

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: After Jesus' miracle of feeding the multitude, the people came across the lake to look for Him to do more. But more of what? More to eat or more of the Christ? Then they saw Jesus and wondered and asked *how did you get here?* Jesus responded a bit harshly, for He saw their insincerity. *The truth is, you do not want the truth, you are just here to see more of a "show" and to receive more food; you want another miracle, but not what is far more important. You should not be concerned about material things; rather, seek what is more effectual and important. Instead of food and what is perishable, see what I am offering you—eternal life and real Truth—because God the Father has sent me to you for that purpose so you can have a purpose!* The crowd responded, *what does God want us to do?* Jesus told them, *believe in me, the One He sent!* So they replied, *you must show us a miraculous sign; what can you do now? Our ancestors ate the manna that Moses gave, bread from heaven.* Jesus said, *the manna came from God, not Moses; now you can have real truth—bread that will give you life.* Then, they wanted this. Jesus said *I am the Bread of Life; no one who comes to me will hunger or thirst again. But you do not believe even though you saw a miraculous sign already! Whomever the Father has given me will come to me and I will not reject him nor will he be lost. It is God's will that whoever comes to me and believes will have eternal life.* But, the people could not get beyond the literal meaning of bread; they wanted food for now, not spiritual substance that would last for eternity. These people were being taught from God by God, and yet all they could do was to complain and murmur just as their ancestors did under Moses. *Everyone who eats this eternal bread of mine will live forever, so the world now has hope and life available.*

Contexts and Background:

This passage is a testimony that Jesus was not only the promised Messiah, but also the fulfillment of Moses' prophecy and the outcome of the Exodus. The image of bread and how God cares and provides parallels Exodus as Jesus fulfills God's promise in His Son, giving us redemption. Here is a picture that Jesus is exceedingly more important than whatever we are dealing with, have been through, or may face. It is when we apprehend who Christ is that we can receive Him as Lord and Savior as He gives us the ability by faith to be saved. Believe in Him; allow Him to take control. These people wanted to have the control and just watch a show (Ex. 16:15; Psalm 78:24)!

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Miraculous signs.* Jesus chastised these people for their shallow wants and desires to be fed with what was temporary and miss the real meal that is eternal. They just wanted more and more miracles, each one greater than the last. People easily place their faith in the wrong things and at the wrong end of the message. These signs were meant to point to Christ, not for us to be humored by Him. Even when these people were witnesses to the incarnate God, they only wanted more of a show and not more of Him. This parallels people today who want a cheap, easy to swallow message but not the real Message of Truth that convicts and impacts. They want a God who dispenses cures to what we think ails us rather than the real cure to what really ails us—redemption (John 11:40; 1 Cor. 1:22).
- *Because you ate.* A popular notion then was that Moses would return and restore manna for the people, so there would not be so much hardship. Jesus steps on that and draws their attention to Him, the Redeemer.
- *Food that spoils...food that endures.* Jesus was not demeaning the miracle of manna or that it was not real food; rather, He taught that what He gives is more and vital for one's eternal life.
- *Eternal life.* The popular notion then, as it is now, was that one can secure heaven by one's own means—be good person, be a descendant of Abraham, and so forth. Jesus makes it clear; He is the only way, and we must believe and trust Him by faith. It is faith in Christ, not faith in one's self or belief system that saves, no matter what the origins are, even from Moses himself.

