

## MAN MUST OBEY GOD

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As the Israelites approached Sinai on their journey from the Red Sea to Canaan, they murmured against God, one of many times that characterized this ungrateful people. This time they complained because of hunger accusing Moses of bringing them into the wilderness to starve (**Exodus 16:2-3**). Their fickle hearts had already forgotten the inhuman rigors of Egyptian slavery and they yearned to be back there.

God promised to “RAIN BREAD FROM HEAVEN” and to satisfy them with flesh (**vv. 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, God gave them plain instructions: They were to gather only a daily portion for each person (1 “omer” i.e., about 1/2 gallon) 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, the strict observance of which would shortly be ordered in the Decalogue (**20:8-11**).

Some of the Hebrews provoked God by their immediate disobedience concerning the manna. In spite of the explicit 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 (**Genesis 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, seemingly at the time, unrelated to the desired end, in order to prove their faithfulness to Him. God’s command to sprinkle the blood of a lamb on door posts and lintels of the Hebrew hovels (**Exodus 12:1-7**) and His ordering Moses to lift his rod and stretch forth his hand over the Red Sea (**v. 16**) must have appeared puzzling to them. The command to Israel to march around the walls of Jericho (**Joshua 6:2-5**), the command to Naaman to dip seven times in Jordan so as to be cleansed of his leprosy (**2 Kings 5:10**), and even the requirement of Christ that men must submit to immersion in water in order to be cleansed of sin (**Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 10:47-48; 22:16**; et al.) fall into this category.

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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 Samuel 15:22-23). Whether or not we understand why God commands something is totally beside the point. Careful, willing obedience will ever be the proof of man’s loyalty to and love for God and His Son (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46; John 14:15; Romans 6:17; 1 John 2:5). The wrath of our Creator against sin will be poured out upon “THEM THAT KNOW NOT GOD AND TO THEM THAT OBEY NOT THE GOSPEL” when the Lord returns (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)

The matter of unquestioning and unqualified obedience to Deity remains so notwithstanding those characters who constantly ridicule “commandment-keeping” and hurl the specious term, “legalist,” at those who exalt God’s law. The touters of *salvation-by faith only* and *salvation-by-grace-done-apart-from-any-“works”* heresies, whether among our apostate brethren or in the denominational world, will do well to heed the Word of the Lord.