

# I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

## John 6

### I. BACKGROUND

#### A. PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS

1. John 1—Christ [Messiah]—Elijah—the 'Prophet' [like Moses?]
2. Mt 16—Elijah—John the Baptist—a Prophet [possibly Jeremiah]

#### B. FIRST GLIMPSES OF JESUS—John 1

1. What John and Jesus said
  - Lamb of God [John]
  - Son of God [John]
  - Son of Man [Jesus]
2. What disciples said—John 1
  - Andrew—Messiah
  - Philip—One Moses wrote about—prophets spoke about
  - Nathaniel—Son of God—King of Israel

#### C. WHAT JESUS HAS DONE—John 2-5

1. **Changed water** to wine at Cana—**first sign** in Galilee
2. **Cleansed Temple**—many believed because of **signs** He was doing
3. **Encounter** with Nicodemus—Jesus alluded to being Son of Man
4. Growing popularity—**John's testimony**—He must become greater
5. **Encounter** with Samaritan woman—I AM He—the Christ
6. **Healed** royal official's son—**second sign** in Galilee
7. **Healed** invalid [38 years]—Bethesda Pool in Jerusalem
  - a. Jews pursued Him—because He healed on Sabbath
  - b. Jews wanted to kill Him—He identified Himself with God as Father
    - As the Son who gives life—just as the Father raises dead
    - Who gives eternal life
      - ❖ To whoever hears My word
      - ❖ And believes Him who sent Me
    - As the Son of Man—Who has the power to Judge

## **D. FOUR WITNESSES (Jn 5)—Jesus as Son, Savior, Judge, Expected One**

1. **John**—testified to the truth—[Son of God—Lamb of God]
2. His **works**—greater testimony than John's—the works I do
3. The **Father**—you don't hear or see Him—He is not abiding in you
4. **Scripture**—Moses wrote about Me—but you don't believe his writings

## **II. SETTING AND CONTEXT**

### **A. SYNOPTIC ACCOUNT OF MINISTRY IN GALILEE/DECAPOLIS**

1. John's two Galilean accounts not in Synoptics  
Wedding feast at Cana (Jn 2); Healing of royal official's son (Jn 4)
2. Called and designated 12 apostles  
Apparently had happened by John 2
3. Many healings and exorcisms
4. Pharisees and Herodians pursue Him after healing leper on Sabbath
5. Scribes say He is demon possessed—family thinks He is crazy
6. Jesus calmed the sea—disciples afraid!
7. Sermon on the Mount
8. Healing of centurion's servant
9. Raising of son of widow of Nain
10. John sent messengers asking about Jesus' identity
11. Parable of sower—plus many other parables
12. Gerasene demoniac
13. Raised Jairus's daughter
14. Healed bleeding woman
15. Healed two blind men—and a demon-possessed mute
16. Rejection at Nazareth
17. Sending out of 12—many exorcisms and healings
18. John imprisoned and beheaded

### **B. FEEDING OF 5000—6:1-14**

Essentially same account as Synoptics—with additional information

**Verse 3**—second Passover—cf with 2:13

**Verses 5-7**—conversation with Philip

Jesus was testing Philip—already knew what He was going to do  
200 denarii = 8 months of man's wages (in Synoptics)

**Verses 8-9**—Andrew—people bringer and problem solver

**Verse 14**—"surely this is 'the Prophet' who is to come into the world"

### **C. EVENTS LEADING TO DISCOURSE ON BREAD—6:15-25**

#### **1. The sea crossing—6:15-21**

- Jesus walked on sea—*again* disciples were afraid [like calming storm]
- Matthew inserts—Peter walking on water—and his lack of faith

#### **2. The crowd comes to Jesus—6:22-25**

- Crowd saw that Jesus had not entered the boat
- Boats from Tiberias arrived—but Jesus was not there
- Crowd and boats from Tiberias crossed—found Jesus in Capernaum

### **III. READ TEXT: 6:26-68**

#### **Words to the People**

26 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." 28 Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." 30 So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so 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 OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'" 32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. 33 For the bread of God is [fn9] that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." 34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread."

35 Jesus said to them, "**I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.**" 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 the one who comes to Me I will certainly not 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 This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

#### **Words to the Jews**

41 Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "**I am the bread that came down out of heaven.**" 42 They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of

Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?" 43 Jesus answered and said to 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 SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. 46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. 47 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

52 Then the Jews *began* to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us *His* flesh to eat?" 53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever."

