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## The Bread of Life

### John 6:30-35

**Intro:** There's a prophecy in the Book of Amos that speaks of a time of divine judgment where there will be no one to preach true doctrine; a time when people will search all over and not be able to find it. He casts this dire situation in the image of a famine (**Amos 8:11-12**). It's a horrible prophecy. Still, in some ways it's even more horrible to have the Lord Jesus available to everyone as He is today, and yet, still have men and women refuse to come to Him. People have a great hunger for many things: truth, righteousness, peace, joy, spiritual satisfaction, and other things. Jesus is the answer to this hunger. Yet the great tragedy of every age is that men will not come to Him.

Jesus revealed the wisdom of coming to Him when He told the crowd of people who followed Him to Capernaum, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will *never* hunger, and he who believes in Me will *never* thirst" (**35**).

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This statement of Jesus, "I am the Bread of Life" is profoundly important. Not just the fact of it (**trivia**) but its important for us to look beyond the fact of it and see the truth of it or, more specifically, what ramifications this truth has on our individual lives. Just as John records 7 miracles, he also records 7 premier "I AM" statements in his Gospel. These "I AM" statements are actually rooted in the OT (**Ex 3:6, 14** [burning bush]; **20:2** [Mt. Sinai]) where they communicate the self-revelation of God. John's Gospel further develops this revelation of the identity of God and does it primarily by means of the Son. These 7 "I AM" statements found in John are clear and concise descriptions of the person and ministry of Jesus Christ and taken as a whole, they form a detailed picture of who Jesus really is.

Why this is so important to us hinges on one of the primary reasons for Jesus coming to earth – to reveal the Father. God the Father desires all men to come to know Him. But, to do that, you must first come to know the Son. But, to do *that properly, you must pay special attention to what the Son has to say about Himself. Why? Because what the Son says about Himself directly relates to who He is, it relates to how we should think of Him and*

*most importantly of all, it relates to how we should respond to Him. In short, the truth about the Son of God should have a direct influence on how we as Christians, the children of God, live our lives!*

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**30-31**- Jesus is talking with those who had seen and participated in the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Although this miracle had left them all completely satisfied at the time, it seems they didn't remain as such because they now express a great interest in having a similar miracle repeated.

To the modern observer, this demand smacks of ingratitude. They had just seen a sign the day before and if they had been a bit more spiritually aware, they'd have recognized another (19). In fact, vs26 implies they'd seen several signs already but they had missed the spiritual significance of them all. The miracles they observed didn't seem to satisfy them to the point of faith. Now they dare impose on Jesus for a sign they must have before they will believe. Like good religious folk, they support their demand for a sign by quoting Scripture & evoking the example of Moses.

Why bring up manna? There's more to it than just asking for brunch. The people of Israel had been taught for many years by their rabbis that when Messiah would come, He would duplicate the miracle of the giving of manna that had been given originally by Moses. Jesus was now claiming to be the Messiah. They could see that. Why, then, should they not expect Him to duplicate Moses' miracle, more specifically, the continuous aspect of that miracle.

When Jesus fed the multitude, it took place on 1 occasion but Moses gave manna for 40 yrs. Jesus fed 5000+ but Moses fed an entire nation. Jesus gave them ordinary bread but Moses gave them "bread from heaven" and who knows what fantasies they had about that. Add to this the Jewish expectation that Messiah would bring manna once again and it's not too hard to see that in the minds of the crowd, the miracle Jesus performed was just the appetizer. Jesus did something wonderful in multiplying the loaves and fish but could He go on from there and produce manna?

Of course, while we may understand the basis of their demand for a sign, we can't ignore the motivation behind it. Put simply, this crowd was trying to manipulate Jesus into doing what they wanted. Manipulation! That's their

real motivation. Jesus had told them He was God's gift to men and that God desired men to believe in Him (29). Their answer to this call to faith in Jesus was that they refused to believe in Him unless they received a sign.

The gall of the crowd may seem shocking to us but it really shouldn't. The spirit behind this demand and the attempt to manipulate God should be at least somewhat familiar to us. It's a spirit that plagues a large portion of the Western Church today – a mercenary spirit. We mentioned this briefly in our last study, the fact that many people who call themselves Christians only seek the Lord to meet their pressing (or desired) needs. "Well, what's the big deal? At least they're in church." It's a problem for 2 reasons: **1)** it sells the believer short. If all you're looking for is receiving the gift then you're always missing out on experiencing the Giver. No matter how bad the need is, the Giver is always greater than the gift. Your spiritual walk will never reach its full potential on this earth if you only look to the fact of God's provision and never look to the source of that provision. **2)** It sells God short. God doesn't accept worship from a mercenary spirit. Why? Because God's not honored by a mercenary spirit – man's flesh is. God cannot honor or accept anything that elevates itself above Him. (Vs31 quotes Ps 78:24, a record of the unbelief & rebellion of Israel)

Wasn't that exactly what Satan accused Job of doing – worshipping God just because God blessed him (1:6-11)? Job didn't crumble after Satan's first assault and God didn't hesitate to point that out to Satan (2:3-6). Satan now accuses Job of worshipping God simply because God preserves his life and health. Did God do that? Yes! Did Job only worship God because of it? No – but it took Job a little while to figure out exactly why he worshipped God. In the end, Job came to realize that he worshipped God because God deserved to be worshipped.

