

Bread of Life Discourse - Part 1

Matthew 14:34-36; Mark 6:53-56; John 6:22-40

The Bread of Life discourse will bring about a great change in people's beliefs about Jesus. His popularity will drop off considerably in Galilee. After the Bread of Life Discourse, we read, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." John 6:66

Logistical understanding of the Bread of Life Discourse: This will begin outdoors and be a conversational teaching session of Jesus with the crowds. We will study this section in Part 1. Then, the Discourse will continue with the Religious Leaders, and it seems to have moved indoors, probably to the local synagogue. We will cover that section in Part 2 – John 6:41-71.

I. Day after the Feeding of the 5000 These verses immediately follow the feeding of the 5000 and Jesus' walking on the water. Matthew and Mark give us the reaction of the people in the Capernaum area after they heard of the massive feeding across the lake. Jesus will continue openly displaying His power, even though the people's faith was imperfect. It is the book of John that tells us the people's reaction the next morning at the place of the feeding of the 5000.

1. Gennesaret Westside of the Sea of Galilee

“And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. ⁵⁴And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, ⁵⁵And ran (Gk – repeated action – kept running about) through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, (“and brought unto him all that were diseased;” Matthew 14:35) where they heard he was. ⁵⁶And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets (Lit. marketplaces), and besought (Gk – begging - repeated action) him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made (“perfectly” Matthew 14:36) whole.”
Mark 6:53-56

“they came into the land of Gennesaret.” – Here we are learning another geographical name at the time of Christ. The land of Gennesaret was a well-watered, fertile plain on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. As a matter of fact, we find the Sea of Galilee, also referred to as the Sea of Gennesaret. (Luke 5:1) This was a well-populated area with many towns, villages, and cities in a suburban setting. Capernaum was on the north end of this plain.

“Straightway they knew him. ” As soon as the people recognized Jesus, word spread of His arrival back in the area. Notice how the crowd became wild, running and spreading the news! The cities of the Capernaum area must have heard of the mass feeding on the other side of the lake! These verses give us a picture of the frieze after Jesus fed the 5000. We see His healing seemed to be at the height of popularity.

“and as many as touched him were made whole.” – Please keep in mind that Jesus healed thousands in His 3+ year ministry. Though His critics had many accusations against Him, it is never recorded they doubted the fact of the massive amounts of miracles He performed. Jesus' compassion is seen here again. We read about those who touched the “border of his garment.” This takes us back to the woman's healing with the issue of blood. This action shows the humble attitude that the people are reflecting. They don't feel worthy of coming or bothering Jesus with their need, but the very touch of His clothing was enough for healing. Regardless of what the people believed about Him; Christ healed them. The word translated as “perfectly whole” in Matthew 14:36 is an unusual Greek word. It means the person was restored to perfect health, completely well. One after

another, desperate souls were given back perfect health whether they understood it was done by the hand of the Son of God or not.

2. Bethsaida Eastside of the Sea of Galilee

“The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; ²³ (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) ²⁴ When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? ” John 6:22-25

Confusion at the shore – Where did Jesus go? As the people returned to the shore and the large grassy area where Jesus had fed them the day before, He was gone. They knew He had sent the disciples away in the boat but that Jesus had not left with them. Jesus was nowhere to be found! When they realized He was not there, they, too, went for Capernaum by boat. When they finally found Jesus, the first thing they asked was, “When did you get here?” This was a burning mystery to them! They seemed to know he hadn’t walked or taken a boat. The Greek construction of this question has hints that the crowd seemed to sense a miracle had happened. Something seemed supernatural.

Explanation of verse 23: Here, we have an inserted sentence about other boats. These would have been boats caring people from Tiberias, a town on the southeastern side of the Sea of Galilee, who had come the day before probably while Jesus was teaching and healing. Those people would have been among the 5000+ people who had been part of the massive feeding.

