



John 6:1 - 60

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WHAT KIND OF SAVIOR?

John 6 records Jesus' miraculous feeding of five thousand men plus women and children. However that multiplication took place — whether as Jesus spoke those words a great mound of bread and fish formed before the thousands, or whether as the bread and fish were passed, they were multiplied — it was a miraculous sign. And the people loved it! A man who could do that could do anything! In their mind's eye the masses probably saw the foot of Jesus upon the imperial eagles of the Roman legions. They could see the image of the Caesar on their coins replaced with that of Jesus. Of course the people wanted Jesus to be their king. Who would not want to be subject to a man like that?

But our Lord took immediate steps to redirect the crowd. Verse 15 tells us that the people intended “to take Him by force to make Him king.” So Jesus, knowing that the people's intentions were not of God, went onto a mountain to be by Himself. We know from verses 16 - 21 and from the other Gospel accounts that Jesus also sent His disciples, by boat, to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. While those disciples were out on the boat, a great storm came up, and those seasoned men of the sea were frightened. They thought they were going to perish. As the helplessly battled the storm, our Lord came walking phantom-like across the water to be with

them and said, “*It is I; do not be afraid*” (v. 20). Jesus’ words had special meaning to these disciples, who were undoubtedly disappointed that He had not set Himself up as king. In essence Jesus was saying, “Although I have not set Myself up as an earthly king, I want you to know, My disciples, that you do not need to fear, for I am King!”

On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but that His disciples had gone away alone. Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” (Vs. 22 -25).

The crowd was not easily put off. They had seen Jesus’ great miracle, the third of John’s signs. They liked what they had seen. So they decided to follow Him across the lake. Notice Jesus’ response to the mob in verse 26:

Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

In other words, “You are following Me because of the things I have given you, because you believe I am a material Savior.” Christ’s words have contemporary impact, as they have for two thousand years.

THE OLDEST PROBLEM BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

Job was a man of great wealth, the greatest man in the East (Job 1:1). He was also a man of integrity and spirituality. Job 1:5 tells us he would offer sacrifices each day for his children in case they had sinned. He was eminently pleasing to God. But there came a time when Satan asked the Lord:

Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house, and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face” (Job 1:9 - 11).

Satan accused Job of only being obedient because he was blessed. God’s reply was simple: “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand” (Job 1:12).

Soon after Job’s children, his oxen and donkeys, his servants, and his home were all taken from him in disaster upon disaster. How would Job respond to such calamity? Would he indeed curse God? “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshipped” (Job 1:20). His first response was to worship! Then Job said, “Naked I came from

my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). In the midst of ultimate loss, Job did not sin by blaming God.

Soon after Job loses his health, yet his response is to continue trusting the LORD. Job in a sense was saying: "My God is not just a material Savior but a spiritual one. He's worth serving, no matter what the circumstances."

Jesus performed the feeding miracle in order to correct the people's mistaken belief system. Perceptive Jewish observers would have recognized that the bread Jesus provided for the multitude was reminiscent of the manna God gave His people in the wilderness and that Jesus was claiming the power to supply every need — especially the spiritual. But they did not understand. Their perspective was clouded by a focus on the material. In fact, the crowd even asked for another sign (6:30-31):

Then what sign will you do, that we may see and believe in You? What work do You perform? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

They tried to provoke Jesus to give them another sign, but He responded with the great Bread of Life discourse.

JESUS IS THE BREAD OF LIFE

Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but My Father give you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to Him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst” (John 6:32 - 35).

Jesus offered Himself as the bread of life. The crowd wanted a material sign, but He offered Himself. Sadly, that was not what they were looking for.

On the day of the miracle of the bread, the people chose rejection: *“But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe.” At this the Jews began to grumble about Him because He said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven” (6:36, 41).*

Only twenty-four hours earlier these same people wanted to make Jesus king by force because of the multiplying of the loaves. But as soon as He began to talk about spiritual realities, they said, *“Who is this? Is He not the son of Joseph?” (6:42).*

Today God often blesses believers materially. But there has been false teaching about this. Some claim that if you receive Christ and commit your life completely to Him, you will certainly have material wealth and good health. In fact, it is falsely taught that if you are not doing well materially, if you do not have good health, you probably are not right with God.

Some have made this fast teaching part and parcel of the gospel. But this is not the gospel. Rather, it is an appeal to our hedonistic culture. When we self-consciously put ourselves

first, it is no wonder that we mix Christianity with this popular, worldly philosophy. Many turn to God only because they have been told that God will bless them materially and give them good health. They seek a material Savior.

But Jesus offers us Himself. He does not promise us an easy life, but He does give life and peace and strength. During hardships and difficult times, as well as during wonderful moments of joy and victory, Jesus gives Himself to us.

GOD GIVES BREAD TO THOSE WHO ARE HUNGRY

The previous day Jesus had provided food for over five thousand men, women and children on a hillside... all from five small loaves of barley and two pieces of dried fish. The miraculous sign reminded the people of something similar in the history of Israel (vs 31-32). When the nation of Israel had journeyed from Egypt to the promised land, God sustained them with manna. Every morning they would wake up to see the ground covered with sweet, flaky white bread. I love the people's reaction the first time God sent them manna:

When the layer of dew evaporated, there were fine flakes on the desert surface, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they asked one another, "What is it?" Because they didn't know what it was. Moses told them, "It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat" (Exodus 16:14-15).

Why did God send them bread? First, they were hungry. They were traveling through the wilderness with no way to gather food to sustain a nation. Second, He loved them and

wanted them to know He would provide for them. He wanted them to unmistakably experience His kind of provision. The manna was a picture of what was to come. Just as God sent them bread to quench their physical hunger, a greater provision for a deeper hunger was coming — Jesus (John 6:33-35). God sent the true bread, but it didn't appear on the ground first thing in the morning. It appeared in a manger late at night in Bethlehem, which in Hebrew means, "House of Bread." The bread was a person: Jesus, sent by God to meet man's spiritual hunger.

We often hunger for the wrong kind of bread. Why do you think the people got in boats and traveled across the sea to find Jesus (vs 22-25)? Was it because they understood He was the one who would meet their needs — filling the emptiness of their souls? Jesus said they were seeking Him because they wanted more bread (v. 26). One author said, "They were moved not by full hearts, but by full bellies" (Morris, *John*, 358).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever noticed your own spiritual hunger?
2. Summarize Jesus' sermon in three major truths.
3. What two reasons did God have for sending bread to the Israelites in the wilderness?
4. Why does Jesus call Himself the Bread of Life?
5. Why do the people follow Jesus across the Sea of Galilee?
6. How much time and effort do you put into making sure your spiritual hunger is met?
7. How often does Jesus mention "life" in this section?