Do you realize that everyone who worships anything other than God does so out of a mercenary spirit? They perform their ceremonies, go through the rites and rituals, offer their prayers and sacrifices; all in the hopes that the idol, god or spirit will somehow improve their lot in life. But, they never do because they really can't. Only the true God thru Jesus Christ can bring abundant life and only the true God refuses to accept worship offered from a mercenary spirit. Worship of the Most High God must be offered & performed on a much higher basis: love & an accurate recognition of Who God is (spirit & truth). Our Bible Study time, corporate worship, even our

fellowship time here should always promote and expound an accurate expression of the true character and nature of God. Anything less is unacceptable

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**32-33-** Jesus doesn't stoop to answer this arrogant question from sinful men. Instead, He counters their false biblical reasoning and their gross misunderstanding of God's promise. He outright rejects the idea that Moses actually gave the manna to Israel which was a remarkable challenge to the accepted biblical logic of the day. The true agent of manna was never Moses; it was the God of Moses! It was God's miracle all along. Not only that; the manna that was given was not the true bread from the true heaven. It was earthly bread (perishable, physical) from a visible sky. Jesus wants them to completely take their eyes off the person of Moses and the manna that was given in the past & focus on the true bread (spiritual bread) that the Father was now giving and will continue to give.

Before they can even ask what it is, Jesus clarifies that the bread of heaven (now: bread of God) is not a physical substance that they can gather, carry or ingest but rather it is identified as having a personality (He). Accordingly, Jesus refers to this bread not as being sent (like manna) but coming down. This bread not only has life but it gives life and the scope of this gift of life was not limited to the Jews or to Israel but to the whole world! This statement directly contradicts the grossly materialistic way in which the coming of Messiah was commonly understood. Jesus did not come to bring manna or to satisfy any other materialistic expectation of the people. This is a vigorous protest against their false concept of Messiah and a strong affirmation of the spiritual nature of the life He came to bring.

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**34-** Just like the woman at the well who wanted Jesus to give her the living water so she would no longer have to come to the well to draw; so too, this crowd is quite willing to accept this true bread so they wouldn't have to toil to maintain life. Obviously, they weren't picking up on anything Jesus was saying. Their distorted perception of God caused the crowd to continue to focus on physical bread instead of seeing *the* bread. The crowd, like the world, has become so accustomed to that which is physical and perishing that they're unable to make sense of what is eternal. Still, they realize Jesus is speaking beyond the manna of Moses so they challenge Him to produce it!

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**35-** Jesus here removes their misconception of the nature of the true bread from heaven in a supremely majestic statement: “I am the bread of life.” The bread He’s been talking about was not like manna, something they could pick up and eat, it’s nothing less than Himself! By this statement, Jesus links life with Himself in the closest possible way. He alone is the food, the sustenance that nourishes spiritual life. It’s only from this bread that we really obtain life.

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When Jesus spoke of Himself as the bread, He used an image everyone knew. So, what’s important about bread?

**1)** Bread is necessary for life. Christ’s day, bread was even more essential than today, it was often the only staple in most folk’s diet. Without bread, men died. If we see that, then we also can see that Jesus was claiming to be the One whom people could not do without. Are you trying to get by without Him? “I’ll take care of myself. If things get too bad I can always turn to Him.” What if everything in your whole life should go well for you, but you lose your soul? Would that be a gain? Would you consider it a good bargain to do without Jesus forever? You cannot do without him. You might manage for a time, but you cannot survive. In another of the “I am” sayings Jesus declared, “I am the way and the truth and the life...” (**14:6**). He is the life. You will remain dead spiritually without him.

**2)** Bread suits everyone. Not everyone can eat everything. Some people can’t eat sweets. Some can’t eat shellfish. Some can’t eat certain kinds of meat. But bread is suited for everyone. In the same way, Jesus is perfectly suited to the needs of all men. Some have a hard time accepting that. If a person’s of above average intelligence, he tends to think that Jesus is only for the dull. If he’s dull, he thinks Jesus is only for the intelligent. If he’s sophisticated, he thinks that Jesus is only for the common people, etc. But Jesus is for all. He’s for you. He’s the Savior of the world, whether you’re a peasant or a king. Jesus is great enough and glorious enough that you’ll never exhaust Him, not in this life nor in eternity. He has exactly what you need and He knows you, He knows how to meet your need.

