

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

The Answer to Man's Greatest Hunger

Many of us like 'quick fixes' especially when it comes to food. With dine-in restaurants currently shutdown due to the pandemic, John and I are always thinking 'what can we fix next to eat?' Bread has been a staple in human diets for centuries. I love the hot rolls from Roma's Restaurant! And I love to tell others about them! I still talk about the hot yeast rolls my mother made years ago. And in a pinch, Sister Schubert's dinner rolls aren't that bad! However, there is a far better bread than all of these! It is the Bread of Heaven. As much as I like to talk about bread, I should be diligent in spreading the good news concerning the Bread that is the answer to man's greatest hunger.

There may have been taverns in Israel that served food and you could purchase food in the market, but fast food as we know it today was unheard of. You can imagine the thrill that 5,000 men felt when they received a 'free fast food meal' from the hands of Jesus. Could this be the beginning of something greater?

It was the beginning of something greater, but the answer that came from Jesus was not what they expected or even wanted.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus spent much time ministering to bodily needs but the real purpose for Him coming into the world was to seek and to save the lost. (**Luke 19:10**) As long as Jesus fed their bodies and healed their sick, they thought He was great. When Jesus moved beyond the physical to the spiritual, they lost interest. They wanted an earthly king and liberator.

From the time that Jesus walked this earth, people have been following Him for the wrong reasons. Judas Iscariot is a prime New Testament example. Today, we still see people using religion and the church to gain prestige, comfort, political votes, and entertainment. Jesus knows our hearts and He understands all the reasons we come to Him. Let's make sure that we come to Him for the right reasons.

Read John 6:22-25 (ESV) ²² *On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone.* ²³ *Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.* ²⁴ *So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.* ²⁵ *When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"*

The mystery of the morning after Jesus fed 5,000 men was 'What happened to Jesus?' 'Where did He go?' They could not find Him. They knew that He had not left in the boat with the disciples and that there had not been any other boats there the night before. So when other boats from Tiberias came, these people got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. When they found Him they questioned, "*Rabbi, when did you come here?*"

Bible.org comments, "Jesus could have replied, 'I got here early this morning after I walked on the water to the disciples and joined them in the boat.' That answer would have caused some jaws to drop! But Jesus didn't

answer their question.” Instead, He began His answer with another of His ‘*truly, truly*’ statements. Remember when Jesus begins with ‘*truly, truly*’, in today’s language it is like He is saying, ‘Pay attention to this! What I am about to say is important!’

Read John 6:26-27 (ESV) ²⁶ *Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.”* ²⁷ *Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”*

Prior to this statement, Jesus' worldly popularity had been growing because of the healings and the feeding. The people were seeking free food and spectacles. Beginning with this *truly, truly* statement, Jesus' words will bring the crowd's enthusiasm to a screeching halt. The *truly, truly*, was important but they did not like what they heard.

As soon as Jesus begins to explain that His miracles are only meant to teach, they will lose interest. What draws you to Jesus? Are you only interested in calling on the name of Jesus in the midst of a coronavirus pandemic or some other personal catastrophe? Will you lose interest in Jesus when the ‘good times’ return?

The English Standard Version translates the term *signs* in reference to Jesus' miracles. A sign is something which delivers a message. It points people in a certain direction – like a road sign. The people's reaction to Jesus' miracles was completely wrong. Rather than grasping the spiritual importance, and trusting in Jesus' authority, the people were attracted to the material aspects. They are seeing the miracle, but missing the meaning. This would be like speeding towards a colorful sign placed by the side of the freeway, thinking it is pretty, but never bothering to read it, and missing its warning of coming danger. Ironically, the same people who sought Jesus due to His miraculous signs developed a ‘show me the proof’ attitude when His claims interfered with their preferences.

Jesus was sealed by God the Father. One way the sealing is revealed is in the signs and wonders He performed. As we consider Jesus being sealed by the Father, I am reminded that we too are sealed by the Spirit when we accept Him as Savior. ***Ephesians 1:13 (ESV)*** ¹³ *... when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.*

Read John 6:28-29 (ESV) ²⁸ *Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”* ²⁹ *Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”*

The crowd asked what they can do to be saved. They determined to work for their salvation. Instead of works, Jesus says, salvation is based on **belief, in the One whom God has sent.**

Read John 6:30-31 (ESV) ³⁰ *So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?”* ³¹ *Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”*

God performed a **daily** miracle for the Israelites for 40 years with a new bread they did not recognize. When they saw it, they said ‘Man hu?’ in Hebrew which is translated “What is it?” They called this bread-like substance manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. It appeared on the morning dew, they gathered only what they needed for one day except on the sixth day when they gathered

enough for two days. Numerous attempts have been made to identify manna with substances found in the Sinai Peninsula. It cannot be identified with any known food. Manna was a miracle. The true Bread from heaven is even a greater miracle.

