

You'll Die Without Jesus

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John 6:48-51

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One of the most famous events in the entire Bible is the Exodus, where God dramatically rescues two million plus Israelites out of Egyptian slavery. I want you to think about what it would be like to be one of those people. Imagine what you saw. You saw 10 miraculous plagues that decimated the Egyptian people, but not you. God split the Red Sea in half so that you with two million of your closest friends could walk across safely. You knew. You didn't have to guess.

You knew that God was in your midst because every day there was this massive pillar of clouds that you could see this is God himself with us. Every night that pillar would transform into a pillar of fire. You had no question in your mind that God was real, that he was with you, and that he saved you. No doubt that is until three days later after leaving Egypt when you start complaining about not having enough water.

No doubt until 15 days after leaving Egypt when the people of Israel begin to complain again, saying in Exodus 16:3, "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by meat pots." I wonder what a meat pot is. Sounds kind of good, I guess. "We sat by the meat pots and we ate bread to the full. For you..." and then that you is Moses and Aaron, "you have brought us out here in this wilderness to kill us with hunger."

It's interesting when you watch Moses and Aaron, his brother, respond to the people, they make it clear that their complaining was not against them, but in reality, what they were doing was complaining against the Lord. Three times, they make it clear to the people, "You are complaining against God himself." Do you ever complain about your life? Doesn't put us in really good company when we do. In response to this, God is gracious and he says that he will, Exodus 16:4, "rain bread from heaven upon them."

Well, what happened is that this bread would show up every morning with the dew and the dew would burn off and the bread would remain for them to gather up and eat for that day. They're only allowed to pick up enough bread for the day and no more. The supernatural heaven-sent bread they called manna, and it showed up to feed them, two million plus of them, every morning except on the Sabbath Day, all two million plus of them for 40 years until they entered the Promised Land.

Now, Psalm 78:24, this manna is called the grain of heaven. Psalm 78:25, it's called the bread of angels. That this manna, this bread was a supernatural heavenly gift from God's grace to people who complained that his goal for them was to starve and kill them. They had a need and God in his mercy met their need. And listen, you and I, we have a need that's worse than starvation. In

fact, we've had this. If we have this one need met and then we die of starvation. God actually loves us infinitely.

That need that we have to be saved from is eternal death, a death that never ends, a death that lasts forever. We have a very desperate need to be rescued from that. In our text, Jesus uses a familiar event to all of his listeners, the exodus and the manna. He uses that to make a point to the people who just like those Israelites leaving Egypt, just like them, the people in our text today were complaining about their God while he was standing right in front of them. From our text today, Jesus will make it abundantly clear that you will die without him.

Without Jesus, eternal death is certain. It is assured. As sure as you are here in this room or watching online, as sure as that is, that's how sure you should be that without Jesus, eternal death is certain. It is guaranteed. It is inevitable. You can say it's not true. You can say you don't believe it. You can distract yourself, but reality doesn't care what you think or what you believe. No amount of distraction will save you from this reality when it comes for you.

Ecclesiastes 7:2, death is the destiny of every man and eternal death is the destiny of everyone who does not have Jesus to rescue them from eternal death. Now, as we examine the context of these words, verse 48 is the conclusion of the first part of Jesus' interaction with these religious leaders in the city of Capernaum. Capernaum is a real city, northern part of the Sea of Galilee, and he's dialoguing with the religious leaders from that city. It starts in verse 41, goes to verse 58.

Before that, he has been chased to the city by people from the east side of the Sea of Galilee because they were fed, 10 to 20,000 of them were fed the night before with five loaves and two fish, and now they're there for breakfast because they're hungry again. While answering questions and refuting objections all from people who ultimately reject him, Jesus keeps coming back over and over again in these dialogues in chapter 6 to this theme of bread and food. In a previous message on verse 35, we looked at what Jesus meant when he called himself, when he said, "I am the bread of life."

And we saw that day, we saw when we looked at that, that this bread is real. he calls this is the true bread. This is the true in a world of lies and fake news. This bread is second is provided by God, meaning given to us by his grace as a gift from him. Third, this is eternal bread because it came from heaven where all life is eternal. Fourth, this is saving bread because it gives a life that lasts forever to all who eat it. Fifth, it's universal bread. It's bread that gives "life to the world."

