



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Bread of Life

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JOHN 6:22-71

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In our study today, we will examine Jesus' claim, "I am the bread of life". We will see how Jesus' words speak of His offer of salvation and eternal life. We should note that scripture speaks of itself as spiritual "bread" or "food". While we will not have time to consider this description of the Word of God in detail, we should take note of this important aspect of God's Word. I would like to encourage you to make an effort to join us in our Bible studies at the Capitol. The Word of God is that which will nourish and strengthen you spiritually as you serve in a challenging environment.

Both federal and state governments spend a great deal of resources providing food and other basic needs to those less fortunate in our society. We can only imagine the response in Jesus' day when He provided food for well over 5000 people from only a few loaves and fishes. Who wouldn't want a king who could provide for their needs in such a way? However, Jesus was much more interested in their spiritual needs than in their physical hunger. John gives the spiritual insight into this miracle when he records Jesus' wonderful words: "I am the bread of life".

THE MIRACLE

The first part of John's gospel is built around seven miracles or signs. These were performed as evidence that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. Jesus' claim to be "The Bread of Life" followed His miracle of feeding the five thousand with only five barley loaves and two small fish. This was the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. It likely involved the feeding of well over five thousand people as Matthew's account informs us there were "five thousand men, besides women and children" (14:21). While we do not have time to study this miracle in detail, it is important to note the people's response. When they saw His ability to provide them food, they sought to make Him king. This miracle caused them to recognize Jesus could indeed possibly be their Messiah, but they only saw Him as a political leader who might provide their needs and deliver them from the Romans. John records that "...When Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone. (6:15) Jesus knew they did not understand His role as Savior, so He slipped away from them. The next day, the crowds sought

Him out and found Him with His disciples on the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

It is here that John records Jesus' message giving the spiritual meaning behind the miracle.

THE MESSAGE

Jesus first admonishes the crowd for seeking Him not out of any spiritual interest, but because He had given them food. He challenges them to not "labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you..." (:27) The crowd then asks a key question, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" (:28) Jesus reply is essential to our understanding: "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." (:29) The rest of Jesus' message is actually an elaboration of this key statement, using His miracle and His claim to be the "bread of life" as an illustration.

Perhaps we should stop for a moment and consider the nature of the things for which we so often labor. In Jesus' day the people may have been concerned about providing the basics of life, such as food and clothing. Most of us do not have to worry about these necessities. However, we pursue things that are just as perishable: wealth, success, position, and material things. Jesus' words continue to challenge to us today to seek after the things that really matter!²

As Jesus continues His teaching, He lays before the crowd His remarkable claim in 6:35:

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

As Jesus continued His message, He made some seemingly strange statements that caused great concern and confusion among His listeners:

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." (6:51)

Upon hearing this people quarreled and asked, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" Jesus' response is even more disturbing to them:

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“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

John 6:53-55

THE MEANING

The problem the people had with Jesus’ message came about because they took His words literally. They were thinking in terms of literal, physical bread. Ultimately their problem was one of unbelief. They did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God. They would not even consider the possibility that He was sent from God. Consequently, they could not grasp the spiritual meaning of His words. But what did Jesus mean when He claimed, “I am the bread of life”? As the “Bread of Life” Jesus is the Source of Eternal Life; the source of that which sustains life; and the Source of That which truly Satisfies

A key to understanding this passage is to determine what Jesus meant when He said you must **“eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood”**. We must determine whether Jesus is speaking literally (as the crowd took Him to mean) or whether He was speaking figuratively, spiritually, and symbolically. Jesus is clearly using symbolic language when He proclaims “I am the bread which came down from heaven”, “I am the bread of Life”, and “I am the living bread”. Likewise, Jesus is using figurative language to illustrate His spiritual point when He speaks of “eating His flesh” and “drinking His blood”. The issue with which Jesus is dealing is how does one receive, or appropriate this life of which He speaks. One does so by believing in the Son of God! (Remember the key statement found in 6:29: **“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent”**.) Jesus deals with this throughout His entire message.

And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.
(:40)

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. (:47)

...The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.”
(:63,64)

Just as we receive the physical life that is found in bread by eating, we receive the spiritual, eternal life that is found in Christ by believing in Him and coming to Him.

REACTION TO JESUS MESSAGE

As we noted in our previous study, throughout the Gospel of John there is a clear contrast between those who accepted and believed the message Christ proclaimed and those who did not. Christ proclaimed the necessity of each person to believe and place their faith in Him in terms that were difficult for them to accept, and we read of their reaction:

Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”...From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. (vs. 60, 66)

Upon seeing this, Jesus asked His closest followers, **“Do you also want to go away?” (vs. 67)** Peter’s answer is vital, **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (vs. 68-69)** Peter and the others had indeed “eaten” of Christ and appropriated eternal life by believing in Him and placing their faith in Him!

CONCLUSION

- **HAVE YOU RECEIVED THIS “BREAD OF LIFE” THAT JESUS OFFERS BY BELIEVING IN HIM AND PLACING YOUR FAITH AND TRUST IN HIM?**
- **AS A BELIEVER ARE YOU DAILY “FEEDING ON CHRIST” BY MAINTAINING A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM AND READING AND STUDYING THE WORD OF GOD?**

¹ Psalm 19:10; Psalm 119:103; Matthew 4:4; 1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12-13; 1 Peter 2:2

² Jesus taught further on this subject in Matthew 6:19-21: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.