

SESSION TEN

The Bread of Life: *Finding Provisions for Life (John 6:28-71)*

“When Christ reveals Himself there is satisfaction in the slenderest portion, and without Christ there is emptiness in the greatest fullness.” ~ Alexander Grosse

I. The crowd is confused concerning the identity of the Bread (6:28-48)

6:30 This is not the first time the crowd asks for a sign (2:18; 4:47, 48). Once again, they are seeking political and economic liberation, not spiritual liberation. If Jesus is superior to Moses, which Jesus is claiming, then He must validate that proclamation. Only those who truly thirst and hunger after God will come to the Lord (Pss 42:1-2; 63:1; 73:25; 119:40, 174; 143:6).

6:31 The crowd cites the “bread from heaven” which Moses gave to the Israelites. Yet, Jesus will highlight eight times that He is the true and living “bread from heaven” which the Heavenly Father has given.

6:35, 37 The concept of “coming” to Jesus and “believing” in him are vital to John’s theology.

6:40 . . . *looks on the Son* . . . The Greek term is more than a mere physical activity, but speaks of spiritual insight and discernment—a clear understanding of Jesus’ identity and mission!

6:41 – The term to “complain” is the same Greek term used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX) to describe the same behavior the Israelites displayed in the wilderness before (Exod 16:7-9) and after (Num 11:1) the manna was provided.

6:44 . . . *unless it has been granted to him from the Father* . . . The phrase parallels Isaiah 9:41 and 12:39-40 which speak of spiritual blindness of the Jewish leaders—a problem that only God can correct (see 6:65; also, see Rom 2:4). Divine sovereignty in salvation is a major theme in John’s Gospel.

II. Jesus provides further clarification concerning the Bread (6:49-58)

6:52-58 . . . *unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood* . . . The term for “eating” graphically describes noisy eating, often used of animals (e.g., gnaw, munch). When referring to human activity, the term conveys the idea of enjoyment (Matt 24:38).

The context seems to speak of a personal belief in Christ and His work. While several scholars argue that the Eucharist/Communion serves as the context for this passage, this

seems unlikely. Reasons include: (1) much of the language is not Eucharistic (e.g., flesh, not body in 1 Cor 11; matter of the wine); (2) one would expect the Upper Room Discourse to be reserved for such rhetoric; (3) John omits the final paschal meal in his Passion Narrative, but makes Jesus' actual death the real Passover; and (4) the "eating" and "believing" are equal. Similar to abiding, if someone does not reside in Christ, he is not in Christ.

6:55-56 Spiritual life is impossible apart from Christ

III. Individuals respond in various ways to the Bread (6:59-71)

6:60-66 . . . *difficult to accept* . . . The phrase speaks of something "harsh". The disciples were not expressing their lack of understanding but their difficulty in accepting Jesus' words. Jesus' reference to "ascending" will be accomplished through the cross (thus, tying back to the symbols of Jesus' flesh and blood). One scholar notes that their difficulty in receiving Jesus' words are because: (1) they were interested in dietary provisions (v. 26); (2) they were unprepared to relinquish their authoritative position; (3) they were offended by Jesus claiming to be greater than Moses; and (4) the metaphor breaks social barriers (D. A. Carson, *Gospel of John*, 300).

6:62 . . . *ascend to where He was before* . . . Ascending and lifting up are often addressing crucifixion. Far more offensive than the cannibalistic notions is the fact that Jesus must be crucified. As noted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:23, the cross is "a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles".

6:69-71 Throughout the Gospel, Judas will model apostasy (12:4; 13:2, 26, 29; 18:3, 5); and Peter will model a level of discipleship (13:6-9; 18:10-18). In fact later, Judas will be seen as a direct agent of Satan (13:2, 27). Our author's post-resurrection insight serves as a warning to the reader to stand firm in one's faith (see 1 Jn 2:19).

IV. Intersect

A. As the bread, Jesus is essential to our spiritual lives.

The Old Testament often equates the Word of God as bread. As the living Word, Jesus is ultimately that Bread of Life.

Deuteronomy 8:3 – "God fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your father know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord" (also, see Proverbs 9:5; Amos 8:11).

B. As the bread, Jesus must be preeminent in our lives.

Peter aptly declares, "Lord, to whom would we go?" (v. 68).

1 Peter 4:11 -

" . . . in everything, He [Jesus Christ] must have the supremacy." ~ *Colossians 1:18*

C. As the bread, Jesus provides the means to have intimacy with the Father.

The Father draws . . . the Son came. If the storm taught the disciples anything, it taught them that apart from Christ they are helpless.

Hosea 11:4 – "I lead them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them."

Isaiah 55:1-6 - "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near."

"Take heed of drowsiness in hearing; drowsiness shows much irreverence. How lively are many when they are about the world, but in the worship of God how drowsy. ...In the preaching of the Word, is not the bread of life broken to you; and will a man fall asleep at his food?"

- Thomas Watson