In verse 31, Jesus is quoting from *Psalm 78:24 (ESV)*²⁴ *and he rained down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven.*

Another *truly, truly* statement is coming – pay attention!

Read John 6:32-35 (ESV)³² *Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.”*³³ *For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”*³⁴ *They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”*³⁵ *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.*

Jesus desired to deepen the people's understanding of the truth. It was *God*, not Moses, who gave the manna; so they must take their eyes off Moses and focus on God. Also, God *gave* the manna in the past, but the Father is *now giving* the true bread in the person of Jesus Christ. The past event is finished, but the present spiritual experience goes on!

They had just been miraculously fed the day before and they are asking for a “sign!” It is almost laughable except that often we are not much different. In the life of the believer, **Jesus** – not luck is the driving force. **Romans 8:28 (ESV)**²⁸ *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

Then Jesus declared, ***I am the bread of life***. This is the first of seven ***I AM*** statements of Jesus and they are recorded by only John. God Himself used the name ***I AM*** when speaking to Moses from the burning bush. (***Exodus 3:13–14***)

*Jesus’ I Am the Bread of life proclamation parallels what Jesus told Satan concerning spiritual hunger in Matthew 4:4 (ESV)*⁴ *But he answered, “It is written, “‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”* The Word is the Bread! Jesus also includes a reference to spiritual thirst that we studied in ***John 4:13-14***. Here, saving faith is seen as an analogy to food and drink: a person must take it inside of themselves—acceptance is a requirement for these blessings to have any effect! Not receiving Jesus as Savior is like a man dying of starvation turning down a plate of yeast rolls from Roma’s. But, that’s what many people do when the Bread of Heaven is offered.

Read John 6:36-40 (ESV)³⁶ *But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.*³⁷ *All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.*³⁸ *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.*³⁹ *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.*⁴⁰ *For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”*

Verse 36 reminds me of what Jesus will later say to Thomas after His resurrection. **John 20:29 (ESV)** ²⁹ *Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

This passage contains Jesus' explanation of the process of personal salvation. Jesus said: *All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.* Viewed from the human side, those who come to Jesus are those who believe in Him. From heaven's side, they are those whom the Father has given to Jesus. Jesus is not saying that the Father has provided Him with a predetermined list of names including some and excluding others. **Romans 10:13 (ESV)** ¹³ *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* The list of names includes **everyone** it is up to us to come to Him.

Salvation involves both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. The Father *gives* men and women, boys and girls to the Son but these folks must make the choice to *come* to Him, that is, *believe* on Him. He assured them that nobody who came to Him would ever be lost but would be raised at the *last day*. The *last day* refers to Jesus' return and the final events of God's program for mankind.

At times people doubt their salvation for a variety of reasons. When or if that happens, cling to the words of Jesus: *For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.* That is a promise straight from the lips of the One who died for us!

Read John 6:41-45 (ESV) ⁴¹ *So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."* ⁴² *They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"* ⁴³ *Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves."* ⁴⁴ *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.* ⁴⁵ *It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—*

The Jews began to do one of the things they did best throughout the Old Testament – that is grumble. It is easy to see their grumbling but we need to be concerned about our own grumbling. **Philippians 2:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ *Do all things without grumbling or disputing,* Perhaps the leaders and some of the crowd had now moved into the synagogue to continue the discussion. The main issue was, "Where did He come from?" Five times Jesus used the phrase "*came down from heaven,*" and the grumblers knew Jesus was claiming deity. They identified Jesus with Nazareth in Galilee, not Bethlehem in Judea where the Messiah was predicted to be born; and they assumed Joseph was His natural father. This was Jesus' declaration of His own virgin birth.

The prophets Jesus mentioned were Jeremiah (**Jer. 31:33-34**) and Isaiah. **Isaiah 54:13 (ESV)** ¹³ *All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children.*

We are currently seeing more people standing in food lines than Americans ever thought possible and people all over the country are being urged to help others as much as we can. How can we help a lost and dying world? We help by sharing the good news concerning the answer to man's greatest hunger. Tell others about the Bread of Heaven – tell them about Jesus. He is the Bread that lasts!