can eat you shall each take an omer according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent and the people of israel did so they gathered some more some less but when they measured it with an omer whoever gathered much had nothing left over and whoever gathered little had no lack each of them gathered as much as he could eat and moses said to them let no one leave any of it over till the morning but they did not listen to moses some left part of it till the morning and did bed worms and stank and moses was angry with them morning by morning they gathered it each as much as he could eat but when the sun grew hot it melted on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread two omers each and when all the leaders of the congregation came and told moses he said to them this is what the lord has commanded tomorrow is a day of solemn rest a holy sabbath to the lord bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil and all that is left over lay aside to be kept to the morning so they laid it aside till the morning as moses commanded them and it did not stink and there was no worms in it moses said eat it today for today is a sabbath to the lord today you will not find it in the field for six days you shall gather it but on the seventh day which is a sabbath there will be none on the seventh day some of the people went out to gather but they found none and the lord said to moses how long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws see the lord has given you the sabbath therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days remain each of you in his place let no one go out of his place on the seventh day so the people rested on the seventh day now the house of israel called its name manna it was like coriander seed white and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey moses said this is what the lord has commanded let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations so that they may see the bread with which i fed you in the wilderness when i brought you out of the land of egypt and moses said to aaron take a jar and put an omer of manna in it and place it before the lord to be kept throughout your generations as the lord commanded moses so aaron placed it before the testimony to be kept the people of israel ate the manna for 40 years till they came to habitable land they ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of canaan an omer is the tenth part of an ephah may god bless to us this reading too now we want to look this evening at the story of the giving of the manna and the quails and that basically is the story of exodus chapter 16 and if you want a particular text to look at it would be verse 4 and this bible is so small i can't see the print that's no better i can't see verse 4 you see verse 3 yeah gotcha then the lord said to moses behold i am about to rain bread from heaven for you and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day that i may test them whether they will walk in my law or not i am about to rain bread from heaven for you to test them now this story is quite well known it's a fairly simple story and yet i do think that it has its importance for example it's mentioned not just in exodus numbers and deuteronomy as you might

expect it to be but it's also mentioned in nehemiah and the psalms in the old testament and in matthew luke john hebrews and revelation in the new testament so here are the inspired writers and they're looking back to the past and they're finding some thing in this story that is used to them in what they want to tell the people so there must be something useful and important in this passage that the inspired writers appeal to it and the importance of it it seems to me is this here are the people of israel and they're at a new stage in their history they've been slaves for years and years and now they're a free people and they're a nation they went down to egypt as a large family an extended family and they come up out of egypt as a nation and here they are living free from constraints as god's people as god's nation how are they going to live and it seems to me that in the journeys in the desert there are lessons to be learned and there's quite a steep learning curve that's going on in their lives both literally and metaphorically they've never gone this way before and of certain lessons that they need to learn and that's what this story it seems to me is pretty well all about here god is teaching his people how they must live as his distinctive people and he's given them lessons that they should learn in order to equip them to be his people and to live as his people ought to live now if you put it that way you can see that although our circumstances are entirely different from theirs pretty well we can still ask well is there anything in this for us today and of course the answer is yes there's something that we can get from this too so here are some lessons that god's people need to learn if they're going to live in a way that brings honor to god and indeed blessing to themselves there are three things that god is teaching them here god provides what is necessary god tests his people and god shows his glory and we're going to look at each of these little by little and see what they mean here and how they can be applied to us today god provides what is necessary the people really are in pretty desperate need they're a huge company of people they're living in an unproductive traveling through an unproductive desert and the need for food is obvious when no source of food is immediately available to them they hanker for the food that they had had in egypt and already just six weeks into their freedom they're complaining saying that they wish they had never left egypt it's a pretty serious situation that they're in they're grumbling against god which is never a good thing to do and they're complaining about a very gracious act of god when he delivered them from egypt and behind their complaint is a lack of confidence in his grace a lack of willingness to trust in him and here they need to learn a lesson namely god provides what is necessary he gives them a fairly plentiful supply there is no sense here that they had to ration the provisions that were given to him rather the reverse they gathered it each as much as he could eat so the provision was plentiful and met the needs of all it was a constant supply okay it didn't come on the seventh day but it came in double

