



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Bread of Life & Living Water

EXODUS 16-17; JOHN 4:7-39; JOHN 6

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Both our federal and state governments spend a great deal of resources providing food and other basic needs to those less fortunate in our society. There are many people who depend upon the government and other agencies to provide for them that which they cannot provide for themselves.

The story of the Bible is how God provides for us as sinful people the greatest need which we cannot provide for ourselves – forgiveness of sin and salvation. We have seen in our studies this year how the whole Bible concerns the salvation provided by the work of Jesus Christ (Luke 24:25-27; 44-47). Many events in the Old Testament point to what He would do for us as He lived a perfect life, suffered and died on the cross, and rose again. Two astounding miracles God performed for the people of Israel in the wilderness are a vivid picture of the spiritual life Jesus provides for us. We read in Exodus how God provided food and water for a population numbering perhaps 2 – 3 million people. We see clearly in the New Testament how these miracles of physical provision pictured how Jesus Christ meets our spiritual needs. While the Bible certainly does speak about meeting the physical and material needs of people, it is more concerned with our more important spiritual and eternal needs.

THE MIRACLES

Manna From Heaven (Exodus 16)

God has miraculously delivered the people of Israel from Egypt. He judged Egypt with the great plagues and brought the people through the Red Sea on dry ground. Yet we find in Exodus 16 that the people grumbled against Moses (and God) complaining that he had only brought them into the wilderness to die of hunger. God said to Moses, ***“I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day...”*** (vs. 4). We find that the people of Israel ate the manna every day for 40 years until they entered the promised land.

Water from the Rock (Exodus 17:1-7)

Even after the great deliverance from Egypt and God’s miraculous provision of food, the people continued to grumble against Moses and against God. They reached a point

in their travels when there was no water for them to drink. So they ***“quarreled with Moses and said, give us water that we may drink.”*** (vs. 2). God told Moses to strike a rock and He would provide water. This Moses did and God miraculously provided water for the people.

These were amazing miracles as God provided food and water for a group of people numbering between 2 – 3 million people. They could not provide this for themselves. There were no other resources available. God had to provide this for them. This points us to how Jesus provides for our greatest spiritual needs of forgiveness of sin and eternal life. We find this in two accounts of Jesus’ ministry in the New Testament.

The Feeding of the 5000 (John 6)

A large crowd followed Jesus as He healed and taught them. Jesus asked His disciples, ***“Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?”*** (vs. 5) The disciples were astounded at His question as there was no way they could provide food for so many. They found a young boy who had five barley loaves and two fish. Jesus took the loaves and the fish, and after giving thanks distributed to the people as much as they wanted. Afterwards the disciples gathered up twelve baskets of food that was left over. Following this miracle, Jesus teaches the people that He is the “Living Bread”, the One who could provide eternal life for them. We will look at His challenging message in the next section of our study.

The Woman at the Well (John 4)

We find in John 4 an account of Jesus speaking with a woman at a well in Samaria. We do not have time to go in to the details here but it is significant that Jesus is sitting down talking to a ***Samaritan woman***. Both of these facts went against the traditions and culture of the day (vs. 9, 27). Jesus’ conversation with the woman is vitally important. He simply asks her for a drink. He goes on to tell her, ***“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”*** (vs. 10) Jesus continues in verse 13, ***“...Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again;***

INTERIM BIBLE STUDY

TUESDAY, JUNE 26, 12:00 NOON TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)

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but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

Jesus uses the illustration of the well and water to speak of the eternal life He provides.

In the Old Testament, God provided bread and water for the people of Israel in the wilderness. In the New Testament we see that Jesus is the “**Bread of Life**” and the “**Living Water**” that provides spiritual life for us. The Apostle Paul made this clear connection in his first letter to the Corinthians:

¹For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ³and all ate the same spiritual food; ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

1 Cor. 10:1-4

THE MESSAGE

Following the feeding of the 5,000 people in John 6, Jesus gives a message explaining how He is the Bread of Life. In this message we find the physical, material bread and water are simply a picture of the spiritual life He provides for us. He 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!¹

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 the people quarreled and asked, “**How can this man give us His flesh to eat?**” Jesus’ response is even more disturbing to them:

“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

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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

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 and water by drinking, we receive the spiritual, eternal life that is found in Christ by believing in Him and coming to Him.

“THIS, THEN, IS TO FEED UPON CHRIST—TO BELIEVE THAT WHICH IS REVEALED ABOUT HIM, AND THEN TO APPROPRIATE HIM TO YOURSELF BY PERSONAL FAITH.” SPURGEON

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 THE “BREAD OF LIFE” AND “LIVING WATER” 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 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.