



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Jesus: Bread or Benefactor?

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John 6:22-71. After feeding 5,000 families, the Galileans expected more free food. John records what Jesus said in response and how nearly everyone left Him thereafter. They wanted bread, but not the kind of bread Jesus was offering—Himself.

Today's text is a reminder that Jesus never promised to be a divine benefactor. He offers Himself to each as Lord and Savior, promising to save and satisfy the soul of man forever.

A military and political genius, Julius Caesar transformed the old Roman Republic into the Roman Empire before his untimely death in 44 B.C. He ascended politically through various offices and alliances and soon became feared as a general for his string of victories. The Senate became nervous of his growing power, challenged him and came to regret that decision. Though greatly outnumbered, Caesar stunned the Republic, dealt with his enemies and crowned himself ruler. Were we to sum up the life of Julius Caesar, perhaps his own words would be most fitting: *Veni, Vidi, Vici*—"I came, I saw, I conquered."

Often the legacy of a man's life or the movement he led can be remembered with a few words. For Winston Churchill, the words "blood, toil, tears and sweat" come to mind alongside his impassioned charge to "never give in." For Jesus, "My kingdom is not of this world," or, "the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost" both tower over His ministry (cf. John 18:36; Luke 19:10). Though His life has touched billions in the most remarkable ways, His central purpose was quite clear and singularly focused. He reminds us of this in John 6.

The Lord previously identified Himself as the Moses-like prophet by feeding a crowd of over 5,000 families (cf. Deut 18:18; John 6:1-15). They were eager to crown Him as king, but Jesus dismissed everyone to have time alone in prayer. No one understood, and the following day He explained.

JESUS CAME NOT FOR A CROWN BUT FOR A CROSS,
AND SO HE CAME NOT TO SUBDUE ARMIES BUT TO
SAVE AND SATISFY SOULS.

"I am the bread of life" (cf. John 6:48). And what must one do to eat of this bread? Simply believe (cf. John 6:29). The miraculous meal was meant to be a physical symbol of a spiritual reality. As a loaf of bread satisfies hunger for a time, Jesus satisfies the soul of man for an eternity.

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD! (JOHN 6:22-27)

After being dismissed, the crowd saw Jesus hike the mountain to be alone while His disciples departed by boat to Capernaum. By the time the sun had risen the following day, word had spread of the miraculous meal, and people were coming from other regions for their share (cf. John 6:22-24).

Moses, who miraculously provided food to millions for 40 years, was the baseline. If the Prophet was supposed to be greater than Moses, and Jesus was the Prophet, then feeding 5,000 families for dinner was lackluster. Nearly everyone searching for Jesus the following morning believed that greater things were to come. As speculation gave way to expectation, they crossed the sea certain to find breakfast on Jesus.

The crowd thought yesterday's meal signaled an endless supply of free food, the beginning of a divine welfare state. Jesus corrects them—the miraculous meal meant nothing of the sort. He exhorts the crowd to quit thinking about food, as if the physical body is the sum total of man. There is far more to life than taking care of the body—what about the soul? He charges the crowd to stop pouring their energies into what perishes; work for food that lasts forever (cf. John 6:27).

WHO WANTS SOUL FOOD? (JOHN 6:28-40)

Not understanding, expectations rise even higher, and the crowd wonders if Jesus is about to provide some kind of "super bread". They wanted it and were willing to work for it—so what must be done (cf. John 6:28)?

John 6:29—This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.

Jesus explains that this different kind of bread comes by a different kind of work. One cannot labor for it, because this bread and all it entails is a work of God. It is a gift, and God has done all the work to prepare it. Believe, and it is yours (cf. Rom 10:9; Eph 2:8-9).

The crowd, however, was not so interested in spiritual matters. The prior day Jesus refused to reign and overthrow Rome, and here He is refusing to provide food for them. What kind of Prophet is this? The Galileans believed Jesus' power and started to despise Him for doing so little with it. They resort to manipulation, citing Scripture to coerce Jesus—"Moses fed the people, aren't you supposed to be greater? Prove it!" (cf. John 6:30-31, 34).