portion on the sixth but it was something constant that that came to them day after day week after week year after year until they came to the edge of the promised land it was a constant supply that he gave them and although there were some complaints made about it there was some variety in this they had complained about the lack of bread and the lack of meat and they got both a bread that was unlike any other bread and to my mind sounds an awful lot more tasty than most bread is although i quite like bread myself but it sounds particularly tasty this bread and they were given meat as well so there may be some monotony in their diet but nonetheless there is some variety as well and that it seems to me it just does underline this god supplies what is necessary god provides for his own and he does so plentifully constantly and with variety that's what they're experiencing here and that's the lesson that they're meant to learn god is saying to them just look at what sort of a god you are what sort of god i am i'm one who opens my hand liberally and provides for you you just need to look to me and trust in me and all that you need will be yours and if they had learned that lesson quickly they would have spared themselves an awful lot of difficulties god provides what is necessary and we don't need to develop that in any great extent because we know it at least in our minds we know it it's part and parcel of the teaching of the scripture god provides what is necessary for his own that's why we sang psalm 23 a psalm that speaks of god's provision for us it's poetic so some of it's literal more literal than others but it does suggest that god is with us he's guiding us he's providing for us in times of difficulty he's with us and all that we need is available to us god provides for his own that was the teaching of the old testament and it's the teaching of the new testament as well as we know very well and the one that i particularly like in this connection is what is said in philippians and my god will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in christ jesus and it may be that we think of spiritual needs in particular and of course these are in the picture too but actually the context of that verse suggested it was material needs that were in mind as well so when it says god will supply every need of yours it means that god will supply every need of yours not just spiritual but material as well well these are the promises and the expectations of the believers in old testament and new testament times and they're just a reinforcement of this basic lesson that god was seeking to teach his people here god provides for his people and as an outcome of this they were meant to say we can trust him okay we can't see any human means of us being supplied for but god will do it he did miracles for us in egypt he can do miracles for us still and if they had just put their faith in the lord they wouldn't have grumbled and they wouldn't have been discontented and that applies for us today god will supply for you are you a sinner with a feeling of guilt god will supply forgiveness have you no peace of mind god will supply that too are you a believer in times of difficulty god will show you the way through are you feeling lonely god will provide companionship is there anxiety in your heart god will provide freedom from fear and from undue disquiet it's all there for the asking because that's the sort of god that there is for his people god supplies what is necessary

[16 : 30] now from here on we're not thinking just of the fact that he supplies but in the next two points that we're dealing with the the important thing is not just that he did supply for them but the way in which he did this and it was very much a miraculous sort of supply that he gave to them not that they didn't come about by by natural means to some degree at least but that it came about by him guiding his providence i'm sure that in other places at other times quail fell upon encampments but in this case quail that's birds of course they they fall every evening on the camp of israel wherever they happen to be and they do so six days a week and they do so throughout 40 years you know that's the sort of picture that we've got here and that's providence but it's not normal providence that there's something special about this there's something as a miraculous element in this we might see in regard to the manna i think we can say that as well some people think in that tend to agree with that there was something in the atmosphere that around which the water vapor condensed and then it came down as dew and when the dew was evaporated then that material was left on the desert floor and it was edible and so there's an element of nature in it but again not entirely so what lay behind it was god's special providence and this you see is something that is emphasized here in the way that these things are described they've never seen anything like this before and so when they see the manna they say in hebrew manna now that that that that is literally what they said and that means in hebrew what is it and that's why we call it manna why the scriptures call it manna but it isn't just a word it's got meaning attached to it it means what is it and that was an ongoing witness to the fact that they didn't know what this was they hadn't seen it before they didn't understand what it was and therefore it was pointing to something extra special in its provision and and this is emphasized in deuteronomy 8 he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know people said manna what is it because they'd never seen it before and they asked the four old folks in the camp what is it and they didn't know either have you heard of this in egypt have you had a tradition of this they knew nothing about it there was nothing of human initiative in this they couldn't understand it from a human perspective it was all from above and that's why in the psalm that we were singing it is spoken of as angels food angels food that's not literally so but it's a poetic way because the psalms of course are poetry that use imagery it's a way of saying it comes from above it's out with human or it's not by human origin that this comes it's bred from heaven and and that's the thing that the next two points that we're going to look at depend on this did not come about by human effort it's not understood by the human mind it's beyond that the hand of god is at work in this and the hand of god is at work in this in a special extraordinary fashion that the human brain does not understand properly okay with that as background then we have then got to look at this

