

## STUDY ON THE TEACHING OF JESUS

### THE BREAD OF LIFE

Read John 6:22-40

Jesus has fed the five thousand, with twelve basketfuls of pieces left over. But in John's Gospel this is more than a miracle of compassion for people who are hungry. It is a "miraculous sign" (6:14), *sēmeion*, a sign that points people to see something beyond the miracle itself.

This miracle was a sign pointing to who Jesus is -- the Bread of Life that God has sent down to quench our spiritual hunger and give us Life.

#### **Looking for Jesus for the Wrong Reasons:**

*“And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?”” (v25)*

They find Jesus across the top of the lake in Capernaum and ask how He got there. Jesus did not answer their question but goes immediately to the real reason for their quest.

*“Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.” (v26)*

There is a difference between faith in Jesus because His miracles point you to Him and a desire to have someone meet your needs especially just your physical needs. Those asking this question of Jesus went to a lot of trouble to find Him. Yet their work was for the food which perishes – things that fill a stomach and rule the earthly kingdoms. Jesus wanted to them labour for the food which endures for everlasting life.

This raises the question as to what Christians are hungry for today. Is it their physical needs more than their spiritual needs? Is it the here and now or is it eternity? Is it the narrow picture of the present demands or the bigger picture of God?

#### **The Bread of Life Study (6:27-71)**

This study contains Jesus' lengthy Bread of Life discourse, which can be divided into four general sections:

1. Jesus, the True Manna (6:27-34)
2. Jesus, the Bread of Life (6:35-51)
3. Partaking of the Son of Man (6:52-59)
4. Reactions to Jesus' Teaching (6:60-71)

*“Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.” (v27)*

The word "Endures" is the common verb *menō*, "remain, stay," here, in the sense of "to continue to exist, remain, last, persist, continue to live." You'll see several close parallels this verse and the Woman at the Well discussion. Jesus is making the same point there as here.

*“Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”” (John 4:13-14)*

Living water quenching thirst eternally corresponds to bread of life satisfying spiritual hunger forever.

Jesus confirms that it is on Him that the SEAL has been placed to provide or guarantee the food for eternal life. The phrase "Placed his seal of approval" (NIV), "set his seal" (NRSV, ESV), "sealed" (KJV) is sphragizō, "to mark with a seal as a means of identification, mark, seal." A seal was a mark of ownership and a guarantee of the contents. They should have confidence in Jesus because God the Father has "guaranteed" Him.

The only guarantee for eternal life is Jesus and His teaching. It is worthless embracing philosophies and religions for the sake of it. To have Jesus is to submit to Him and follow His teaching and you cannot follow His teaching successfully without relationship with Jesus. He is the Father's seal for eternal life.

### **The Work of God**

*"Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.""* (vv28-29)

The Jews were used to the idea of meritorious works that would bring them favour from God. What should we be doing? they ask naively, as if they can perfectly perform what God requires if they just know what it is. Jesus answers with one work -- faith, "to believe in the one he has sent" (6:29).

Paul says the same thing in different words as he combats "works righteousness" in his letter to the Galatian church.

*"knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ..."* (Galatians 2:16a)

Eternal life isn't earned; it is a gift, appropriated by faith.

What work is of any value without faith in Jesus?

### **OK, Give Us Another Miracle to Believe!**

*"Therefore, they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"* (vv30-31)

The crowd doesn't seem to have a clue. Jesus has performed many miraculous signs in their presence, most recently feeding 5,000 people. (v14) But now they want Jesus to prove by still another sign that they should put their faith in him. Here's their reasoning -- faulty though it might be. Moses told us to expect another Prophet we should believe in (Deuteronomy 18:15-18). You want us to believe in you. Moses fed us with bread. So, what miracle will you do to prove you're the Prophet?

In a nutshell, bread for bread. Moses gave us bread for 40 years; you have only given us bread once. Perhaps, more bread will tip it over. More bread please!

*"Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.""* (vv32-35)

First, Jesus corrects them. The verse they quoted doesn't say that Moses fed them, but that God fed them. (See Exodus 16:14; Psalm 78:24)

Jesus identifies himself as the "true bread". The true bread comes down from heaven (like the manna did). The true bread doesn't just give physical life, but eternal life.

The crowd responds, "Lord, give us this bread always" but as the dialogue continues, we see that they are too spiritually dull to understand what Jesus is talking about. The woman at the well had responded in similar fashion, "*Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water*" (4:15). At that point she was as clueless as the crowd is here.

Jesus senses their clueless heart and perhaps, unbelief. But again, Jesus' words sound much like his promises of living water to the woman at the well (4:13-14). They do not understand and therefore, they don't believe.

It is time we put ourselves in the picture and see ourselves as one of those in the crowd without the privilege of what you know now. Would you have understood what Jesus was saying here?

Jesus explained that the one who comes to Him – that is, receives Him, believes upon Him – will find his spiritual hunger satisfied in Jesus.

### **Jesus' Promises**

*"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing but should raise it up at the last day. 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."* (vv37-40)

First, there are two categories of people Jesus that Jesus seemingly mentions here:

1. *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me"*. There are those that the Father has given Jesus. This in some sense would suggest predestination at work.
2. *"And the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out"*. He is inviting people, not pushing them away.

Jesus made it clear that coming to Jesus begins with the work of the Father, and He will receive all who come to Him. Jesus has just offered tremendous promises to a spiritually dull, unbelieving crowd. But Jesus assures them -- and the readers -- that not all will disbelieve. There will be people the Father sends who will believe and will continue or abide in that faith in spite of the unbelief of this crowd.

Second, Jesus says he will "lose none" the Father has given (6:39), a promise of Jesus' power to protect his disciples. A similar verse, often quoted, follows the analogy of protecting sheep from theft, says, "no one can snatch them out of my hand" (10:28). We can have assurance that Jesus takes care of his own disciples as his charge from the Father. We can trust him to keep us. We only get lost when we exercise the choice of walking away.

Third, "...everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life..." (6:40a). What we must do is to look at Jesus as our Saviour. If we look with faith, we live!

Fourth, twice Jesus promises to raise believers from the dead at the Last Day. We're talking about resurrection. The Pharisees believed in it, but the Sadducees did not. What is bold and true is that Jesus here claims to be the one to personally raise believers from the dead. Such a claim must have angered Jesus' enemies no end.

This is the wonderful destiny of all who are given of the Father and come to Jesus.

