

Bread of Life - part 2

Imagine tens of thousands of people being fed by two fish and five loaves of bread. Imagine these same people traveling many miles on land to find Jesus. When they find Him they are surprised that He is in Capernaum. They are surprised because they had not seen Him get into any boat. They did not see Jesus walking along any roads in the evening after He fed them. They did not know that He had escaped from them by walking on the sea. When they found Him, they were puzzled, surprised and thrilled to see Him. But Jesus knew that they did not come to Him because they believed that He was God, the Messiah, or the promised prophet (Deut. 18:18). No, they came because He had filled their stomachs. They came to Him for selfish reasons. They came for more food. Did they think that Jesus was into some type of social services or welfare program? Jesus stunned them when He told them that they sought Him for selfish reasons (John 6:26). The discussion that followed between Jesus and the crowd was difficult. Jesus tried to speak to their spiritually dark souls and help them understand spiritual truth. He reminded them of the manna that God sent their ancestors in the Egyptian wilderness. The manna came down from the sky. Jesus was greater and better than the manna. He was the Bread of Life (John 6:35). He was spiritual bread that came down out of heaven (John 6:38). But most of the crowd missed the message. They had self-centered sight - not spiritual sight. All they could see was themselves. What a loss!

GRUMBLING LEADERS. The Jewish leadership did not believe Him. They did not understand and so we should not be surprised that they grumbled.

Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." John 6:41 (NAS95)

The Greek word that is translated as "grumbling" is in the imperfect tense. It means that they were repeatedly grumbling - repeatedly complaining. If we listen closely we might hear them criticizing Jesus. "Oh, He said, 'I am the bread that came down out of heaven.' Who does He think He is? He must think that we

are stupid or something." Their words were most likely said with disdain and sarcasm.

It seemed preposterous that Jesus came down out of heaven since they knew His earthly parents.

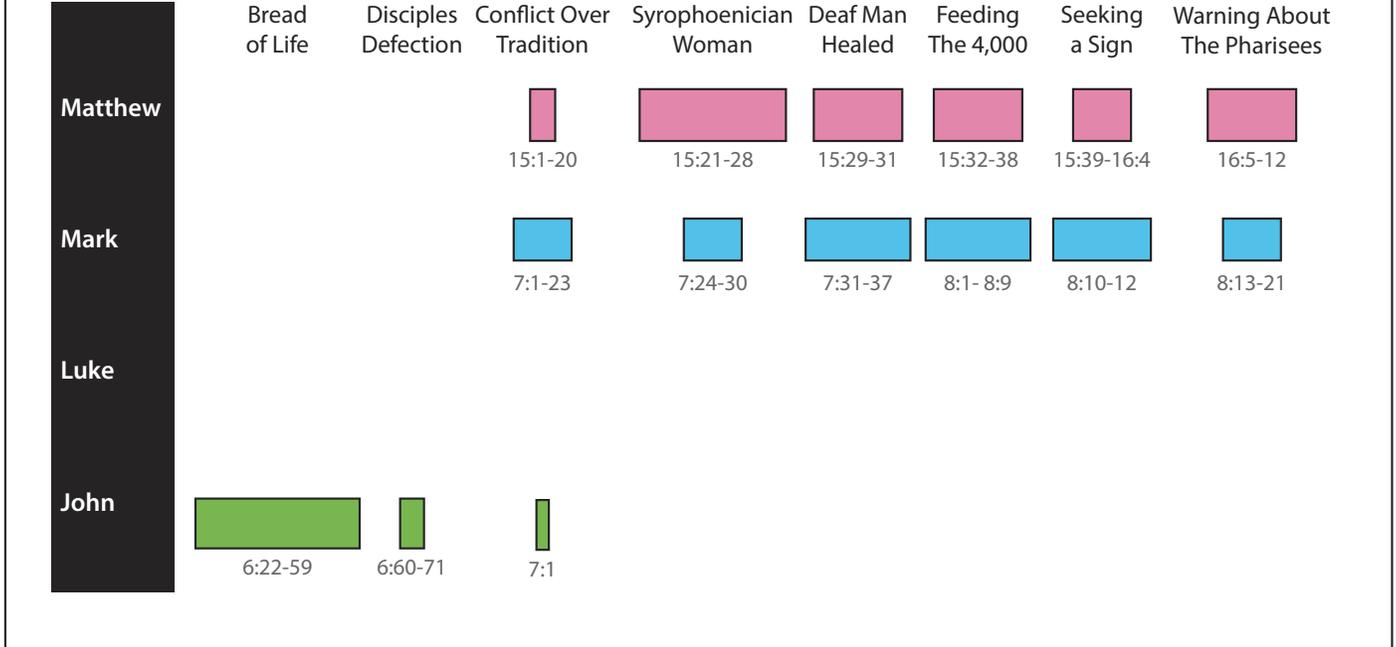


They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven?'" John 6:42 (NAS95)

Mark 6:3 indicates that they knew the names of Jesus' brothers and that He had sisters. Oh, the religious leaders heard the words that Jesus spoke, but they could not understand His words. They focused on the plain sense of

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the words and missed the spiritual truth. They were in spiritual darkness. They asked the question, “How can He say that He came down out of heaven?”