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: THURSDAYS @ 7:30 A.M. CAPITOL CHAPEL

STAFF: MONDAYS @ 12:30 P.M. STRATTON BUILDING ROOM 205-N

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Jesus was offering spiritual bread, and the miraculous meal set the stage for this revelation. What He created the day before was a shadow of which He is the substance. The meal was not meant to be the first of many; it was meant as a picture. What Jesus had done for the body, He could do for the soul, and He could do it not just for a day but forever. Moses could do nothing of the sort.

John 6:35—I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Everything Jesus gives, He already is. Christ offered bread and said, “I am the bread.” He offered life and said, “I am the life.” He offered truth and said, “I am the truth.” He offered love and said, “I am love” (cf. John 14:6; 1 John 4:8). What feeds the soul of man is not a thing but a person; it is Christ. To have Him residing within is to have all that is truly good and pleasing working within.

The human heart is an endless factory of desires, and the will is ever bent on finding fulfillment. In a world littered with broken cisterns and castles of sand, there is a God who makes good on His promises, and He offers pure fulfillment both now and forevermore. Is it any wonder the psalmist so passionately urged to “taste and see that the Lord is good”? (Psa 34:8).

DIVINE MYSTERIES (JOHN 6:41-59)

Expectation became confusion and turned to contempt when the crowd realized breakfast would not be served. They loved Jesus for His miracles; they hated Him for His words. They grumbled, and their questions mocked the words of Christ (cf. John 6:41-42, 52, 60-61). Because Jesus refused to give in to their demands, they refused to believe. He did not produce the bread they wanted, so they would not eat of the bread He offered.

Unbelief is a spiritual problem often disguised as an intellectual one. The crowd attacked Jesus’ rationale with their questions and concluded His words were offensive (cf. John 6:42, 52, 60). Contempt came to the surface, and they interpreted Jesus in such a crassly literal way that made Him seem a lunatic. Similar tactics are used today.

The crowd did not need another miracle or more evidence. Had Jesus created more bread, they would have asked for more the next day and thereafter. What would have overcome their unbelief? God reaching down, breaking the hardness of their hearts and drawing each man and woman that day to Himself (cf. John 6:37, 44, 65).

It is not that God keeps anyone from believing. All who sincerely or humbly look for Him will find Him (cf. Jer 29:13). The problem is that man is not naturally a truth seeker, humbly searching for God (cf. Rom 1:18). His heart is naturally biased and hardened against belief (cf. Rom 3:10-18). This is what Jesus saw with the Galileans, and it is at the root of unbelief to this day. Therefore, present the gospel and pray that God would soften even the hardest heart. Is He not able to do this?

The words of Christ were hard, but they separated the wheat from the chaff that day. And so, what did Jesus mean? Throughout this discourse He equated believing His words with eating His flesh (cf. John 6:35, 47-50). It was a metaphor based upon the previous day’s meal. As bread sustained the crowd physically, so He could sustain them spiritually. By feeding on Him, believing in Him, a man will live forever (cf. John 6:47, 58).

SCANDALOUS WORDS (JOHN 6:60-71)

Jesus dashed the hopes of the crowd by not providing food, told them He is the real food and that they must believe Him in order to have it. Like a bait and switch, the crowd felt betrayed—“You mean to tell us that you’re the bread?! That’s not what we came for!!” And with that realization, they left (cf. John 6:60). The Lord asked if His words “offend” which in the Greek is the word *skandalon*. His message was a scandal, and in their estimation Jesus was not the Prophet but a scandalous fraud (cf. John 6:61).

The crowd was willing to follow Christ as long as He made all their dreams come true. When He refused, His following of twenty-thousand Galileans vanished. The Lord had healed their diseases, fed them, taught them and offered Himself to them, and yet, His entire ministry in Galilee ended as it began with no one. Few things in life are more painful than to pour out your heart and soul only to be rejected. As a man, Jesus came to know that pain like none other (cf. Heb 2:17-18).

As He watched the crowd scatter, Jesus turned to the only twelve people still there—His disciples. The original text conveys the emotion of a broken hearted Messiah: “You won’t go away also, will you?” (cf. John 6:67). Though knowing the end from the beginning, it still grieves the heart of God that any should reject Him and perish. Thus, Christ asked His disciples what they would do to which Peter replied, “To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed” (cf. John 6:68-69). Seeking Christ’s face, what was in His hand no longer mattered. With the Lord they realized they needed no more in life than Him.