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JESUS, THE BREAD OF LIFE (John 6:35, 47-51)

Sometimes a word picture is helpful when we're learning a spiritual principle. One night in our family devotion time, I had my daughter stand at the top of our basement steps and I stood down at the bottom. "Now, without touching any of the stairs, come be with me down here in the basement", I told her. Her eyes widened, then I could see the fear. There was no way a five-year-old could make that jump. *Nobody* could make that jump!

Then I told her that when our heavenly Father asks us to obey and trust him, we know he has the best plan. Even though it might seem impossible to us, He can do what we can't. Then I walked up the steps, picked her up, and took her to the bottom with me. "See? You didn't touch a step. Your dad did the work."

The crowd that Jesus taught in today's passage also received an object lesson that took them from the known to the unknown.

John 6:35, 47-51 - Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

WHO THE BREAD IS

In this paragraph, Jesus continues his teaching on the difference between the temporal things of earth and the spiritual plane. At the beginning of the chapter, he had multiplied a little boy's lunch to feed the whole crowd and they were still full from that meal. Using that object lesson, he calls himself the Bread of Life. Bread is a staple food in most cultures. It is crucial, foundational, and essential. Jesus is letting this group know that for

them to be sustained in this life and the life to come, they need the Bread of Life. To teach this, Jesus moves from what this Jewish crowd would have known well to something that was less common to them.

To be Jewish was to know the history of your nation and ancestors. When Jesus referred to the manna that their fathers ate, they knew exactly what he was talking about. So Jesus used this picture of earthly bread to contrast with who he is – spiritual bread.

How does Jesus characterize himself? He calls himself **true bread** in this text (in verse 32). He calls himself bread that is **present now**, not far back in history like the manna. He also describes himself as **heaven-sent**, not of this world. He is also the **living bread**, not bread that will go stale and rot. And back in verse 33, he says that he is the bread that **gives life to the world**.

The problem with earthly bread is that if you eat it, you will still die. Jesus said, if you take in the heavenly bread the Father sent, you will have eternal life.

WITHOUT JESUS, THERE MAY BE EXISTENCE, BUT NOT LIFE. PHYSICAL BREAD MAY SUSTAIN THE BODY ONLY FOR A WHILE, WHILE TASTING OF THE BREAD OF LIFE SUSTAINS THE SOUL FOR ETERNITY. THE RESTLESS SOUL FINALLY IS AT REST; THE HUNGER OF THE HEART IS SATISFIED.

William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*

Warren Wiersbe wrote, "Christ was not claiming to be exactly like manna – He was claiming to be much greater than manna. Jesus meant that, just as you take food and drink within your body and it becomes part of you, so you must receive Christ within your innermost being so that He can give you life."

HOW THE BREAD IS EXPERIENCED

Jesus is clear when he teaches, “He who comes to me will never go hungry.” We all draw near to what we have **faith** in. Faith in Christ must be exercised to receive him as the Bread of Life.

That faith will be shown to be genuine by **believing**. “He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” In this same passage, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.” This means to accept all that is revealed about Christ in the Scriptures – his existence, his teaching, his miracles, his death, his resurrection. We must believe that he is the Son of God and he is the only way to the Father (John 14:6).

So, we experience this heavenly, living bread by faith and by believing, but also by receiving it inwardly. “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world.”

The concept of God being in the life of the true believer is found all through the New Testament.

Ephesians 3:16, 17 - I pray that out of [God's] glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

*Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but **Christ lives in me**. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

*Colossians 1:27 - To [the saints] God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory.*

We should take time to think about a couple more things relating to Christ being the Bread of Life. Just as with physical bread, the acceptance of this bread is an ongoing process. By that I mean that our experience with Christ is a relationship. And just like any other relationship that is healthy and growing, we must spend time with the other person, get to know them more and more intimately, and grow in our love for them. We don't eat once and forget ever eating again. Our life would end. But with spiritual bread, we come to Jesus over and over again, spending time in the Scriptures and in prayer to receive the sustenance we need in this life. In the life to come, the Bible says that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, so that will make it so much easier to be fed regularly by the Bread of Life.

Another thing to keep in mind with this passage is that actually every human will continue life consciously after this life is over. For the believer in Christ, as this text makes so clear, life goes on eternally with Christ in heaven. But to be made in the image of God means to have an everlasting soul which means all people, believers or not. For the person who does not believe, the Scriptures are equally clear. Their eternity will be in suffering and pain, separated from God. Since they did not find satisfaction in the Bread of Life, they will experience the wrath of God for eternity for rejecting him.

As hard as it is to believe this reality, we have to accept what the Bible makes plain.

*1 John 5:12 - Whoever has the Son **has life**; whoever does not have the Son of God **does not have life**.*

**TO COME TO CHRIST AND BELIEVE ON HIM MEANS
TO RECEIVE HIM WITHIN, JUST AS YOU RECEIVE
FOOD AND DRINK.**

Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.
(ZOOM)