Why did they not understand? Then Jesus explained why they did not understand.

Jesus answered and said to them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:43-44 (NAS95)

At first Jesus’ statement may seem to be completely unrelated to the question of the religious leaders, but the following verse helps us start to understand.

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds . . . Col 1:21 (NAS95)

When a person finally finds God, repents of his or her evil deeds, and asks for forgiveness, he or she has spiritual life. But before a person has spiritual life, each individual is alien-

ated from God, hostile to God, and engaged in evil deeds. A person who is spiritually dead cannot understand the things of God. So, God the Father must give one a spark of spiritual light in order to help one understand spiritual truth. He must draw them to Himself. No one will come to Jesus unless the Father draws them. The Greek word that is translated as draw is ELKO and means “to drag.” God the Father must drag a person to Himself. That is the meaning of Jesus’ statement.

Both Romans 5:10 and 8:7 send us the same message. We are spiritually dead. Consequently, we need help,

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Rom 5:10 (NAS95)

. . . because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so . . . Rom 8:7 (NAS95)

The first verse reveals that each one of us was or is an enemy

against God. The second passage reveals that we were or are still hostile towards God. 2 Corinthians 4:4 adds that before a person becomes spiritually alive, that person is blind to spiritual truth. 2 Timothy 2:26 says that each person is captive or slaves to Satan and consequently we reject God. Colossians 1:13 says that we were trapped by Satan. 1 Corinthians 2:14 adds that we were powerless to understand. Without God's help we cannot respond to spiritual truth. We will reject the plain and clear teaching of the scripture. We will find reasons to reject truth. People used to say that the world was flat and most believed it, but it was not true. So today, when people say that Jesus was not God, that does not mean they are correct.

THEIR PROBLEM. Jesus' message to these religious leaders was very simple. They were spiritually blind and unable to believe Him. The religious leaders could not understand. The religious leaders could not come to Jesus and understand unless God the Father drew them. Look at Jesus' statement again! He said, "No one can come to Me, unless the Father . . . draws . . ." They needed help.

Jesus' next statement makes this truth even clearer.

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. John 6:45 (NAS95S)

Jesus quoted Isaiah 54:13. His message was that God is the one who teaches spiritual truth. Since they were rejecting Jesus, it was clear that God the Father was not teaching them. Jesus' words are so very clear and simple. We may not like the implication of Jesus' words, but the words are very plain.

If we quickly look forward to John 6:65, we discover that no one can come to Jesus, unless God the Father grants them permission or allows them to come. Now that is a strong statement.

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." John 6:65 (NAS95S)

Jesus says that we need the Father's permission in order to come to Him. John 6:65 says that God the Father must grant a person permission to come to Jesus. John 6:44 says that no one can come unless the Father draws them, and John 6:37 says that those whom the Father draws will come to Jesus, and Jesus will not reject them. We cannot come on our own. We are not able to come to God on our own because we are spiritually blind.

Several years ago a well-known author wrote a book in which he claimed that God would not be very loving if each one of us could not choose to come to God on our own. He wrote an entire book with the goal of proving that we were free to choose or reject God. Unfortunately, he missed the truth that the scriptures teach that a) *none of us can choose to come to God* and, yet b) *any of us can choose to come to God if we desire*. Both are true. We are free to choose God and He is free to choose us. The Bible says that God does not want anyone to perish,

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 2 Pet 3:9 (NAS95S)

The scriptures also teach that God loves everyone,

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NAS95S)

If this seems confusing, it isn't. The truth is that both concepts are true. God chooses men and women to come to Himself, and yet we choose or decide to come or not come to God. If we try to resolve the apparent contradiction, we will reject one or the other clear teachings of scripture. One cannot resolve the apparent contradiction. We must be satisfied to accept both truths and wait until we see God face-to-face to discover the complete explanation. For a more complete lesson, please see the attached study called "Predestination and Free Will."

JESUS' CLAIM. Then Jesus explained why He had spiritual insight into God the Father.

Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. John 6:46 (NAS95S)

Jesus has seen the Father. They hadn't. Only Jesus had seen the Father. Jesus used to be with the Father in heaven (John 1:1-2) and so He can reveal the Father to us.