- *Seal of approval.* Jesus' claims are backed up by God the Father, as He gives Christ His full authorization and support and points out that all must go through Him to be saved.
- *Works God requires.* This is not works of merit where we put in the time or work to earn something; rather, we put in the effort to receive what He gives by His work alone. Many Jews then believed and taught works-based righteousness, whereas Christianity teaches we can't earn our righteousness, but we respond in gratitude because of it (John 3:33; Rom. 6:33; 10:2-4; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).
- *Believe in the one.* It is God's role and work that is behind, under, around, and in the midst of it all; we merely respond. Our faith is a response, not a work; we realize Christ because He is revealed to us.
- *Manna.* For pious Jews, this meant spiritual food, that we are to nourish ourselves on God's Word. It also means God provides and fulfills His promises (Ex. 16; Num. 11; Psalm 119).
- *Bread from heaven.* Meaning the nourishment that God gives us, which is *eternity*. Jesus is using every day illustrations to help them grasp eternal values (Ex. 16:4, 15; Deut. 8:3).
- *He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.* Meaning that God came to be a man, referring to Jesus' incarnation as the eternal, One True God who became the God-Man—fully God, fully man, something only He can accomplish—to be God and give eternal life to those of us who are dead in sin and hopelessly unable to be redeemed by any other means. He was fully man while remaining fully God. Jesus also did this so He could identify with our plight in life. As He lived a normal human existence for over 30 years, He experienced all that we experienced, including all the emotions, relationships, and temptations; we have a God who identifies with us and asks us to identify with him (Isa. 7:10-16; Matt. 1:18, 23; Luke 1:34-37; John 1:1-18; 3:2, 13-16, 31; 5:36-38; 6: 29-38, 58; Rom. 1:3-4; 1 Cor. 15:45-49, Gal. 4:4; Eph. 2:1; 4:9-10; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 1:1-14; 2:14-18; 4:15).
- *Give us this bread.* As many others who misunderstood Jesus, they took His metaphor literally (John 3:4; 4:15).
- *Bread of life/the bread that gives life.* This is one of the famous "I Am" sayings of Jesus, significant because this points to His Divinity (John 8:12; 9:5; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5). Jesus is the One who gives life and provides. It is a bold claim to divinity, that Jesus is God. Jesus is the God who nourishes us and we must receive and consume His most precious gift so it becomes a part of us so we can have real satisfaction and contentment. Jesus as Lord is not a commodity; rather, it gives us the means and ability to have a right relationship with God (Ex. 3:14; John 4:4; 8:12, 58-59; 9:5; 10:7-14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1-5; 17:3)
- *Never go hungry...never be thirsty.* Meaning God provides. It is God who satisfies, who quenches our deepest spiritual and emotional needs. What is missing in us can't be filled by just meeting temporary desires, fulfilling pleasures, or solving our political problems. Jesus is contrasting what is merely material, which is fleeting and limited, to what is true and more important, spiritual, and eternal, because what we think is important is not what really is important (Isa. 44:3; 55:1-3; John 2:19-21; 3:3-10; 1 Cor. 2:14).
- *Seen me and still you do not believe.* Most Jews then were expecting a returning Prophet like Elijah or Moses or some kind of leader who would fulfill that role. Jesus is declaring that He is more than the anticipated return of Moses; He is the real Messiah. The people did not understand that His true mission was to save souls—not be a political or military figure or a showman. To make matters worse for them, they are even more culpable because they got to see Jesus first hand, and to see His testimony and miracles to back it up. If they refused, there is no excuse (Deut. 18:15-18; Matt. 11:20-24; Mark 9:41; John 6:14-15; 8:58).
- *Father gives me will come to me.* This means that our Sovereign and Holy God is giving us the faith and means, and does all the work so we can be saved. Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the

Light. This also means God is active in the election of our salvation, picking us up where we can't be lifted up. He chooses us who cannot do it for ourselves because of sin, and gives us the faith to make that choice so we can come to Christ and be saved. This also means we have the responsibility to receive His gift of grace and we also deserve any damnation for rejecting Him (John 12:20-32; Rom. 3:1-19; Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:4; 2 Tim. 1:9).