### Words to the Disciples

59 These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

60 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this* said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" 61 But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? 62 *What* then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would [fn10] betray Him. 65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

### Peter's Confession of Faith

66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" 68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

## IV. EXPLANATION OF TEXT

### v26—Jesus' criticism

1. You look for me not because you saw signs—but because you're hungry
2. Jesus critical elsewhere of those who look for signs—**Jn 4:48**
3. But these people don't even rise to that level of curiosity

### v27—Perishable—vs—enduring bread

1. This bread is perishable—like the water that did not satisfy—in **John 4**
2. **Work** for imperishable food—food that endures

3. Cf. enduring food—with everlasting water that gives eternal life—**John 4**

#### vv28-29—Doing the ‘work of God’

1. People want to know how to do this ‘work’
  - Steeped in their Jewish legalism and works-oriented righteousness
  - So they took Jesus literally—‘work’ for eternal life
2. Jesus’ stunning answer—this ‘work’ is to **believe**
  - Salvation is not by works—but by faith!!!

#### v30-31—demand for a sign

1. Jews always demanded a ‘sign’ to authenticate the authority of a prophet
  - Moses did this—by providing manna in the desert!
  - They expect a prophet like Moses—**Dt 18:15**
2. Jesus *already* has given them many signs!
  - Exorcisms, healings, raising the dead
  - People who need signs/miracles *never* see enough—always blind!
3. He has just given them a HUGE sign!
  - Feeding 5000 with five loaves and 2 fish—filled their stomachs
  - But this bread should have done more than feed them
  - It was sign of the ‘true bread’

#### vv32-33—the ‘true bread’

1. Moses did not provide the manna—**God** did this!
2. Now God is giving you even better bread
3. Manna was defective—temporary, spoiled, did not permanently satisfy

**See v49**—your fathers ate it in the wilderness and died!

4. Bread—that ‘comes down ‘out of heaven’
  - **Key phrase**—used 7 times in this passage
  - Refers to Jesus as the Son Man
    - 1:51**—Image of Jesus as the ladder—He told Nathaniel about
    - 3:13**—Told Nicodemus—only one has ascended, who has descended
5. ‘true’ = ‘real’ thing—not defective/deficient—not uncertain—trustworthy
  - a. Other instances of ‘true’ in John’s Gospel
    - Like the ‘**true** light’—that was coming into the world—**1:9**
    - Like the ‘**true** worshipers’ the Father seeks—**4:23**
    - If I (Jesus) do judge, my judgment is ‘**true**’—**8:16**

- Like the ‘**true** vine’—**15:1**
- John’s own testimony about Jesus’ death is ‘**true**’—**19:35**

b. Why all this is ‘true’—because God is true

1. At the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus declared:

***Jn 7:28-29**—You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is **true**, whom you do not know. I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me.*

2. In His priestly intercessory prayer, Jesus said:

***Jn 17:3**—This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only **true** God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

6. The ‘bread of ‘God’

It gives life to the world—just like ‘light’ gives life—**Jn 1**

**v34—the plaintive plea—“Give us this bread”**

- Like the woman at the well—**Jn 4**—give me this water!
- They still want their stomachs filled—like Jesus said in verse 26

**vv35-40—Jesus’ startling declaration—“I AM the bread of life”**

1. The **significance**—v35

- Second I AM statement—**εγω ειμι**
- He is the eternal—self-existent **provider**

2. The **offer**—v35

- He who **comes** to me will never **hunger**
- He who **believes** in me will never **thirst**

3. The **warning**—v36

- You have seen Me, and yet do not believe me

4. The possible **consequence** [in **John 8**]

***Jn 8:23-24**—You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that **I Am He**, you will die in your sins.*

5. Why this offer is possible—again— because of the Father

**First:** Because the **Father sends** His Son to do His will

**Second:** Not because we come on our own initiative

But because the **Father draws** us—and gives us to Christ

*Is 49:10—They will not hunger or thirst, nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down; for He who has compassion on them will lead them and will guide them to springs of water.*

*Is 55:1—Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread., and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance.*

6. The three-fold promise—to those who come—see—and believe

**v37**—Divine **acceptance**—I will not cast them out

**v39**—**Security** in the Savior—I will not lose

**v39-40**—**Certainty** of salvation—who sees/believes—will be raised up

**SUMMARY: the ‘true’ bread—gives real life—saves—sustains—permanently**

## **IV. GRUMBLING AND ARGUING**

### **A. HISTORY—FOREFATHERS HAD GRUMBLING IN WILDERNESS**

**Ex 15:23**—when waters at Marah were bitter

**Ex 16:2**—when they had no food—before the manna and quails

**Ex 17:3**—at Rephidim they had no water—before Moses struck rock

**Nu 11:4-23**—when they got tired of manna—and wanted meat

### **B. FIRST GRUMBLING—QUESTIONING HIS DIVINE ORIGIN—v 41**

1. Their problem

- How could His **Father** have sent Him to give eternal life
- They doubted His paternity and heavenly origin
- They Knew His parents—who were in Nazareth—not heaven!