II. Crowds Followed for the Wrong Reason As we move into Jesus’ discourse, I want to remind you of John 1:14. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” Notice we are observing both the “grace and truth” of Jesus within these events! “Grace” as He fed the hungry multitude, and now “truth” as He clearly gives the Gospel to the people! Remember, we are to be filled with grace (kindness, generosity, forgiveness) and give truth! 1 Peter 4:10; James 2:13-18; Eph. 4:31-32

Jesus strongly answered them, but He didn’t answer their question; he addressed their motive!

“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 (Lit. – fodder like animals), and were filled. ²⁷ Labor 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.” John 6:26-27

“Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.” – Jesus knew their motives and heart. Though they had called Him Rabbi, they were not there for any kind of spiritual reason. They were not there to learn about Jesus’ person or mission. The crowds had even moved past the desire to know Jesus based on all His wonderful acts and miracles (v.2). It had been miracles that had drawn large crowds before, but Christ is pointing out that this crowd was not coming to Him now based on a desire to even see miracles. This time, the crowd sought Him out solely because they wanted more food! Just like the disciples, they had seen the feeding of the 5000, but because of their hard hearts, they did not understand its significance. Jesus had revealed who He was, their Messiah, and they only saw food! They wanted their Messiah on their terms!

“Labor not for the meat which perisheth” – What would I find in your fridge? I probably don’t want you to check mine, either! We all know what happens to food after a while, even food stored in the refrigerator. It spoils, molds, smells, turns strange colors, and even grows little fuzzies! Jesus is telling the crowd, don’t make your life about the pursuit of food that spoils! Of course, this is a broader statement than just food; He’s talking about pursuing earthly things. This crowd wanted easy earthly provisions without effort or money. The woman at the well was the same; when Jesus offered her “living water,” she immediately said, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.” John 4:15

Instead, they were to pursue, labor....

“but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” – But according to Jesus, here is what should be one’s pursuit should be; everlasting life! It is true, food sustains life, and we all need it, but more importantly, we need eternal life....

“which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.” – Only Jesus can **give eternal life**. Just as Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “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.” John 4:14 The critical word here is “give,” Jesus can give us eternal life! And the reason: because God the Father has sealed Him. What does this mean? God sanctioned or given Jesus the authority, accredited, approved, certified, authorized! Acts 2:22 During Jesus’ ministry, God spoke from heaven three times, giving His approval to Christ’s work. Baptism – Matt. 3:16-17; Mount of Transfiguration – Matt. 17:4-6; Week before the cross – John 12:27-28

III. Crowds Ask the Wrong Question

“Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? ²⁹Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. ³⁰They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? ³¹Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” John 6:28-31

“What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” – The people didn’t listen to Jesus’ words carefully. They never heard Jesus say that **He could give** them eternal life. The people picked up on the word “labor” and misinterpreted it as a continual working for eternal life; salvation! Bible Gateway has other English translations saying, “What work does God require of us?” “What does God want us to do?” “Tell us what works God requires, and we will perform them.” The heart of man believes they can work, or labor enough to attain heaven! Titus 3:3-6 Life Application Bible had this to say, “Many sincere seekers for God are puzzled about what He wants them to do. The religions of the world are mankind’s attempts to answer this question. But Jesus’ reply is brief and simple: “we must believe on Him whom God has sent.” p. 1813

Here is a salvation statement from Jesus...

“This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” – What is the work of God? BELIEF in JESUS, the one who God sent from heaven! John 1:1-3; 10-13; 3:13-17; 6:38; 12:49; 1 John 4:9-10 It is the first step of faith – belief in Jesus! This is not a work, but a gift. v. 44, 65 God will draw and give faith.

“What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee?” – “What sign are you going to do that we may come to see and believe in thee?” WOW! Do you remember who this crowd is? It’s those whom Jesus had fed at the feeding of the 5000 and probably others who had heard about it. Now they are asking for a sign so they can believe in Him! The Jews always wanted a sign – 1 Cor. 1:22. Remember, the day before, they had enough sign to desire to make Him king!

