BORED WITH BREAD by Andy Diestelkamp

One event that shows God’s grace in the wilderness and points to His ultimate grace in Jesus occurs in the context of some early complaining by Israel. Just one month after their exodus, the people craved the food they had eaten in Egypt and accused Moses of bringing them into the wilderness to kill them with hunger. God responded by promising to “rain bread from heaven” (Ex. 16:1-4). This was not ordinary bread. It appeared on the ground as“a small round substance, as fine as frost” (v. 14) after the morning dew lifted. It was *“*like white coriander seed, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey”(v. 31). The people called it *manna* meaning, “What is it?” (cf. v. 15). Manna would be their staple food for the next forty years (v. 35). Yet after a year, they were again longing for the foods of Egypt while expressing discontentment with the manna (Num. 11:5,6).

The miraculous feeding of a nation of nomads was indeed a miracle of epic proportions on which later generations of Israelites looked with awe. Centuries later it was remembered fondly as a sign of God’s almighty provision and poetically called “angels’ food” (Ps. 78:24,25).

Many more centuries later Jesus miraculously fed five thousand, and many followed Him “not because [they] saw the signs, but because [they] ate of the loaves and were filled” (Jn. 6:26). When Jesus called upon them to work instead *“*for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you” (v. 27), the people wanted to know how to do such work. Jesus replied, “believe in Him whom He sent”(vv. 28,29). They responded by asking Him what sign He would perform so they *could* believe and suggested something awesome such as the bread from heaven which was given to their forefathers who wandered in the wilderness, (vv. 30,31). It was an interesting request seeing that their ancestors had tired of that bread and that God had explicitly given them that bread to humble them and teach them *“*that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD” (Dt. 8:3). The Jews of Jesus’ day imagined that, unlike their forefathers, *they* would be content with whatever God sent them from heaven (Jn. 6:32-34).

When Jesus declared Himself to be “the bread of life” (v. 35), guess what? *“*The Jews then murmured” (v. 41). In the following discourse Jesus challenged the Jews to *“*eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood” (v. 53) and “From that time many of His disciples ... walked with Him no more” (v. 66). Have we learned what Israel would not, or do we find ourselves bored with Jesus and longing for the food of Egypt? May we be content with “the true bread” (v. 32).