The Bread of Life Discourse

John 6:22-71

“I am the bread of life, he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”

109-110

Jesus’ Discourse on the Bread of Life

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Jesus’ Later Galilean Ministry

Public ministry of John the Baptist

Jesus’ baptism and temptation

Ministry transition: John to Jesus

Later Galilean ministry

Sabbath issue: Jerusalem John 5+
  “Sermon on the Mount”

John the Baptist’s relationship to the kingdom

Beelzebub confrontation

Parables of the kingdom

Demoniac at Gadara

Last Tour of Galilee

Feeding 5000

Bread of Life

Later Judean and Perean ministry

Phoenicia/Decapolis

Crucifixion

Resurrection

Ascension

A.D.
Time Line of Jesus’ Ministry

- Public ministry of John the Baptist
- Jesus’ baptism and temptation
- Ministry transition: John to Jesus
- Ministry in Galilee
- Decapolis/Phoenicia
- Feeding the Five Thousand
- Bread of Life Discourse
- Judean ministry
- Perean ministry
- Crucifixion
- Resurrection
- Ascension

Time Line:
- 26
- 27
- 28
- 29
- 30

A.D.
Notes

- The Feeding of the Five Thousand is the only miracle of Jesus recorded in all four Gospels. The event took place one year before the crucifixion and was the only one recorded by John in Galilee until Jesus met with his disciples at the Sea of Galilee (chapter 21).

- Walking on water: John 6:16-21/ Matt 14:24-33/ Mark 6:47-53
- Events at Gennesaret: Matt 14:34-36/ Mark 6:52-56
- Discourse on the Bread of Life: John 6:22-59
- Defection of the Twelve: John 6:60-71

Ch 6: Feeding the multitude = “Field experience” // Ch 6: Bread of Life Discourse = “Classroom lecture” // Ch 21: Commissioning in Galilee = “Commencement”
Climax of Jesus’ Galilean Ministry

- Feeding the multitude (105) Matt 14:15-21; Mark 6:35-44; Luke 19:12-17; John 6:4-13
- Removing the multitude and the revolutionaries (106) Matt 14:22; Mark 6:45-46; John 6:14,15
- Travel to Capernaum (107) Matt 14:24-36; John 6:16-21
- Discourse on the Bread of Life (109) John 6:22-59
  - Reunion with the multitude (vv 22-25)
  - Teaching on the Bread of Life (vv 26 - 59)
- Defection of some disciples (110) John 6:60-71
“They had rowed all night.”
After feeding the 5,000+, Jesus reunites with His disciples the next day.
Jesus leads the crowd from the Plain of Gennesaret to Capernaum where He gives the Discourse on the Bread of Life.
“The next day the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one and that Jesus had not entered . . . but that His disciples had gone away alone.”

“There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread . . .”

“When the multitude therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.”

“And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, ‘Rabbi, when did you get here?’”

John 6:23-25
The northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus had called His fishermen disciples.

For some two years Jesus’ home had been in Capernaum, the base of His extensive Galilean ministry.
Capernaum

*Jesus settles in Capernaum:* Luke 4:16-20, 31; Matt 4:13

1. Healing a centurion's son (from Cana): John 4:46-54

2. Calling His first disciples: Mark 1:16-20

3. Casting out a demon: Mark 1:21-28

4. Healing Peter’s mother-in-law and others: Mark 1:29-34

5. Healing a paralytic: Mark 2:1-12

6. Healing a centurion’s servant: Matt 8:5-13

7. Teaching on the Bread of Life: John 6:22-59

Population: 3,000
The synagogue at Capernaum
The Discourse on the Bread of Life: “These things He said as He taught in the synagogue in Capernaum.”
Jesus said, “I am the . . .”

- Bread of life. (6:35-41)
- Light of the world. (8:12)
- Door of the sheepfold. (10:7)
- Good shepherd. (10:11, 14)
- Resurrection and the life. (11:25)
- Way, the truth and the life. (14:6)
- True vine. (15:1)
Context: “The First of the Story”

1. Feeding the multitude at Bethsaida (John 6:1-13)

2. The attempt to make Jesus king (John 6:14-15)

3. Separation: Jesus – from the crowd – from the disciples
   (Matt 14:22-23)

4. Jesus and Peter walk on the water (John:16-21; Matt 14:24-33)

5. Arrival at the Plain of Gennesaret (Mark 6:53-56)

6. Travel to the Capernaum synagogue (John 6:22-24)
Jesus’ Five Major Discourses

- The “Sermon on the Mount” (Matt 5-7): The kingdom: implications for the audience with universal principles
- The Parables of the Kingdom (Matt 13): The form of the kingdom following Jesus’ rejection
- The Bread of Life (John 6): Israel’s response to the new “manna” Jesus, the “Bread of Life”
- The Olivet Discourse (Matt 24,25): Events for Israel immediately preceding Messiah’s return
- The Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17): Preparation of the disciples for their post-Pentecost ministry
John 6:32-58

Subject of the Discourse

The Incarnation: Jesus, the “Bread of Life” sent by the Father

- “the true bread out of heaven” v 32
- “The bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven” v 33
- “I have come down from heaven” v 38
- “This is the will of Him who sent Me” v 39
- “I am the that bread came down from heaven” v 41
“I have come down out of heaven” v 42

“the One who is from God” v 46

“This is the bread which comes down out of heaven” v 50

“I am the living bread that came down out of heaven” v 51

“As the living Father sent Me” v 57

“This is the bread which came down out of heaven” v 58
Themes of the Discourse

- Jesus’ relation to the manna their forefathers ate
- Jesus’ origin: vv 33, 38-39, 41-42, 46, 50-51, 58
- Resurrection: vv 39, 40, 44, 54
- Eternal life: vv 47-50, 51, 54-57
- Reception by Israel of the Bread of Life: vv 35, 51
Progression of the Discourse