god tests his people now this is in verse four as i mentioned when i read that i'm about to rain bread from heaven for you that i may test you to see whether they will walk in my ways or not and this therefore is something that is designed to see what they're made of to test what's in their hearts and to see what their priorities are and it's teaching them something about their priorities in life god tests his people remember that this is also what deuteronomy 8 made of this passage this was sent to humble them and to test them to see whether they would acknowledge god and walk in his ways and respect his word and that of course is why this can be used in matthew and luke's gospel in regard to the temptations of jesus he was being tested he was being tempted and he uses this story in that connection or that yeah he uses that story the story in that connection so that fits into his thought pattern too jesus saw this as an example of god's people being tested and he takes it over into his experience of being tested or tempted so what i'm saying is there's ample testimony to the fact that this was something designed to test them what were they being tested on to see if they would walk in god's ways or not now here is something that i only mentioned because i think the bible teaches it otherwise i would rather prefer to miss it out not that i don't agree with it but it's not the big thing it does seem to me inevitable to say that god was teaching them about whether they would keep the sabbath or not now i say that because you know these things are actually put side by side this is what the lord has commanded you tomorrow is a day of solemn rest a holy sabbath to the lord and it does seem if we read this that that is an element in the story because certainly the keeping of the sabbath is pretty prominent throughout this chapter and so i have to say that i do think that that is part of the story this is a test are they going to keep the sabbath or not and i think the the reason why this is in here is simply because i suspect that over all the time that they've been in egypt they haven't been keeping a sabbath at all the sabbath we believe was instituted in the beginning god blessed the sabbath day this day of rest and hallowed it made it holy and that is taken up in the command the fourth commandment and god says the sabbath was made for man he didn't say the sabbath was made for the jewish people the sabbath was made for humanity which means it's universal in its application and humanitarian in its intent so so i'm saying okay the sabbath was instituted at the beginning so why do they need to be tested about it now and i'm suggesting probably because in their time in egypt they weren't able to keep the sabbath and they were slaves they had to work they maybe worked seven days a week for all we know and i doubt if the egyptian taskmasters allowed them to distinguish their sabbath day as different from all others at any rate at the beginning of this new stage in their history this is something that's put before them and the lesson is simply god wants us to make due preparation in order that we may be able to rest on the day of rest and to let others rest on the day of rest and that it seems to me is what they're being tested about and it's the application for us today we must make due preparations as they did in order that we may be able to rest as much as possible

and to let others rest as much as possible as well and that has all sorts of implications which we're not going to go into because to my mind it isn't the main point of what they're being tested on so what are they being tested on and the answer given is this in deuteronomy 8 that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the lord so they're being tested on this what is it that is going to count most for them is it the bread that they're being provided with or is it the means by which that bread came to them is the big thing for them that their bodies were nourished and their stomachs were full or is the big thing that god was miraculously at work with a powerful word on their behalf that it seems to me is the thing that they're being tested about the word that is spoken about here is not the written word at least i don't think that it's mainly that that is in mind it's god's word that commands the the clouds that they give rain it's god's word that commands that the sun shines it's god commands that there's storms and so on and earthquakes and whatever it's god's word of command over nature his command and providence that's what we sang about to the skies he gave the order heaven's doors he opened wide he gave the order here he is lord of providence and he gives a command and it rains the quails he gives a command and the manna comes down it's god's providential care over nature that is being spoken about here and they're being taught to think about that as god's word word of command that opened the heavens so that the manna came down that directed the quail so they landed on the camp god ordered it he spoke a word and it was done in his good providence and if we look at it in that way of course that's what fits in well with jesus temptation as well he was asked to make stones out of bread and he in effect says okay just remember this it's not the bread that counts it's how the bread comes to me that counts and it's not going to come to me by you asking me to do it it's going to come to me by the mouth of god and sure enough when the devil had left him the angels came and supplied from okay so so that's the idea he's not saying you've got to pay attention to the bible it's more important than eating or get your priorities right give more attention to reading the word than to your food that may be taught in the scriptures i'm not denying that for a moment all i'm saying is that it's not actually i think what is being taught here is god's providential care looking after his creatures and commanding nature to fulfill their needs and to meet their their needs and supply for them that's what's in mind here so are they going to look at that bread and say now we're happy we've got the bread or are they going to look behind the bread and say it's the hand of god that's the thing that matters god has spoken a word on our behalf he's fighting for us he's acting for us he's providing for us it is control over nature the word of god is what matters in this situation that's the test that was before them now what do we make of that because how did our food come to us and we know the way in which it came to us