Six, its divine bread, not only because it comes from God, but Jesus says that he is the bread and we've seen all throughout the book of John so far that this Jesus is God. He is the God man. Seven, this is necessary bread and that it's only through Jesus that anyone will ever have eternal life. Eight, it's satisfying bread because it actually does what Jesus says it does. It actually rescues from death. It actually meets our deepest needs for forgiveness and eternal life. And nine, this is permanent bread and that it never needs to be supplemented. It never needs a refill. The person who eats this bread is fully satisfied now and forever, world without end.

This is what Jesus meant when he said to the religious leaders, verse 48, "I am the bread of life." Now, the fact that manna and Jesus both came from heaven, both came from God as the source, that's fact, that's true, that's a true parallel between these two, but that's where the comparison ends. Look at verse 49. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died. All the people that ate the manna died. Everyone who knows the events knows that the manna did not give eternal life. They all died. Notice, by saying this that Jesus assumes what? Think about it. By saying this verse 49, he assumes that this miraculous bread that fed two million plus people for 40 straight years, by saying this, he assumes that that event is history, not fantasy. This is fact. His words support that event in the Old Testament as being factual, as being history. Interestingly too, notice verse 49, he says your fathers instead of our fathers, our ancestors.

Seems like he's separating himself from them even though he is one of them, right? he is Jewish, but why would he create that separation between him and them? Well, if you think about it, in the context the emphasis here is that he is from heaven, so yes, he's Jewish, so those fathers are his ancestors too, but God is his Father and heaven is his true home also. But also, if you think about it, your fathers could also be a warning. Your father is the ones you're related to, the ones that you are imitating right now. By complaining about God, you're complaining about me. It's almost like it's this your father is a bit of a warning. Be careful. Don't forget, they complained about God and they died in their sin. Jesus is greater than the manna. He's greater than his ancestors.

Look at verse 50. That's because this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat of it and not die. I read authors this week that believed that Jesus when he said verse 50 actually pointed to himself and said, "This is the bread that came down from heaven so that one may eat of it and not die."

Manna may have been from heaven, but it didn't carry heaven's life with it. All who ate the manna eventually died, but Jesus can do what the manna could never do for anybody, all who eat him do not and cannot ever die. Eating Jesus in this context is a metaphor for coming to him, for believing in him, for giving your life to him. When Jesus uses physical life and physical death as an illustration, he compares that to the spiritual life and the spiritual death that he's talking about. Well, the question in all of that, everything that we just read here is, is Jesus right in what he said here?

Is what he says here true? And of course, it is. And since it's true, then point #1) ***Concede All Who Reject Jesus Will Die Eternally. All who reject Jesus will die eternally.*** Confess it if you're hesitant. Admit it if you disagree. All who reject Jesus will die eternally. All who refuse to eat, who refuse to believe in Jesus will die eternally. Daniel 12:2 calls this death "everlasting contempt," a hatred, a shame that never ends. Matthew 25:41, Jesus calls these people cursed because they're sentenced to "the eternal fire" prepared for the devil and his angels.

Now, I know it's hard to concede that this is true. I know it's hard to admit as more and more people that we know and love end up there because they reject Jesus. But listen, this is true. All who reject Jesus will die eternally. Every one of them. There's no escape. There's no relief.

There's no second chance. All of them will die forever. How does a person die forever? I mean, death seems to be the end of existence, a kind of expiring or a running down or a turning off. But that's not what it is.

No one ever expires. No one is ever annihilated. No one ever ceases to exist. All people continue to exist either in eternal life or in eternal death. That's because death in the Bible does not mean ceasing to exist. Death in the Bible means separation. There are three kinds of death in the Bible. The first is spiritual death, which is what all people alive today who are reject Christ. This is what they are currently experiencing, spiritual death, which is their separation from God. They're dead and their sin is separated from him, unable to respond to him, unable to believe in him.

Second, there's physical death, which is not only a person's separation from this life and all that this life has, but it's ultimately separation of their soul from their body. Romans 6:23 says the wages, the paycheck for sin is death. All die because all sin. But listen, nobody ceases to exist. They very much exist though dead. There's spiritual death, separation from God, and physical death, separation of the soul from the body, both because of sin, and then there's third, we'll call final death, the permanent separation from God and his blessings for all who reject Christ in this life.

After the resurrection of all the damned, all the curse at their final judgment, Revelation 20 calls this third kind of death, it says it's the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Well before that happens, before this permanent final death happens, all who reject Christ, they still exist. They're conscious, awaiting their judgment day in a place where they're being destroyed but not annihilated, perishing but not expiring, burning but not consumed, with no relief, with no mercy, with no escape, and with no hope at all.

