

JESUS IS THE BREAD OF LIFE

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Summary and Historical Background

The miracle of the loaves and fishes, recorded in all four Gospels, provided the occasion for His message on the Bread of Life. He spoke to three different audiences: to the leaders of those fed in the wilderness (6:22-40), to the religious Jewish leaders (6:41-59) and to His own disciples (6:60-71). The leaders of the 5000 that were fed in the wilderness found Jesus in Capernaum and asked Him how they might work the works of God. He told them the work of God was to believe on Him that was sent by God (6:29). Then they asked Him for a sign so they could believe He was sent by God. He said His Father had given their fathers manna in the wilderness, but now He sent Him to them, the true Bread from Heaven. If they believed on Him, they would never hunger or thirst, but He would give them everlasting life.

The religious leaders of the Jews heard Him say that He was the Bread that came down from Heaven. This caused them to murmur, because they thought He was Joseph's son (6:41-42), so how could He say that He came down from Heaven? Then Jesus told them that no one could come to Him unless the Father would draw him and He would raise him up at the last day (6:44). The next verse tells how the Father draws sinners to Jesus Christ. When the Jewish leaders refused to believe He was the Bread from Heaven, Jesus no longer spoke to them plainly about Himself; He used figurative words to seal their minds in the darkness of their unbelief (1 Cor 2:14). Instead of saying they needed to believe on Him to have eternal life, He told them they must eat His flesh and drink His blood to have eternal life. This was a figurative way of saying that they needed to partake of Jesus' suffering and death by believing He was doing it to save them from the penalty of sin and have everlasting life. Even though He had not died on the cross for their sins yet, He was anticipating it.

Some of His disciples also were offended by these words. They were following Him, but were not fully committed to Him. To help them understand His words to the Jewish leaders, He told them the eating of His actual flesh would not be of any spiritual value. He was using spiritual words to describe what it meant to believe in His suffering and death for them (6:63). However, Jesus knew which of His disciples were true believers and which ones were not. The uncommitted disciples left Him, but none of the twelve disciples left Him at that time (6:67-69). However, Jesus said that one of them would eventually betray Him; He was speaking of Judas (6:70-71).

I. Miracles of Christ — 6:1-21

A. His Multiplication of Bread — 6:1-16

6:1-4 — This was the height of Jesus' popularity, but after His message on the Bread of life, it would diminish greatly (vv. 60, 66).

6:5-9 — Jesus taught two of His disciples lessons on faith when He fed the 5000. (1) Jesus told Philip that He wanted to feed these people and asked Philip how they should do it to test his faith. Philip did not see how they could give the multitude much more than a bite to eat with the amount of money that they had. He was wrong. Philip was taught that Jesus could feed 5000 men, plus women and children without spending any money. He learned that Jesus had the power to produce bread without money. (2) Jesus apparently asked His disciples to collect all the food that they could find in the crowd and bring it to Him. Andrew found a boy with a little lunch and brought it to Jesus, but he felt that it was much too small for such a large crowd. He

was wrong. Jesus took that little lunch and fed more than 5000 people with it. Andrew was taught that Jesus could take a little lunch to provide a feast for a great multitude.

6:10-13 — Jesus gave His disciples a job to do in feeding the multitude. They passed out the food that Jesus multiplied and then they picked up the remains after the crowd was fed.

6:14 — When the multitude realized a small lunch was used by Jesus to feed 5,000 and there were enough fragments to fill twelve baskets, they wanted to make Jesus their "bread king."

6:15-16 — When Jesus saw that the people were going to make Him a king, He compelled His disciples to get into the boat and go before Him to Capernaum (cf Mt 14:22). It appears the disciples agreed with the people and thought this was a good time to make Jesus their King. However, the multitude wanted to make Jesus their king for the wrong reason; they wanted Him to satisfy their physical appetite rather than their spiritual needs. Also it was in the wrong place to make Jesus their king. Jesus Christ needed to be made king in Jerusalem, not in the wilderness. Moreover it was the wrong time to make Him their king. He could not be made king before His death on the cross to pay for their sins. His disciples did not understand, so Jesus had to compel them to get into their boat and leave. Then He dismissed the crowd and went up into a mountain to be alone and pray (cf Mt 14:23).

B. His Walk on the Water — 6:17-21

6:17-19 — "Jesus walking on the sea" - The disciples encountered a strong wind against them as they rowed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. When they had gone almost three miles in the darkness of night, they saw something coming toward them on the sea. They thought it was a spirit (a ghost) and they cried out with fear.

6:20-21 — "It is I; be not afraid" - When Jesus called out to them, the disciples recognized Jesus' voice and gladly received Him into the ship. This is the time that Peter walked on the water to Jesus (Mt 14:28-32). As soon as Jesus got into the ship, they were at land on the other side of the sea.

II. Message of Christ — 6:22-71

A. For Leaders of the Multitude — 6:22-40

6:22-25 — The leaders of the 5000 that were fed in the wilderness wanted to know how Jesus came to Capernaum when He did not leave with His disciples. Jesus used their question about coming to Capernaum to tell them about His coming to earth which was far more important. He had been sent to them by His Father. Notice the use of the words, "came" and "sent," beginning with v. 29.

6:26 — Jesus told them He knew their motive for seeking Him was not the miracles of healing the sick, but they sought Him for the bread He produced and were filled. They did not accept the miracle as a sign of His deity, but only as a means for an easier way of life.

