

Jesus is the True Bread from Heaven

Jn. 12:20-21 – “And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.”

We also would see Jesus – we have a desire to know him as he is, and since for now we are separated from him, we know him by what he told us in the gospels, and especially the book of John.

There are seven statements of Christ in the book of John that show who Jesus claimed to be, in symbolic, or mostly symbolic terms. He said he is the true Bread from heaven, the Light of the world, the Door of the sheepfold, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the True Vine. In three other places he claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and the great “I AM”. Clearly there is no room for men to reasonably say he is just a good teacher. For him to make these claims, he is either a lying fraud, a delusional mad man, or he really is God come down to earth in human flesh. He also claimed to be the Lord of the Sabbath and to be able to forgive sins. If he is not God, then how could we possibly call him good while claiming these things about himself? We indeed do recognize him as “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).

The True Bread from Heaven

Jn. 6:32 – “... Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.”

Jn. 6:35 – “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

Jn. 6:48-51 – “I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

Through Bible times, bread was the major staff of life. Of course they used real whole grain bread that had more substance to it than “Wonder Bread”. Today’s normal, cheap white bread is not good for much more than keeping the mayonnaise off your fingers. It is an empty substitute. It is analogous to man-made religion – cheap, empty, robbed of what is good and necessary, whereas the true religion has real substance, and that is in the Person of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus claimed to be the True Bread, he was using a figure of speech – he is obviously not literal bread, so we must look for the meaning of the figure. He is saying that he is the one that sustains life here in this life. Of course we know he sustains and provides for us in a quite literal and physical way (why else would we thank God for our food?), but more significantly he is the bread that gives and sustains spiritual life.

Typical or Symbolic Background Events of Christ being the Bread from Heaven

- a. Manna in the desert as a miraculous provision
- b. Elijah multiplied the “handful of meal” and “a little oil” for the widow of Zarephath (1 K. 17:11-16)
- c. Elisha fed 100 men with twenty loaves of barley (2 K. 4:42-44)
- d. Jesus’ feeding of the five thousand (Jn. 6:1-13)
- e. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which means “house of bread” (Bayit = house, lechem=bread, Beyt-lechem=house of bread). That was literally where the Bread of heaven came down to earth. It was not an accident – Micah 5:2 predicted it, and its significance is now apparent,

The two significant but related events that Jesus uses in Jn. 6 to explain his meaning were the feeding of the 5000, and the manna in the desert. With almost nothing to work with, he multiplied the fishes and loaves to feed the whole crowd. After crossing the Sea of Galilee, the crowd tracked him down, wondering how he got there. He gently rebuked them, saying that they were following him for the bread, not because their hearts were moved by the miracles he had done.

Jn. 6:26-27 – “Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for

that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”

In this he was trying to point them to a spiritual truth behind his provision of literal bread. Incredibly, they responded in 6:30, “What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee: what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” (What? Multiplying five barley loaves and two small fish wasn’t a sign?!) Evidently they expected the Messiah to produce a continual supply of literal bread from heaven, like the manna.

Jesus corrected them, saying it really wasn’t Moses who gave them the manna, but God, and furthermore the Father was really giving them the true bread from heaven. 6:32-33 – “verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven: but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.”

They still did not understand (6:34), so he clarified in 6:35 – “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger: and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” The giving of the manna and the feeding of the five thousand were physical signs typifying how God would provide life, spiritual life, like bread for the soul, and that it would come through believing on the Son who had quite literally come down from heaven in the Incarnation.

He tried to move on from the figure to the reality in 6:36-40 – “But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

But they were having none of that (6:41-42), so Jesus stressed the issue of believing on him for everlasting life even more (6:43-47 – “Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”).

Then he returned to the figure to further explain his meaning. 6:48-51 – “I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

Complication

At first it may seem simple enough for us to understand that he, as the Bread of heaven, came down to give us spiritual life. But he seems to mix other things into his discourse in John 6, like

- Labouring for the meat that does not perish. (27)
- That the work of God is to believe on Christ. (29)
- That he came down from heaven, sent by God, to do his Father’s will. (29, 32, 33, 38, 39, 40, 44, 50, 51, 57, 58, 62)
- The Father gives certain people to Christ; they will inevitably come to him, and will not be cast out. (37)
- The Father’s will is that not one of these people will be lost, but raised up in everlasting life at the last day. (39-40)
- That no one can come to Christ on their own – they must be drawn to Christ by the Father. (44-45)
- That he himself is of God and has seen the Father. (46)
- That all who believe on him have everlasting life. (47)
- That we have no life apart from eating his flesh and drinking his blood. (53-57)

Interwoven amongst all these statements are the verses declaring himself to be the True Bread. So any correct and full comprehension of the meaning of John 6 must recognize that all those points listed above have something to do quite directly with his being the Bread of life.