Why such a harsh punishment, you might ask? I mean, shouldn't the punishment fit the crime? It does. It does fit the crime, because God is that holy and our sin is that serious. Please concede this. For all who reject Christ, they will die eternally. There's no special category. There's no other way. There's no second chance after death.

There's no special deal that God makes with people who seek to be rescued from their sin in some other way than the way that he offers, the way that he provided through the death of his Son. Nobody has a special deal with God that allows them to reject Jesus and still be okay with God. To die without Christ, to die rejecting the salvation he offers is to say, my way is better than your way, God. Jesus is not that big of a deal. That is to die forever.

Listen, if you've grown maybe lax in your evangelism to those that you know and love, if you've become okay with the fact that they're just lost, if your heart has grown cold to the dire predicament that they're actually in, and let this reminder, let this concession to the truth spur you on to talk to them again, spur you on to jump back in the arena, spur you on to sit back at the debate desk and talk to them again about the death and resurrection of Jesus to rescue them from eternal death. Eternal death is real for all who reject Jesus. It is fact.

It is certain. It is guaranteed, and it is what Jesus came here to fix. Look at verse 51, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone, if any person eats of this bread, he will live forever." Jesus and Jesus alone is the living bread unlike all the physical bread that sustains life, but doesn't have life in itself, he is the living, the life-giving bread because, verse 51, he came from heaven. He came from the place where eternal life is the only kind of life that there is. This is the sixth time since verse 33 that Jesus says he came from heaven.

He's hammering this truth home to make it clear to them that what he is saying comes from God himself, that where he's from is where God lives, that he brings the life that only God has to all who would believe in Christ. In response to the eternal death, we are all facing, Jesus invites us to point #2) ***Know All Who Believe in Jesus Live Eternally. All who believe in Jesus live eternally.*** This is just as factual as you are here right now, just as certain as you exist, is that all who believe in Jesus will live forever. 1 John 5:11 says, "God gave us eternal life and this life is in his son."

John 10:27, Jesus says he gives his people "eternal life," and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 1 Timothy 1:16, Paul says that people believe in Jesus for eternal life. We actually saw this truth last week. Look at verse 57 or 47 where Jesus says, truly, truly, which means truly, truly. This is fact, reality. This is real. Anything else that disagrees with it is false. "Truly, truly, I say to you as the one with heaven's authority, whoever believes has eternal life." This is John 3:15, John 3:16, John 3:36, whoever believes in the son has eternal life.

Now, I used the word believe in point number two, but the actual word in verses 50 and 51 is what? It's not believe. It's what? You see it? What's the word? Little three letter. It starts with an E and ends with a T. Eat. Jesus is using the word eat as a metaphor for believing in him. Now, you got to ask yourself, why does Jesus with an infinitely perfect mind, who knows everything, has infinite knowledge, perfect brain, why does he make a connection between eating and believing? It's actually a pretty amazing profound metaphor for believing. Think about it.

Just as eating is necessary for physical life, so believing in Jesus is necessary for eternal life. Second, just food is useless for physical life unless it is eaten, so Jesus is useless for you unless you believe in him. Third, just as eating is a response to physical hunger, so believing in Jesus is the response to spiritual hunger. When you begin to want to be forgiven, when you begin to want to be right with God, when other things that you've allowed in your life begin to be drowned out because you're thinking, I just need to be right with him, that's God drawing you to Christ.

Fourth, just as food becomes part of a person when it is eaten, so when you believe in Jesus, you are you united to him. You're in Christ. You're now part of his body when you believe. Fifth, just as eating involves trust, right? Trust in the person that prepares the meal. Trust that the label is accurate. Trust that the food isn't diseased, trust that the food's not contaminated. Just as eating involves trust, so believing in Jesus means to trust in him, to trust his death and his resurrection, to trust that this is true, to trust it, to appropriate it for yourself.

Sixth, just as eating is constant. It's not like, well, I ate when I was a toddler, so I'm good now. No, no. We constantly eat throughout our entire lives. That's what believing in Jesus is, a constant thing, a constant believing, a constant trusting. It is a life commitment to him. It's not something you did once and you're good. It's a trust. It's the commitment to Jesus that's lifelong. Seventh, just as eating is personal, nobody can eat for you, so believing in Jesus is personal. No one can believe in Jesus for you.