6:27 — He told them not to labor for the bread that perishes when it is eaten and gone, but to seek the Bread that endures and gives eternal life. This is the Bread that the Son of man gives and His Father sets His seal of approval on Him

6:28-29 — In response to their question about doing the works of God, Jesus told them that doing the work of God was to believe on the One that He had sent, that is, they were to believe on Him to save them from their sins and give them eternal life.

6:30-34 — Their request for a sign to prove that He was sent by God to give them the true Bread showed their unbelief in Him. They had already received a sign, when Jesus fed 5,000 men with a small lunch, but they rejected that as insignificant when they compared it to Moses' supply of manna for two million people every day for forty years. Jesus corrected them

by saying that Moses did not give them that bread from heaven. They should have known that it was given by God, not Moses. Then Jesus told them that His Father wants to give the whole world the true Bread from heaven. They asked Jesus to give them this Bread, but that was not possible since they did not believe He was the true Bread. Jesus is the only one who can give everlasting life to lost sinners. Not all who call on the Lord are saved, but only those who turn from their sin and believe in His work on the cross for them can call on Him by faith and receive the true Bread that gives eternal life.

6:35 — He clearly told them He was the Bread of Life and if they believed Him they would never hunger or thirst.

6:36-38 — He told them that they did not believe He was sent from heaven to do His Father's will, but if any did believe in Him, He would never cast them out.

6:39-40 — It was the Father's will to give everlasting life to all who believed on His Son. Jesus promised that He would raise them up at the last day.

B. For the Jewish Leaders — 6:41-59

6:41-42 — The Jewish leaders would not believe Jesus was the Bread that came down from Heaven because they believed He was the son of Joseph. They made the wrong decision about Jesus because they had the wrong information about Him.

6:43-46 — Jesus told them, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him" (v. 44). This verse is used by many to prove that God chooses by His sovereign will all those who will be saved. But in the next verse Jesus tells how His Father draws sinners to Him. Jesus begins with a quote from the prophets where it says "They shall be all taught of God" (Isa 54:13). Can we believe that everyone is taught by God, even those who do not have the Scriptures or read them? The Apostle Paul said people suppress the truth by their unrighteousness because that which may be known of God is manifest in them. God has shown the truth about Himself to them so they can know the invisible things about Him, even His eternal power and divine nature from the things He has made. So Paul concludes that everyone is without excuse (Rom 1:18-20). Since everyone is taught of God, Jesus goes on to say, "Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes to Me." A person may hear the words of the Father, but not learn the truth He is teaching them. The Father teaches the truth about Jesus to all sinners, but He does not choose those that will come to Jesus. It is the sinner's responsibility to hear the Father's teaching and to learn the truth about Jesus. Those that learn from the Father through the Scriptures, through creation or through their conscience (Rom 2:15) will be drawn to Jesus. These Jewish leaders did not learn the truth about Jesus from the Father, so they were not drawn to Jesus.

6:47-51 — Once more Jesus plainly told them, "He that believes on Me has everlasting life." Then He told them again that He was the Bread of Life, which came down from Heaven. His flesh was the Bread they needed to eat.

6:52 — "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" - They were perplexed by their unbelief and could not understand how they could eat His flesh. They would eat His flesh when they sincerely believed His physical death on the cross paid for their sins.

6:53-59 — They could not understand Jesus' words because of their spiritual blindness (cf 1 Cor 2:14). A comparison of v. 54 with v. 40 would indicate that Jesus did not intend for them to take His words literally. "Eating His flesh" is a figure of speech for partaking of His life by believing on Him. Note: "eating His flesh" is not done at the Lord's Supper; it is done one time by a new believer at the time of his or her salvation. Eating bread at the Lord's Supper is done repeatedly by all believers to remind them of Christ's sacrificial death to

save them so they in return will live a sacrificial life to serve Him (Rom 12:1-2).

C. For His Disciples — 6:60-71

At this time in Jesus' ministry He had many disciples; many followed Him for the wrong reasons (6:2, 14, 15, 26).

6:60 — "This is a hard saying" - It was a hard saying to those that did not believe He was the Son of God. They stumbled over His figurative words because they did not believe His plain words and powerful works.

6:61-62 — "See the Son of Man ascend up" - Jesus challenged his disciples that doubted His claims as to what they will say if they see Him ascend to Heaven where He was before.

6:63 — "It is the Spirit that quickens" - Jesus made it clear to these disciples that it is the Holy Spirit that gives life. Eating His physical flesh would not be of any benefit to them. His words were spiritual words, even when He spoke figuratively to the Jewish leaders and told them that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood. When these words are understood in a figurative sense, they are words of life.

6:64-66 — "Some of you that believe not" - Some of His common disciples did not believe He was the Son of God, while others did believe. Jesus knew the heart of each man and how they were learning from the Father (v. 45). Those who left Him did so because of unbelief, not through misunderstanding. They refused to learn from the Father and be drawn to His Son.

6:67-69 — "Will you also go away?" - Jesus asked this question of the twelve disciples. Peter spoke up for the Twelve and said, "We believe and are sure that You are the Christ (or, Messiah), the Son of the living God." They all remained with Jesus at that time.

6:70-71 — "One of you is a devil" - Jesus, however, said these words about one of the Twelve, namely Judas. He knew that Judas did not believe, and would work with the Devil to betray Him to the Jewish religious leaders. They hated Him and wanted to kill Him. Jesus gave Judas a fair warning with plenty of time to repent.