“Our fathers did eat manna in the desert.” – Here, the crowds are demanding a duplicate miracle or one that will exceed the greatness of Moses when he gave manna from heaven! The crowd's logic was that Jesus’ miracle was small compared to Moses feeding all of Israel and its longevity. “Prove that you’re greater than Moses.” They wanted a longer, full-scale national feeding. They were asking Jesus to outdo Moses! (v. 30-31) I’m afraid the crowds of Jesus’ day had forgotten the rest of Israel’s story. Psalm 78:22-29, 32 Manna from heaven never caused the people to believe and follow God!

IV. Crowds Had the Wrong Conclusion

“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” John 6:32-33

“Moses gave you not that bread from heaven.”—Here, Jesus is correcting the crowd’s thinking and their wrong doctrine. With the phrase “Verily, verily,” Jesus strongly reminds them of the truth that Moses didn’t give them manna; God did every day for 40 years! They needed to shift their thinking from the man Moses, one of their prophets, to the God of Israel, their Deliver, who still sought to Deliver them, but this time from their sin!

“my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.” – Notice the shift from the past to present! Jesus is moving their thinking into the present! “Moses gave you not” to “my Father giveth you.” Manna was a gift of God, and now Jesus is! Manna had sustained life for Israel while in the wilderness, and now the living bread, Jesus, will give everlasting life to Israel and the entire world!

“For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world” – “true bread from heaven” and “bread of God is he” = JESUS! He gives spiritual and eternal life to Israel and the entire world! Jesus is telling them who He was and continues to say these plain statements to the dull-of-hearing crowd. They were not in tune with the word and plan of God.

It is interesting to note that the ruins of the 1st-century synagogue found in Capernaum have a carving of a pot of manna. Many believe it was placed there by the Jewish Christians, who remember this sermon given by Jesus at their location.

V. Crowds Ask for the Right Thing

“Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 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. ³⁶ But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. ³⁷ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ³⁸ For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” John 6:34-38

“Lord, evermore give us this bread” – Just as the woman at the well said, “give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw” (John 4:14), the crowd now asks Jesus for **a continual supply, from now on, always** supply of this bread “evermore give us this bread!” The Greek “evermore” has the idea of giving repeatedly. Neither the woman at the well nor this crowd understood what Jesus was offering! They both were thinking physically and had missed that Jesus was offering Himself to them – living water and bread from heaven! In this discourse, Jesus will join hunger and thirst here—the phrases “never hunger” and “never thirst” set up another part of His sermon. In verses 53-54, eating His flesh and drinking His blood should not be shocking because it answers the picture of hunger and thirst. He is the bread and living water of eternal life!

“I am the bread of life” – But then Jesus plainly gives them the meaning of bread! Verse 35 is the thesis statement of Jesus’ message that day! He is like bread; He gives life – spiritual life/eternal life! In this passage, Jesus will say this over and over again. He is the bread of life, the true bread, the bread from heaven! v. 23, 33, 35, 48, 50, 51 He can satisfy spiritual hunger!

“ye also have seen me, and believed not.” – What a sad, sad statement of Jesus. The Jews have now observed His teachings and sign miracles for over two years, yet they don’t believe. He came to do the Father’s will; He was God’s messenger, yet they didn’t believe in Him. At this point of Jesus’ ministry, He is now challenging Israel’s unbelief. Here, He is challenging the people of Galilee. He has already said much of the same to those of Jerusalem. (John 5:19-20; 36-38) In his commentary on the Book of John, DA Carson said, “Curiosity, appetites and political ambitions have been aroused, not their faith.” p. 290

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” – Matthew Henry, a preacher who lived in the 1700s, said this about these words, “pure gospel duty” – come; “pure gospel promise” – no wise cast out! When we come to Christ, we are promised not to be rejected! JV McGee said, “The Father gives men to Christ, but men have to come. And the ones that come are the ones, apparently, whom the Father gives to Him.” p. 405 Faith is a gift of God. Rom. 12:3; Eph. 2:8-9 Faith is a gift of God. Then Jesus will receive them! I checked with Bible Gateway and found this passage to hold powerful language! This is how other translations handle the phrase, “I will in no wise cast out.” “I will in no way throw out,” “I will never refuse anyone,” “I will certainly not turn away,” “I will never, never reject them,” “I will never, no never, reject them,” “I won’t send them away,” “I won’t drive them away.” It seems like when we come to Jesus, we can be confident He will receive us! That happened to me when I was just 8 years old! John 1:10-13