we can trace the way in which our food comes to us and we can see the human agency involved in that and we should do that but we've got to do more than that we've got to go behind that and see that in all the the varied duties and pieces of work through which our food comes to us ultimately behind it all is the gracious word of god commanding that this should be now i try to think more down to earthly on this and when we were students in the free church college the professors and the students had dinner together and the professors took turns in asking a blessing and there was one professor in particular who obviously prepared his blessings beforehand and he had some very fine statements in his prayers and one of them was this bless all those through whose manifold labours these gifts have been made conveniently accessible to us anybody that knows the professors in those days will be able to guess which professor it was anyway that's what he said and it stuck in my mind because you've got so much truth there in words that absolutely fit in nicely bless all those through whose manifold labours these gifts have been made conveniently accessible to us so i began to think about all those through whose manifold labours my breakfast is made available to me or your breakfast is made available to you and i had to google a fair bit about this but nonetheless i got this picture have you ever considered how many people involved in making a piece of toast with butter and marmalade and a cup of coffee with sugar and milk and if you think about it it's quite astonishing how many through whose manifold labours these gifts have become conveniently accessible to us the bread the wheat it may have been grown in britain but it might have been grown in canada or the united states the butter it might have come from britain but it could have come from denmark the marmalade surely came from spain if it didn't come from south africa the tea well we use red bush tea so it comes from south africa but most tea apparently comes from kenya the milk it might have come from your local dairy but it might have come from ireland the sugar probably came from belize or brazil the appliances that you use the kettle and the toaster almost certainly they came from china the simplest breakfast has a strong international flavour so how many people were involved in bringing it to us and you've got the farmers that grew these things and tended them and reaped them and you've got the transport workers that took them to the factories and the process workers that processed them there and you've got the packers that packed them into neat bundles and those that transported them to the docks and the dockers that loaded them and the seamen that brought them to our shores and the lorry drivers that took them to the depots and the lorry drivers that took them to the supermarkets and the packers that brought them to the shelves how many people there contributed to our breakfast and the answer is innumerable people did so and although the food chain is something that man can analyze that people can analyze and we can say that came from there that came from there and so on it's so complicated it's so complex that we've got to say it's a remarkable thing and we've got to go beyond that

and say just as the people there did this provision for us is remarkable it was the hand of God it was God at work ok he doesn't work in our case miraculously but he gives the rain and the sun to make the crops grow he gives wisdom that has been accumulated over the years so that good crops are grown in plenty and free from disease to a large extent he gives us machinery that makes it easier to harvest these crops he gives scientific knowledge it's all his and he supplied all that he's behind it all his hand's behind it all and that i think is what this is teaching us to see and that's the question that he tests us on do you just take your bread from God ok you say thanks but have you really thought about what that means and have you realised this is a big thing that this has come to me in such a convenient form all sorts of people are involved in it all under God's hand what a wonderful God he is graciously providing for us working everything out in this way so that it works smoothly even in Covid