- The background: vv 22-25
- Israel’s true bread and how to obtain it: vv 26-29
- Jesus is God’s “manna” received by faith: vv 30-36
- The Bread of Life is offered to all: vv 37-47
- Jesus, the “Bread of Life” is “eaten” by faith: vv 48-51
- Argument about Jesus’ metaphors: vv 52-57
- Conclusion: v 58

The text: “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.” v 29

as He sent the manna

“eat”

Jesus – the “Bread of Life”
Structure of the Discourse

The setting  vv 22-25
The challenges  vv 26-31
The debate  vv 32-40
The analogy  vv 41-51
The metaphor  vv 52-57
The theme  vv 58-59
The responses  vv 60-71

Interaction with the multitude
Challenge by the religious leaders
Follow up conversation with Jesus’ disciples
Works vs. Grace

- “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life which the Son of Man shall give to you.”

- “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”

- “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

John 6:27-29
Jesus, God’s “New Manna”

- God gave manna to sustain physical life in the wilderness.
- God sent Jesus, the “Bread of Life” to give and to nourish spiritual life.
- As the manna was received (eaten), so Jesus must be received (“eaten”) to give and nourish eternal life.

God the Father sent

**Manna** – to sustain physical life

**Jesus** – to give and to sustain spiritual life

John 6:30-35
What is this drawing?

“No one can come to Me, unless the Father . . . draws him.”

- It is the power of the Holy spirit overcoming the self righteousness of the sinner and convincing him of his lost condition.
- It is the Holy Spirit's awakening him to a sense of need.
- It is the power of the Holy Spirit overcoming the pride of the natural man so that he is ready to come to Christ as an empty-handed beggar.
- It is the Holy Spirit's creating within him a hunger for the bread of life.

-- Arthur W. Pink: *Exposition of the Gospel of John*
What is this “eating”?

- It is a necessary act. I may look at bread, admire it, analyze and eulogize it, and handle it skillfully, but unless I eat it I am not nourished by it.

- It is responding to a felt need. Once a sinner is awakened to his lost condition and the fact that without Christ he will perish eternally, whatever intellectual difficulty had troubled him in the past, he will promptly and gladly receive Christ as his own.

- It implies an act of appropriation: Not until I commence to eat do I make the food my own. Christ may be presented to me in all His attractiveness, I may admire His perfect life, be moved to tears at the sight of Him dying on the cross, but not until I receive Him as mine will I be saved.

- It is an intensely personal act: There is no such thing as eating by proxy. If I am to be nourished, I must myself eat. Watching others eat will not supply my needs.

-- Arthur W. Pink: *Exposition of the Gospel of John*
Reception of the Bread of Life

- **Believe** that Jesus is the Christ, God incarnate.

- **Receive** Jesus as the One who provides by grace forgiveness of sin, righteousness and eternal life.

- **Come** to Jesus in repentance, because of who He is.

Metaphors illustrating reception of Jesus: the new manna

*Eat* His flesh = (believe in His person – God’s presence)

*Drink* His blood = (apply His work – God’s redemption)

Cf. “Feeding on the Word!”
“Eating and drinking” do not refer to Communion (“The Lord’s Table”)

- It was introduced a year later.
- It was given to believers only.
- It memorialized a one-time event, the crucifixion.
- It does not give spiritual life.
- It is not the mass (= “eating and drinking” literally).
- It is a metaphor: A is B (Contra a simile: A is like B)

**Question:** If the wafer and the wine “become” the body and blood of Jesus, do the vines and branches “become” Jesus and believers? (John 15:5)
Results: “The Rest of the Story”

- **The departure of some of Jesus’ disciples**: Were they Zealots or those whom the Zealots had influenced to realize that Jesus would not be “their kind of king”?

- **Jesus’ response to His defectors**: His ascension (leaving) would be as difficult for them to explain as had been His appearance (coming) to earth.

- **Jesus’ challenge**: Betrayal or belief? A preview of the responses to Jesus by Judas and Peter
Judas and the Selection of the Twelve

The fact that Jesus included Judas among His disciples did not indicate that he was a believer or that Jesus chose him by mistake. Jesus knew Judas’ heart when He appointed him.

Jesus came to earth to die for sin; He was not crucified as a result of Judas’ defection or deceit.

Jesus selected each disciple for a particular role and function. Judas was personally responsible for his decisions and actions; they were foreknown by Jesus and became essential elements in the fulfillment of His redemptive purpose in coming to earth.
The Significance of this Event

- When in Jesus’ ministry did this event occur?

- Why was it’s timing important? (Cf. Pre- and post- events)

- How did Jesus use the “manna event” in His argument?

- Explain: “... eat My flesh and drink My blood.”

- Why was Jesus’ “Bread of Life” teaching hard to receive?

- Why do you think Peter and Judas were referred here?
Value Added

What have you learned about . . .

- The purposes for feeding the five thousand?
- The meaning of “eating My flesh and drinking My blood”?

The Purpose of the Discourse?

To prepare His disciples for their future ministry by role playing: distributing “the Bread of Life” for edification and evangelism.
Points to Ponder

- Reflect on Jesus’ use of the manna imagery. How does this teaching relate to vv 28 and 29?

- Write a script: The conversation among the disciples in the boat just before Jesus appeared and then when Peter swung over the side to walk on the water to Jesus.

- Why did some of Jesus’ followers leave Him at this time?

- Why was this discourse especially important for Jesus to give at this time?