Probably the most basic foundational principle in understanding this is to see that God is our Provider. Like Gen. 22, he is revealed as “Yahweh Yireh” when he showed Abraham the ram caught in the thicket as a substitute for the life of his son Isaac. He provided the animal skins to cover Adam’s and Eve’s nakedness. He provided the manna in the desert, and water out of the rock. He feeds the sparrows and the whole animal kingdom, and even provides rain and food for men in their state of rebellion against him. We are instructed to pray that he will provide our daily food. But the height of the Father’s provision was that he sent his Son into the world to redeem an elect people to him, and make a way of forgiveness and justification.

John 6 repeatedly states that Christ was sent from the Father, that he came down from heaven to do the Father’s will. In the same way that God sent physical manna to feed the Israelites in the desert, he sent his Son to be spiritual manna – Bread that would give and sustain everlasting spiritual life, not just physical and temporary life.

Doing the Work of God. Jesus’ work, or responsibility, was to obey the Father and do what he was sent down to do. We also are to work, labouring for the true, imperishable meat. What is that work? Not religious observances and good deeds, but to believe on Christ (6:29, 40, 47). God does all the real work – the Father sent the Son, the Son accomplished the redemption, and the Holy Spirit opens our hearts and minds to receive the truth. Our “work” is simply to believe on the Son and receive that everlasting life.

To whom does God give the Bread? When 6:33 says the bread of God “gives life to the world”, it obviously doesn’t mean every individual in the world, because “there are some of you that believe not” (36, 64). The majority of mankind do not receive the truth. They are on “the broad way” that leads to destruction.

God gives specific people to Christ, and they will most certainly receive the truth and believe. Not a one of them will be refused or rejected, or lost in the end (37, 39), but will be raised from the dead at the last day.

Why do others reject him? Jn. 10:26 gives the answer, “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep”. Notice that it does not say “You aren’t my sheep because you don’t believe”. This would please the Arminians, but surprisingly, I found no translations that twist it that way. They all agree – “You do not believe, because you are not my sheep”. We do not “become” sheep by believing – we are sheep by God’s eternal election and calling, and therefore he moves us to believe. We cannot come to God on our own, unassisted. “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (6:44).

What is meant by the eating of the bread? God uses the figure of bread. Bread is of no use unless it is eaten. It must be taken into the body and assimilated, where it becomes a living part of us. This is a great wonder even in the physical sense – dead food can be converted by the body into living tissue. But physical bread cannot produce permanent life. “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.” (49)

Because the hearers in Jn. 6 were applying the figure too literally, they were offended (“How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”). He obviously didn’t mean it in a cannibalistic way. As we eat physical bread to maintain physical life, we “eat” the living Bread by believing on him.

What is the result of partaking of this Bread? There are at least three results of “eating the flesh of the Son of man and drinking his blood”.

1. **The immediate effect is that we receive everlasting life.** 6:54 – “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life”. This is confirmed in many places:

Jn. 3:36 – “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

1 Jn. 5:11-13 – “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I

written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. “

The point is that it is when we believe that we receive eternal life – we are not waiting to get to heaven for it to become effective.

He says if a man eat of this bread he will not die (6:50). Christians have been dying ever since those words, so it obviously doesn't refer to physical death. The life he gives is eternal, spiritual life, not physical. Our spirits will never die, unlike the unsaved world, who await “the second death” (Rev. 20:6).

2. **The continuing effect is that we will not hunger or thirst.** 6:35 – “He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” With physical food and drink we are in a continual cycle of hunger, eating, satisfaction, and hungering again. But when we believe on the Son, the source of the spiritual food and water is already within us. Jn. 4:14 – “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Jn. 7:37-38 – “... If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”
3. **The last effect will be our resurrection at the last day, to live in glorified bodies with our Savior forever.** 6:39-40 – “And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” (also repeated in verses 44 and 54)

Application

The real question now becomes how stands it with each of you? What is Christ to you? Is he an interesting historical figure, someone we should emulate, or is he your life? Is he the true Bread of your life? Is there a well of life springing up within you? Do you experience this life-producing and life-sustaining relationship with God? Is he your daily bread? Or are you just existing in a mix of physical and mental stimulations and experiences, totally occupied with job, family, and enjoyments? Do you have spiritual life, eternal, everlasting life? Do you know you have eternal life?

If not, you may come to Christ and receive that life, simply by believing on him - believing that he is the True Bread from heaven, the Son of God who provided forgiveness, redemption, and justification for all those who believe. Did he die for you?

Jn. 1:12-13 – “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Are you now, or will you now, become a son of God by receiving him as he is in truth – Savior, Redeemer, King, and the Bread of Life?

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