

May 8, 2022

“The Bread of Life”
Lesson 1 of Unit

John 6:22-35

Intro

Bread was a primary part of the diet of people in Jesus' time. It was simple to make, but it took time. It depended on having water available, so when there were droughts, many people died. The lack of bread for the common people was a major factor in the people rising up against the nobility in the French Revolution.

The background events that lead into today's passage are crucial for understanding why Jesus says what He does.

Near the beginning of Jesus' third year of ministry, John the Baptist is killed. The disciples are distressed, so Jesus takes them to an isolated place across the Sea of Galilee so they can have some time to deal with it. But the multitudes of people go around the lake to find Jesus, who has compassion on them, teaching them and healing them.

At the end of that day, the people have nowhere to get food, so Jesus feeds the 5000 men as well as the women and children with two fish and five loaves of bread. (This is the only miracle of Jesus before the resurrection that is recorded in all four Gospels.) The people are so taken with a leader who can give them food via miracles that they want to make Him king. But Jesus goes away, up to the mountain to pray. Later that night, Jesus walks across the water to save the disciples from the storm as they are crossing the Sea of Galilee.

These are the events that lead into the passage beginning in vs. 22.

Read John 6:22-35

1. vs. 22: This verse happens “the next day” following the feeding of the 5000
The people are confused; the disciples took the only boat, and Jesus stayed
Where is he?
2. vs. 23: Some boats arrive from Tiberias, meaning they have come from the direction the disciples went
The boat must have traveled during the daytime hours
It was stormy during the night, as Jesus has to help his disciples
This boat would have seen the disciples' boat if it had been out during the mornig
The verse ends by noting the location is the same as where the feeding miracle happened
3. vs. 24: The people get into the boats which have just arrived to go look for Jesus
They head to Capernaum on the northwest side of the sea
They were near Bethsaida on the northeast side of the sea for the feeding miracle
Capernaum is Jesus' base of operations, his home town (Matt. 9:1, Mark 2:1)
This is the logical place to go look for Jesus

4. vs. 25: The crowd finds Jesus in Capernaum, but they have questions
“When did you get here?” (and “How?” is no doubt thought, but unsaid)
This question indicates their surprise at finding him there
He didn’t leave in the boat with the disciples; he went up the mountain
Walking there in the dark is very difficult
But here He is in Jerusalem—How did this happen?
5. vs. 26: Jesus answers them, but He doesn’t answer the question that they ask
They seek Him to give them more bread, not because His miracles prove who He is
How Jesus got to Capernaum is not the most important thing for them to know
They are being asked to question why they follow Him
It is because they want to gain something materially
Jesus is offering change from the inside
6. vs. 27: Jesus challenges his listeners to consider what they put their effort into
Food that spoils, or food that lasts for eternity
Jesus isn’t saying, “Don’t work”
Scripture clearly teaches that we are to work for our livelihood (2 Thess. 3:12)
Jesus is referring to how we prioritize things in our lives
Jesus wants them to seek eternal “food” which “the Son of Man will give you”
Jesus wants them to rely on Him first for spiritual nourishment
Focus on what matters most first, and then the next things after that
7. vs. 28: The people hear him, and alter their concerns, but they have missed the key point (like us...?)
They recognize that the bread they wanted isn’t the most important thing to seek
They are in the process of changing: “What must we do...?”
Like the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16), they think they must do something to gain eternity
This is not illogical; the Jewish system has been all about doing
Sacrifices and offerings are required at the prescribed times
There are correct foods to eat, and those to be avoided
But they have missed the part where Jesus said, “The Son of Man will give you...”
Some may not realize Jesus is referring to Himself
Others may know that, but have skipped right over that at the moment
8. vs. 29: So Jesus helps them take the next step
They think they need to do something, so Jesus tells them what to do
“The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent.”
Salvation comes from faith, from believing, not from works
Their challenge (and all humanity’s) is to believe that Jesus will do what He says
9. vs. 30: We see the hearts of the majority in this verse
Jesus just told them in vs. 29 to “believe in the one He has sent”
They don’t seem inclined to believe or trust Him
They ask for a miracle as “proof” that He is who he is claiming to be
Instead of doing what Jesus asks of them, they *demand* He do something for them

10. vs. 31: The people continue their thoughts to Jesus

“Our forefathers ate manna in the desert”

They were given bread by God; Jesus just gave them bread

They seem to be rightly connecting the bread miracle to God

They seem to be connecting Jesus as God’s next prophet

Moses, who “gave” them the bread, said God would raise up another prophet

This prophet would be like Moses himself (see Deut. 18:15)

Jesus is on the way to being like Moses to these people

However, Moses gave manna for forty years; Jesus gave one meal

He isn’t greater than Moses in their eyes yet

11. vs. 32: Jesus forcefully corrects their thinking

“I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven”

They think Moses did the work; he was merely God’s conduit to the people

The people are being asked to change their perceptions of who Jesus is

Moses was a servant of God; Jesus is the Son of God

Moses delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (with God’s leading)

Jesus will deliver all mankind from slavery to sin and death

Moses led the people to the entrance to the promised land

Jesus will lead believers into heaven

A greater One than Moses has come to them, but they don’t see it yet

12. vs. 33: Jesus tries to explain it to them; it seems clear and unambiguous

“For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

The bread isn’t bread, says Jesus

It’s a person

He has come down from heaven

He gives life (not just bread)

He is again calling for them to place their faith in Him, not in things

13. vs. 34: The people hear “bread from heaven” and want it—sounds like a great deal for them!

They don’t hear Jesus say the “true” bread from heaven

It’s not physical bread; instead, it is what sustains life and leads to eternal life

They don’t acknowledge Jesus’ teaching about what the bread truly is

So Jesus gets as exact as He can in the next verse

14. vs. 35: Jesus tells them who He is, plainly: “I am the bread of life”

This is the first of the 7 “I am” statements that Jesus makes

This specific one is repeated three more times in chapter 6

Jesus is offering himself as God in human flesh

He is the total solution

He doesn’t just provide bread, He is the bread

People understand what it is like to be hungry and thirsty

Jesus says he will take away the deep hungers and thirsts of humanity

He is echoing Is. 55:1: “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters...”

Application: God made mankind to be in fellowship with Him. When we are out of sync with Him, there is a spiritual hunger that doesn't get fed. It is only when we are in right relationship with Him that our spiritual hungers and thirsts get met.

Jesus said that He is the bread of life. One line in the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:11) says, "Give us this day our daily bread." Though it's referring to physical food, it's a good reminder that we need the spiritual bread from heaven daily as well.

Jesus said in John 6:35 that those who have the true bread from Heaven will never thirst. We have our hunger and thirst needs met when we participate in communion each week. It is one time we are consuming the bread that gives us life. As we do "the work of God" in our daily lives, we are consuming the bread of life. As we digest the teachings of Jesus and find ways to act on them daily, we are consuming the bread that gives eternal life.

Prayer: Father God, we desire to eat the bread of heaven, that gives life, that takes away our hunger and our thirst. Help us to incorporate Jesus and His teachings into our lives more fully each day. Give us faith to follow you, even when we don't fully understand everything. In Jesus' name, Amen.