“not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” – Let’s not miss the phrase just before this one, “For I came down from heaven.” That’s a WOW statement. The crowd that day heard Jesus’ declare His deity! And why did God the Son come from heaven? To do His Father’s will of providing us a way back to God. His death on the cross as the Lamb of God. Then, our sins can be cleansed, and we can have a relationship with God.

VI. Crowds Misunderstand the Father’s Will

“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. ⁴⁰And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” John 6:39-40

Notice the ease in which Jesus is teaching, and John is recording concerning God giving to Jesus those who would believe and man’s need to believe. Both sides are simply taught that God’s elected chosen ones and

man's need to come and believe. "Intellectually harmonizing the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man is impossible humanly, but perfectly resolved in the infinite mind of God." JMcA p. 208 We can't grasp it all but realize there is much we don't understand in the world, let it go, and believe God!

"all which he hath given me I should lose nothing." – The strong language of verse 37 tells us Christ will receive all that comes to Him! Then again, we see the same thought in verse 39. All that comes will be kept! Jesus is giving, teaching, and repeating wonderful doctrine. Soak it up! Believe it!

"raise it up again at the last day" – Here's the bread of life promise: Resurrection and Everlasting life! Twice we will read in this passage that believer's will be raised up "at the last day." This is essential part of our salvation promise from God. Eternal life with Him in a new, resurrected body.

"everlasting life"—Verse 40 Jesus will restate what He has been saying to the people. It is a beautiful, simple, and direct statement about God's will for every person! The God of Heaven desires all people to believe in His Son so they can have everlasting life and come live with Him! God has given us that message to tell the world: our world, our people, our family, friends, and dear ones. What an amazing message of mercy!

Believer's Application:

1. Our motives in life must always be checked. The "why" of our desires and pursuits must be examined against the truth of the Bible. In this incident of Jesus, the people desired to satisfy their flesh with food. This seemed their highest goal. But we must remember our sinful default is also feeding our flesh. The desire for the satisfaction of earthly things happens throughout our lives. Let's consider that statement. If unsure, consider what consumes much time, thought, and effort. What do you worry about, check on, or speak of often?

*children – toys, fun, time with family or friends

* teens/college age – electronics, car, job, sports, good grades, girl/boyfriends, friends, appearance, music

*young professionals – good job, further degrees, car/trucks, leisure activities, travel, friends

*35-55 – family, house, bank account, leisure activities and toys, job ladder

*young retire – travel, leisure activities, comfort and stability

*older adults – safety, health, family, money, friends

What are you pursuing? Is it, first of all, **eternal life**? Have you put your belief in Jesus as your Savior?

1 John 3:23 He came to fulfill His Father's plan as the Lamb, dying for your sins. Have you received His cleaning? In this discourse, Jesus is pointing out that man's greatest pursuit should be eternal life! (v.26-27)

This was His #1 message, "Follow me!" "Ye must be born again!" "Living water" – are you sure of your home in heaven with Jesus? Isaiah 55:1-2

And then, after salvation, what are your pursuits? Are they the things that please God or just please yourself?
I Cor. 3:11-15

2. When we come to Christ in salvation, we are eternally secure. This is a promise of God found in the Bible. The strong language of verse 37 tells us Christ will receive all that come to Him! Then again, we see the same thought in verses 39-40. All that comes will be kept! Let's examine a few more verses concerning this wonderful Bible doctrine – Security of the Believer! John 5:24; 6:47; 10:27-29; 17:2; Rom. 8:38-39; 11:29; Eph. 1:12-14; Phil. 1:6