

The Bread of Life

(John 6:30-6:50)

Expository Lessons from the Gospel of John

I. Background, from Previous Lessons

- a. Jesus miraculously fed a crowd of thousands (5,000 men), and later walked on water.
- b. These miracles are reminiscent of ones Moses had done 1400 years earlier, and it calls to mind the promise Moses left that God would “raise up a prophet” like him (**Deuteronomy 18:15-19**), in days to come.
- c. People are pursuing Jesus across the Sea of Galilee; however He confronts them, saying that they were simply seeking to be fed more bread. He challenges them to “work for (spiritual) food which endures to everlasting life”, rather than for “(physical) food which perishes”.

II. Jesus Teaches, “I am the Bread of Life” (Read John 6:30-50)

- a. Taking verses out of context
 - i. Martin Luther favored the gospel of John highly above the other three gospels. Modern Calvinists and evangelicals base much of their teaching on taking verses from the gospel of John out of context. In this passage we have some classic examples of verses taken out of context by evangelical Protestants today (who have been influenced by Luther and Calvin).
 - ii. Let’s review of typical logic used by those who hold to Reformation Theology, which is extremely popular in Protestant circles in the United States today (seminaries, books, study Bibles, commentaries, radio, TV, internet, etc.). This theology is also being exported to all parts of the world!
 - 1. At the fall, man became totally depraved (unable to do anything good)
 - 2. Since we are totally depraved, the only way we can be saved is through God arbitrarily choosing which individuals He wants to save (doctrine of “Unconditional Election”).
 - 3. To be saved, all we have to do is believe in Jesus; obedience to His commands has nothing to do with our salvation (since we can’t actually do anything “good”, anyway).

4. Those who have been chosen for salvation cannot resist that call (doctrine of “Irresistible Grace”), and also cannot lose the gift that God has given them, regardless of what they do. This Calvinist doctrine is known as “Perseverance of the Saints”, “Unconditional Eternal Security”, or “Once Saved, Always Saved”)
 5. Many Christians today are unaware of the extent to which Calvinism and Reformation Theology have influenced their own understanding of the faith. Sadly, this theology has produced many worldly believers who do not put Jesus’ teachings into practice. Bottom-line, this theology is not “the faith once for all delivered to the saints (**Jude v.3**). This is *not* what Jesus taught (**Matthew 7:22-23**)!
- iii. The first example of a verse often taken out of context in this passage: **John 6:39-40**.
1. “This is the will of the Father who sent Me that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” (**John 6:39-40**, NKJV)
 2. This is used by many today to teach two things.
 - a. Belief only: All one has to do to be saved is to believe (obedience, repentance, and perseverance are not mentioned here; therefore, not necessary).
 - b. Unconditional eternal security: Jesus will not lose any of those the Father gives to Him (“once saved, always saved”).
 3. Yet Jesus taught many things regarding what it will take for us to be saved in the end. Since no one single verse captures it all, we must read and understand them all! Listen to what Jesus said:
 - a. **Repentance** is essential to be saved.
 - i. “And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them,

do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:2-5, NKJV)

b. **Obedying the teachings of Jesus** is essential to be saved.

- i. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." (Matthew 7:21-27, NKJV)

c. **Persevering to the end** is essential to be saved.

- i. (Parable of the Sower explanation) "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away." (Luke 8:11-13, NKJV)
- ii. (Jesus gives warnings regarding the end) "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved." (Matthew 24:11-13, NKJV)

iv. A second example of a verse often taken out of context today: **John 6:44.**

1. "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." (**John 6:44**, NKJV)
2. The point that those who believe in the Calvinist doctrine of "Irresistible Grace" try to make from this passage is that *our salvation has nothing to do with our own choice*. They point to the phrase "unless the Father... draws him" to claim:
 - a. Everything related to our salvation depends on what the Father does. Either He draws some individuals, but not others. He chooses who He wants to draw, and then He draws them.
 - b. This "drawing" done by God is something that we cannot resist (after all, all of us are totally depraved, anyway).
3. It seems to me that the above conclusions paint God as (essentially) having the character of an evil monster! Is God *arbitrarily picking* certain people to be saved, with *everyone else being doomed* to eternity in hell, to be punished forever? God set this up such that we have *absolutely no choice* in whether or not we can be saved? However, let's consider what the Scriptures teach.
 - a. Jesus uses the same term "to draw" elsewhere in the **gospel of John**.
 - i. "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." (**John 12:32**, NKJV)
 1. Jesus is not teaching that all men will be saved (because he is drawing all men to Himself). This "drawing" is a pull; in this case it is *not* coercively forcing us to do something against our will. It *does not* over-ride our free choice to do good or evil, to follow or reject the Lord!
 - b. Let us never forget the character of God. He does not want anyone to be lost (yet He also does not override our free will).
 - i. Paul, when explaining why Christians should pray for the governing authorities, says, "For this

is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (**1 Timothy 2:3-4**, NKJV)

- ii. In **Ezekiel 18** (which we studied in a recent lesson), God defended His willingness to forgive a wicked person who turned and repented later in life, saying “For I do not wish the death of the one who dies.” (**Ezekiel 18:32**, LXX, OSB)

- 1. In context here, “death” is referring to spiritual death.