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. John 1:18 (NAS95S)

Jesus was not just any ordinary person.

The God of the universe was standing before these religious leaders. He had been in heaven. He knew the truth. He could give them eternal life because He was and is the Bread of Life.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. John 6:47-48 (NAS95S)

I like bread, especially ciabatta bread. Some bakers make ciabatta bread very flat and others make it longer and taller. No matter what the shape of the loaf, I like ciabatta bread. I also like multi-grain breads. But the Bread of Life is not ciabatta bread and it is not wheat, white, multi-grain, or rye bread. The Bread of Life is eternal, spiritual bread. Once you "eat" it, you will never want to eat any other spiritual bread. All of the other "breads" are stale, flat, uninteresting, and lifeless. Jesus is unlike anything anyone has ever experienced.

Next Jesus reminds them that the bread that God provided the Israelites did not last very long, and God had to constantly provide them fresh manna each day throughout their forty years of wandering in the Egyptian wilderness (Exodus 16:35). But they eventually died. The manna did not give them immortality.

Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. John 6:49 (NAS95S)

But the Bread of Life - Jesus Himself - fills a person and gives him or her eternal spiritual life.

This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 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." John 6:50-51 (NAS95S)

Jesus was better than manna. He was and is living bread and He came down out of heaven. He lives forever, and those who partake of the Bread of Life, do too!

CURRENT MISUNDERSTANDINGS. But the religious leaders did not understand and started arguing among themselves.

Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" John 6:52 (NAS95S)

They thought that Jesus was talking about someone literally eating His flesh. What a great example of how people respond to divine truth today when they hear the Word of God. They do not understand because they cannot understand unless the Father is drawing them. They just do not get it. Sometimes the followers of Jesus use books about the Bible and logic to help people understand the Bible. What people need to do is to read the Bible. Many people have never read the Bible. They do not know what it says. Let God's Word speak to them and not some uninspired author.

Wow, what a clueless group. I wonder if they thought about how much flesh was on Jesus' body and how many people could actually eat some of His flesh? But Jesus ignored them and continued with His allegory,

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. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 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. John 6:53-57 (NAS95S)

Did they ask themselves how Jesus would be able to raise

them on the last day if they killed Him by eating His flesh and drinking His blood? They should have understood that Jesus was not speaking literally. He was offering them eternal life - a spiritual relationship unlike anything they understood, Jesus still offers the same today.

Some have misunderstood Jesus' words. Some teach that Jesus was talking about actually eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Those who believe that Jesus is talking about eating His flesh and drinking His blood use the following passage of Matt. 26:26.

While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Matt 26:26 (NAS95S)

They claim that during the Lord's Supper or communion, the bread and wine become Jesus' flesh and blood after they enter their stomach. Unfortunately, John 6:52 is not talking about communion. Jesus did not institute the Lord's Supper or communion until the last week of His life. Also, the Greek word that Jesus used for "flesh" here in John 6 is SARX and the Greek word SOMA is used for "body" in Matt. 26:26. SOMA means "body" and SARX refers to flesh. That means that Matt. 26:26 is dealing with a different issue. So Jesus was not teaching the religious leaders about communion. Why would He anyway? They were not His followers.

BREAD FROM HEAVEN. Next, Jesus must have pointed to Himself when He said,

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. John 6:58 (NAS95S)

The Israelites who lived and walked in the desert had desperately wanted the manna that God dropped from the sky in the wilderness day after day. It temporarily satisfied. It was life. Some of them even tried to hoard it. The manna was essential for earthly, physical life and God provided fresh manna every day. It was God's gift. It was bland, unappealing bread, but it was their bread for daily life. When Jesus pointed to Himself and declared that He had come down from heaven, He was making an awesome statement.

These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. John 6:59 (NAS95S)



CONCLUSION. Jesus was the real spiritual bread. He was and is better than ciabatta, challah, cranberry, focaccia, french, multi-grain, parisienne, oatmeal, rosemary, rye, or walnut bread! Jesus is the best bread. When you trust Him to forgive your sins, you will spiritually "eat" Him, or take Him into your life and you will have eternal life forever. You will not want to spread butter, honey, jam, jelly, or peanut butter on this bread.

Is there is an empty feeling inside? I do not mean that your stomach is hungry. I am talking about spiritual emptiness. No one will eat this bread unless he or she is spiritually hungry. Jesus said that He is the Bread of Life. He will satisfy you completely. This bread is symbolic of believing, trusting, relying, and depending on Jesus to forgive your sins. We eat this bread when we repent of our sins and trust God to forgive our sins. Then we gain eternal life. That was Jesus' promise.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NAS95S)