**3)** Bread should be eaten daily. This brings us into the area of the Christian life. Trusting Christ as Savior it’s just the beginning, it brings you into a living relationship with Jesus in which you grow by feeding upon Him day by day. Think of that phrase in the Lord’s Prayer, “Give us today our daily bread.” I

emphasized today and daily because in them, the idea of the repeated fulfillment of a prayer occurs twice. This Prayer has only 65 words in it so anything that's repeated twice is important. In this case, they refer to a daily supply of something or a ration.

Now, these two texts together—"Give us today our daily bread" and "I am the bread of life"—and consider the applicable truths. One truth is that God cares for our bodies. The Bible teaches us there will be a redemption of the body as well as a redemption of the soul. So, it's right to pray for this world's needs: food, homes, clothing, and other necessities. We have seen the Lord's concern for physical needs in the fact that He fed the multitude.

We should also see that God is able and willing to provide for our spiritual needs, and this is far more important. We have spiritual needs as well as physical needs, though in our fallen state we may not be so conscious of them. Will we allow Jesus to satisfy those needs also? All we need to do is come to Him, and come regularly – daily.

Sadly, too many Christians allow the love of things to come between themselves and Jesus and, thus, go on being spiritually hungry. The OT tells us this happened repeatedly with the people of Israel. We're told that they desired things instead of God. So, God gave them "things" but "sent leanness into their soul" (**Ps 106:15b**). Do you do the same thing today? Are you "rich in things, but poor in soul"? Maybe you've spent most of your life in pursuit of things and have never looked to God to be spiritually fed. Ask for that spiritual bread that comes down from heaven.

Most desires are OK in themselves, but we often get them out of proportion. They've been put in us by God. We have a valid desire for achievement, happiness, friendship, love, and success. It's tragic that many believers attempt to satisfy these hungers in worldly way while neglecting the truly satisfying task of spending time with God.

**4)** Bread produces growth. *We need to grow.* The Body of Christ is weak in our age, and it's weak because the individuals who make it up are not strong. Where are the great churches of a former age, churches filled with men and women who knew the great doctrines of the faith and were not afraid to trumpet them to a sleeping world? There are still some churches that are growing and spreading the gospel and this is hopeful. There are still

some very productive evangelistic crusades. But, for the most part, we don't have a strong church in our day and age. What we have is a weak, anemic Christianity, a lot of easy believism combined with morality. What's the reason for this sickly Christian climate? Nothing other than our deep failure to feed upon Jesus Christ who alone can make us grow.

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Would you like to see growth in your church or in yourself? Then, you must feed on Jesus. This means not looking to others as your source of nourishment. That's what this crowd was doing. They were looking to the teachings of their rabbis and to Moses. Don't look to men as the source of spiritual teaching. There are lots of great avenues for good teaching you don't go off saying, "But Dr. So and So said . . ." when all you need to say is, "This is what Jesus says...." There's no power in the name of a human teacher. There is only power in the blessed name of Jesus.

Also, we mustn't look to earthly things for our satisfaction. The people of Christ's day were doing this. Are you looking only for your earthly needs to be met? God will meet them. He's promised to do it. But if that is the whole of your desire, even your major desire, then you'll never experience a great move of the Holy Spirit in your life. We need to get our minds off ourselves and our needs, and we need to focus instead on the Lord Jesus Christ and His glory. And what great glory! What a great Lord!

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Becoming a Christian can be described in various ways. In [vs35](#), Jesus uses the terms come and believe. We must not think of these as describing 2 different stages of salvation but the same thing. To come to Jesus means to believe on Him and to believe on Jesus means to come to Him. Believing is not just an intellectual exercise, as in giving mental assent to some doctrine. Believing means coming to Jesus and yielding yourself completely to Him. To what degree? Jesus illustrates coming and believing by speaking about eating and drinking. To come to Jesus and believe on Him means to receive Him within, just as you would receive food and drink – ingest it and allow it to become part of your life and being. Except in the case of Jesus Christ, He must become the biggest part!

Have you ever thought about all that grain must pass through before it becomes bread? It must first be planted and then grow. When it's ripe, it must be cut down, winnowed, ground into flour. Finally, it must be subjected to the fiery heat of the oven. Only by this process does it become able to

sustain life. This is what happened to Jesus Christ in order that He might become your bread. He was born into this world. He was bruised. He was cut down by sinful men. He passed through the fires of God's holy wrath as He took your place in judgment. This is His glory. He suffered this for you. How, then, can you refuse to feed upon Him? Come to Him! Draw from His fullness, and grow strong. 😊