- v. The above are just two examples of Scriptures in the book of **John** that are often taken out of context to support a theology (and understanding of God) that not only mischaracterizes the Father, but also violates Jesus’ teachings on what it will take to be saved in the end.

- 1. Let us be aware of Satan’s schemes to twist the Scriptures.
- 2. Let us strive to look at all Scriptures in their proper context, including in light of what the Bible teaches in other places on any given topic (here, the definition of saving faith).

- b. What is going on between Jesus and the people as He teaches “I am the Bread of Life”?

- i. The people are looking for a sign from God. They point to the sign Moses provided (manna in the Wilderness, to feed the people).
- ii. Makes me think of the prophecy of **Deuteronomy 18:15-19**, where Moses said that in the future God would send the people a prophet “like Moses”. We have already seen a few allusions to that prophecy in the gospel of John (Jesus as the great Prophet who would come, like Moses).

- 1. John the Baptist is asked, “Are you the Prophet?” (**John 1:21**)
- 2. Philip tells Nathanael, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth.” (**John 1:45**).
- 3. Jesus’ first public miracle, turning water to wine (**John 2:1-12**), foreshadowed by Moses’ first public miracle, turning water to blood. (**Exodus 7:14-25**)

4. Jesus said, "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me." (**John 5:46**, NKJV)
- iii. The people quote from a passage in the Hebrew Scriptures, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat". Jesus uses the "*from heaven*" phrase (literally "*out of heaven*") to teach about Himself. However, His teaching here is like a parable or a riddle; the people are confused by what He says.
 1. In the story of the first manna, it says "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Behold, I will rain *bread out of heaven* for you...' "**(Exodus 16:4, LXX, OSB)**
 - a. Recall that this was written by Moses, approximately 1400 years before the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.
 2. This story is also recounted in **Psalm 78** (numbered **Psalm 77** in the LXX). This is one of the psalms attributed to Asaph, a contemporary of King David, who lived about 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus (**1 Chronicles 25:1-2**).
 - a. Read **Psalm 78:1-2 (Psalm 77:1-2 in LXX)**
 - i. "I shall speak to them in parables, hidden things"
 - ii. Then recounts the Exodus story, in detail, including time in the Wilderness. Paul points to this story of the Exodus as a parable of the Christian life, in **1 Corinthians 10**. Jude (**Jude v.5**) and the writer of Hebrews (**Hebrews chapters 3-4**) make a similar correlation.
 - iii. Jesus quotes **Psalm 78** in **Matthew 13**, regarding why He spoke in parables.
 1. "All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.'" **(Matthew 13:34-35, NKJV)**
 - iv. Read **Psalm 78:18-27 (Psalm 77:18-25 in LXX)**
 1. They tested God, asking for food for their souls.

2. He opened the doors of heaven.
3. He gave them bread of heaven to eat.
4. Men ate “the bread of angels”.
- v. Keep in mind that the writer of this psalm told us up front, in the intro, that they need to pay close attention to his words; he will be speaking to them *in parables, things hidden from ancient times*.
- iv. Jesus says, “I am the bread which came down from heaven” (**John 6:41**).
 1. Jesus came down from heaven itself, just like the bread out of heaven in the story of **Exodus**.
 2. Jesus came down to do the will of the One who sent Him, not His own will.
 3. He came to give everlasting life to all who believe in (and feed on) Him.
 4. He is the only one who has seen the Father.
 5. He will raise us up on the Last Day.
 6. The bread that Jesus provides is greater than the bread (manna) given by Moses.
 - a. Those who ate the manna given by Moses all died.
 - b. Those who eat of the bread provided by Jesus will live forever.
 7. The **Exodus** story is a true historical account of God’s people departing Egypt on their way to the Promised Land. However, this story also foreshadows in detail for Christians today the way through the spiritual desert to heaven, our Promised Land. Jesus says He is the fulfillment of the manna, the true bread that came down from heaven to sustain us to the end. God has provided a table for us; Jesus is the only food that will sustain us, He is the only way; He alone can sustain us to the end.
 8. This provides several practical challenges for us today:
 - a. We must see this world as it really is: a spiritual desert (even though it might appear beautiful to us).

- b. Understand that our time here is short; we are headed for death and we need the food that leads to eternal life.
 - c. Through Jesus, God has provided this food, to keep us for eternal life. We must read the words of Jesus, meditate on His life, and follow Him.
- c. There is more to come! In the next passage Jesus pushes this teaching even farther, alienating many of His disciples, who then turn away and no longer walk with Him.