2. Importance of the issue

- a. His paternity is at the heart of His I AM identity

- Either He is God’s Son and from the Father—or just a man
- If He is not—He is not the Bread of Life
- If He is not—He cannot offer eternal life

- b. **Verse 46** = key to understanding all the I AM passages

- **Only He** has seen the Father—only He has come from God
- Therefore He **is** the Bread of Life—**v48**
- Indeed, He **has** come down from heaven—**v50**
- Therefore **only He** can/does offer eternal life—**v47**

3. Jesus reiterates His promise—takes it to the next level

Whoever **eats** this bread will live forever—**v51**

4. Jesus proclaims His sacrificial death—**v51**

I will give this bread—my flesh—for the life of the world

**C. SECOND ARGUMENT—HOW COULD HE GIVE HIS FLESH TO EAT?—v52**

1. Three problems

- ❖ Against the **Law**—‘Jews’ did not eat meat with blood in it
- ❖ Offensive **imagery**—cannibalism—accusation by early pagans
- ❖ To ‘give’ his flesh for the life of the world—**He must die!**

2. Jesus’ response—was even more graphic

- ❖ You must **eat** my **body** and **drink** my **blood**
- ❖ He who **eats me** will live because of Me

3. What Jesus meant—He stressed three things

a. We can live only through Him

- In Him was life, and that life was the light of men—**Jn 1:4**
- This life came from the Father—**v57**
- This life is transferred to whoever eats Him—**v57**

b. Eternal life comes only through ‘true’ food and drink—**v55**

- Only the sacrifice of *His* body and blood can bring real life

c. We must abide in Him—and He abides in us

1. This comes from **eating** and **drinking** Christ

**John 14**—promised in-dwelling presence of His Holy Spirit

**John 15**—if we abide in Him, and He in us, we will bear fruit

2. Abiding in Christ binds us to the *living* Father—implied **v57**

4. So—the *giving* of His flesh

- Was His crucifixion/death in atonement for our sins
- So we can be made one (abide) with the Father (see John 17)

5. But what did He mean by **eat** and **drink**?

**D. THIRD—GRUMBLING BY SOME OF HIS DISCIPLES**

1. What was the ‘hard’ (difficult) saying they could not ‘listen to’?

His last statement—summarizes all their objections

**v58**—*This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the*



*fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.*

2. Objections:

a. Scandalized by His divine origin—Son of Man is Son of God

**v62**—*What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?*

b. Repelled that He must sacrifice Himself and die

His ascension pre-supposed His death [and sacrifice]!

c. Misunderstood what He meant by **eat** and **drink**

1. But He did not mean this literally—but as an analogy

**vv53-54**—You must do two things—**eat** and **drink**

This parallels the two actions in **v35**—**come** and **believe**

2. Instead—He stressed intensity and totality of the action

‘eat’ in all the rest of John 6 is **εσθιω** = eat, consume

But here [**vv54, 56-8**] it is **τρογω** = gnaw, feed upon, devour

3. The ultimate meaning

I must become an integral, in-dwelling presence united in you

You must become inseparably united with Me

This is a deeply spiritual—not physical thing!

d. **Mainly**—unwillingness to accept spiritual nature of His message

- Some expected a **king**—to deliver them politically—**see 6:15**
- Some looked for a **physical** provider—who give them bread
- Some were **legalists**—rejected the simple “come—see—believe”

**V. BUT JESUS MADE IT CLEAR**

A. THIS IS A SPIRITUAL MATTER—THAT ONLY GOD CAN RESOLVE

B. THE FATHER SENT HIM TO SOLVE THE HUMAN SPIRITUAL DILEMMA

C. NOTHING LESS THAN THE ANCIENT DIVINE MESSAGE OF SALVATION

1. God *created* the world by His **word**—**Gen 1**

2. Man does not live by bread alone

But by every **word** that comes from the mouth of God—Dt 8:3 and Mt 4

3. Jesus *is* the Word incarnate—In the beginning was the **Word**

4. Now He brought the ‘true’ words of life

*v63—It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken t you are spirit and are life.*

#### D. ULTIMATE MEANING

1. **To ‘eat’ means to come and take Him at His word**

- **To accept Him as the Word and promise of life**
- **To receive the gift of His body that was given for us**

2. **To ‘drink’ means to believe his ‘blood’ seals the New Covenant**

- **To depend on the power of His shed blood alone to atone**