

## **MAN MUST OBEY GOD**

As the Israelites approached Sinai on their journey from the Red Sea to Canaan, they murmured against God. This time they complained because of hunger, accusing Moses of bringing them into the wilderness to starve. Their fickle hearts had already forgotten the rigors of Egyptian slavery, and they yearned to be back there.

God promised to “rain bread from heaven” and to satisfy them with flesh (Exo. 16:4, 12). The flesh was a one-time bounty of quail, while the “bread” was the famous manna (which lasted throughout the wilderness trek). Concerning the manna, He gave them plain instructions: They were to gather only a daily portion for each person (one omer) each day for the first five days of each week, but on the sixth day they were to gather a double portion in order to relieve the need to gather any on the seventh. By this means God both tested the submission of Israel to His will and helped introduce the sanctity of the Sabbath, which would shortly be ordered in the Decalog.

Some of the Jews provoked God by their immediate disobedience concerning the manna. In spite of the prohibition against gathering manna on the seventh day, some foolishly sought to do so (vv. 27–28). The command of God in this matter was as simple, direct, and unmistakably clear as that given to Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:16–17), but, like them, some Israelites ignored and despised it.

This flagrant violation of the Divine mandate typifies the history of all men, Jew and Gentile alike. As with the manna, God has often given commands to men to prove their faithfulness to Him. The command to Israel to march around the walls of Jericho (Jos. 6:2–5), the command to Naaman to dip seven times in Jordan (2 Kin. 5:10), and even the command of Christ that men must be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16) fall into this category.

The principal thing God has always required of man is obedience— unquestioning, trusting compliance with the Divine will. Samuel taught this lesson plainly to King Saul: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Sam. 15:22–23). Whether of not we understand why God commands something is totally beside the point. Careful, willing obedience will ever be the proof of man’s love for God (John 14:15; Rom. 6:17; 1 John 2:5). This remains so notwithstanding those characters who constantly ridicule “commandment-keeping” and hurl the specious term, “legalist,” at those who exalt God’s law!.

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