- *I will never drive away.* Referring to our unity and perseverance in Christ as a bond of faith and reality
- *The will of him who sent me.* Meaning God is not contradictory; He is in full communion and agreement within the Godhead; three Persons; one God. This also means Jesus, as fully human, was submissive as is God the Son to God the Father—equal, but having different roles.
- *Lose none.* Referring to the Sovereignty of God, that He recognizes those who receive Him by faith and will not recognize those who reject Him (Rom. 8:28-30).
- *Raise them up at the last day.* A Jewish metaphor meaning God will restore the land and raise the people up to inaugurate the new Kingdom of God. Jesus uses this term for its real purpose, that God gives eternal life.
- *Grumble/murmur.* This is the response to conviction; we as humans hate and fear the trust and belief we can have, but God demands it and even gives us the means to overcome sin and receive His Redemption. Yet, these people were so stuck on themselves that they jumped to a literal understanding when they knew better. This also shadows the Israelite's grumbling (Ex. 16:7; 17:3; Num. 11:1; 1 Cor. 10:10).
- *Son of Joseph.* Jesus, being fully human, had a human family too.
- *Taught by God.* This is a prophecy from Isaiah, that God Himself would teach them about His final plan of redemption; here, He is doing this, and we are too, through His Word (Isa. 54:13; Jer. 31:34)!
- *One who is from God.* Another emphatic statement that testifies to the Deity of Christ: He is God (John 1:18; 14:9)!
- *Live forever.* It is through Christ we have redemption and are saved with new life for the here and now.
- *My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* This is, of course, a metaphor, as Jesus is the Substance who becomes our nourishment and His life gives as well as sustains our lives. We take and consume who and what He is for our Spiritual Growth just as food nourishes the body for physical growth. Bread was the essential food staple of the region.

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

What do you want and need more of in life? Is it physical comfort or a problem resolved or a fear to be eliminated or a hurt corrected—or is it something even shallower, like a new car or a better dress? Seeking comforts and needs, felt or real, are not always wrong; they are wrong when we replace our real need with them. Our real need is more of Christ and less of ourselves! We need to have a grasp on who Christ is and who we are in Him. This is the foundation of being a Christian. Who is He? What did He do for me? What is my role and purpose (John 3:30)?

We must have more in our spiritual arsenal than just belief. We must have more in order to grow in Him and make our faith and relationships work. Our faith cannot just be academic, an idea, or even just a hope; it has to be real. Jesus cannot just be an idea or a hope or fuel for our agendas and purposes. He must be real and tangible in our feelings, thinking, and focus. We must be willing and able to trust and abide, so when the storms of life come, we will have a firm foundation, not one on sand made up of grains of false expectations, misplaced hopes, false ideas, and a skewed determination. We are called to know the will of God and to obey the will of God so we can give Him glory and praise and be His display. We need to focus on God, our intimacy in Him, and that He is a God who cares and who gives. We must be

thankful, look at what is He saying, (we do this by praising Him) and not bow to the will of others who give misguided information under the disguise of presenting it as God's will.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What is your favorite type of bread or bakery product? Why is Jesus being compared with a food staple? How do you relate to this?
2. When or have you ever challenged the statuesque of something like a belief or idea? What do you do to call attention to what is important, right, and true?
3. What do you want more of in life? What happens when we want more of something just to fulfill a current need over more of Christ?
4. Why do you think that Jesus responded harshly to the crowd? After all, they went to a lot of trouble to find and follow Him.
5. Why does real Truth not make sense to someone who is not in Christ?
6. Why did these people, after hearing and seeing the incarnate God, only want more of a show and not more of Him? How does this parallel people today who want a cheap, easy to swallow message but not the real Truth?
7. What message did you have trouble with or what was something that convicted or impacted you? In what ways do you see people today so easily placing their faith in the wrong things?
8. How do you handle truth from God's Word that convicts and impacts more than normal? What has Jesus given you that is far more important than your present perceived needs?
9. What does it mean to you that Jesus, being fully God, was also fully human and had a human family too?
10. What does the Bread of Life mean to you? How is Jesus your substance and nourishment for life and spiritual growth?
11. What do you need to do to desire more of Christ and less of what temporarily satisfies?
12. How do you know if someone is being insincere with you? How do you react? Why is it that most people just want to be tickled with a message of what feels good rather than what is the real truth from a book or pastor or teacher?