[33 : 58] I was astonished how well the chain the food chain worked ok there were some lacking things in certain occasions but not seriously and even in the midst of such difficulties the food chain still operated and that to my mind is just a picture of the marvellous God that we've got that stands behind it all and directs it all in accordance with his good promise seed time and harvest will never fail and the result of that is that we get what we get from day to day so let's make sure that we don't fail this test that while we take the provision that is given we remember the giver and we're impressed by the fact that ultimately God's word is involved in this he gave the command for nature to work as it did he gave the command so that human beings act as they do his word is behind it all that's what counts man does not live by bread only but by every word that comes from the mouth of God in his gracious providence

God tests his people now we've been rather long on that God shows his glory and this is something that again is given to us quite distinctly here at evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord so what was going to happen in the evening the quail was going to come down so he's saying to them when you see the quail coming down you are going to know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt what was going to happen in the morning the manna was going to appear what were they to see in that in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord now when he said that to them when he said that to them I doubt if they understood what was involved in that and even after he said it and experienced it I don't know if they did either but in order to help them you see there is this appearance of the glory of the Lord in verse 10 here and as soon as Moses sorry as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel they looked toward the wilderness and behold the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud so he says you are going to see the glory of the Lord in the morning and here is a preview you might see here is the sort of thing you have got to grasp and he gives them this display of God's glory they look out what do they see they see brilliance they see majesty they see splendor

I don't know what they see but they see something to their physical eyes they see something of the glory and splendor of God and so they say what a God we've got what a great God we've got what a wonderful God we've got that's what it means when they see the glory of the Lord so that's what happened literally and that's Moses is what's going to happen when you see the manna in the morning and I think that he means every morning that's what you have to see morning after morning evening after evening this is what you're going to see morning after morning you're going to see the glory of the Lord not that he's going to appear to them but they're going to but there's this opportunity to them to grasp the same idea they're going to look at this manna and they're going to say what a wonderful God we've got what a great God we've got what a gracious God we've got what a good God we've got and if they say that they're seeing his glory that I suggest is what they're talking about here and that you see was a remarkable thing the last time I preached on this somebody said well that's not likely to happen but that's the sort of thing that I think is meant to happen here after all these people have seen

God working in Egypt he's seen their miracles they've seen the wonderful things he does if he does another wonderful thing for them why shouldn't they say this is a manifestation of God's glory I see how great he is how wonderful he is in the provision of this manna and similarly with the quails in the evening they're going to see they're going to know that it was the Lord who brought them out of the land of Egypt in other words they're going to say the one that brought us out of the land of Egypt is with us still I can see this in this provision that has been made for us and so they're going to look at the outward things and they're going to grasp God's word will lay behind it and they're going to go beyond that and they're going to see God's glory is revealed in it now for myself I very much doubt if they actually did that or many of them did that but potentially that was what they were sent for and those that were spiritually minded would see that and that you see is our most remarkable thing

God displays his glory to his people even in this remarkable provision of manna and in the providential supply of the quails if you look at it in the right way you'll end up saying what a great God there is out there what a wonderful God there is and he's my God that's what they'll end up saying according to this passage and of course the application of this is obvious if we haven't got as far as recognizing the importance of God's word in providing for us we're not going to see this but even if we do say all these provisions all this goodness all this care it comes to me by the command of God even if we say that we've just got to go that wee bit further and say this is a display of his glory it's a display of the wonderful things that he does it shows us what a great God he is it shows us what a good God he is it shows us what a gracious God he is therefore it is a display of his glory and it gives us the confidence this God is with me that's the message that we are meant to take in in connection with this so we see the lessons that they were meant to learn simple lessons at one level to begin with building up building up until something almost mind boggling in its wonder they're taught

[40 : 39] God provides what is necessary they're taught God tests us to see if we see behind these things the hand of God at work and if we do God displaces glory so that we end up saying what a wonderful God we've got if they had learned these lessons I don't think they would have had to spend 40 years in the desert and they would have if they had they would have saved themselves an awful lot to bother and that's so with us let's seek to learn these lessons too God supplies for us all that is necessary his hand lies behind these provisions and if we could only look at them as they really are we'd see them as a display of the glory of God may God bless to us his word we're going to sing in conclusion Psalm 146 this is in the Sing Psalm version