No one else's belief in Jesus will be accepted as your belief in Jesus. You can only eat for yourself and no one else, so only you can believe in Jesus for you. I mean, don't we wish we could believe for others? When we do that for thousands. But we can't. We can't because it's personal. You see, when you think about it, eating is an incredibly accurate metaphor for faith in Jesus. At its core, verse 51 is an invitation. It is an invitation to a group of people who are rejecting Christ and complaining about him and displeased with him.

It is an invitation to come and eat. Have you eaten? Do you believe in him? Do you personally believe in Jesus? Well, if you do, believing in him is not, well, I think he's great, or I think what he said was great, or I'm convinced about some of the things that were said about him is true. No, that's more like tasting, not eating. That's more like swishing something around in your mouth, not swallowing. I mean, food that is smelled, food that is tasted can't sustain your physical life and it can't satisfy your hunger.

Same with tasting Jesus, but not trusting in him. Believing in him is to eat, it's to swallow, it's to take him into your life so that he begins to dominate your life. Just like the nourishment you take in when you eat begins to dominate the energy that you have thereafter. Listen, if you haven't eaten, if you don't believe in Jesus, be done with feeding on the moldy bread of this world that promises joy, promises satisfaction, promises to help you, but never really does. These promises are lies.

Only Jesus can satisfy not just your life in this life, but your life for eternity, and that's because, verse 51, only Jesus is the living bread from heaven. Well, how is it that you will not die? How's that possible? How is it that you will live forever by eating, by believing in Jesus? How is that even possible? That's the rest of verse 51. Take a look. "And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." Here, Jesus adds something new, something he hasn't said yet. He clarifies that while being the bread of life, the bread more specifically is what?

What does he say? It's his flesh. It's his body. To give his flesh means to die physically, but notice, he gives his flesh, he dies for the world. He dies as a substitute to benefit the world. And notice, he gets death when he gives his flesh for the world. In exchange for his death, what does the world get? The world gets life, which in this context, it's the life that lasts forever, verse 51, so that anyone who eats, who believes you, who trust in Jesus, verse 50, will not die eternally. Notice, Jesus says that he will give his flesh for the life of the world.

Do you see that there? Which means his life is not taken from him. Roman soldiers didn't take it from him. The Jewish leaders didn't take it from him. Judas didn't take it from him when he

betrayed him. He gives, he offers his life as a sacrifice. We saw this in John 3:16. The word give refers to sacrifice. It's not just giving like a gift. It is giving over to death. And look, this is something Jesus again will give, which means two more things.

The word will there makes this a prophecy that one day he will as a substitute, a stand-in, that he will make a sacrificial payment for the punishment that sinners deserve. And second, the people there that day don't know what we know, which is that what he's talking about is the cross. His death meant life for the world, not just for the Jewish people, but for all people from anywhere on the face of the earth.

This feeding 10 to 20,000 with five loaves and two fish is just the beginning of a miracle banquet that he will host one day, according to Revelation 19, with people from every tribe and language and people group and nation who surround him, who feast, who once were enemies, but are now seated at his table in what is called the marriage supper of the lamb. The reason why we will be there, the reason why we will die with Christ so that we will not experience eternal death, the reason why is now clear, we must, point #3) ***Realize All Who Live Eternally Do So Because Jesus Died.***

It is Jesus' death that gives life to the world. In order for men and women, whoever you are, whatever you've done, whatever's been done to you, in order for men and women from all over the world to live forever, he had to die. His death means life. Life for the world. Life for anyone and everyone who believes in him. You see, the cross is the center of the Christian message. There is no Christianity, there's no church, there's no salvation without the cross.

That's why Paul says, 1 Corinthians 2:2, that when he's talking to lost people, he says, "I desired to know nothing, to say nothing other than Jesus Christ and him crucified." Book of Acts is a book in the Bible here. It's the book right after John, and it has a bunch of sermons that the first Christians preached. When you look at their sermons, it was always about the cross. The cross was not added centuries later. The cross has always from the very beginning been the center of Christianity.

We've already seen the death of Christ in the Book of John 1:29 where he is proclaimed as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Galatians 1:4 says his death delivers us, it rescues us from this present evil age, this age that we know that we're in, but we know that we're not of. How is that possible? We're in, but not of this crazy world because Jesus rescues us from it, his death. Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 5:2, these verses say that his death was driven by his love for sinners.

That is what motivated him to be a sacrifice to God that releases us from the penalty that we deserve for our sins, our crimes against God. Hebrews 9:26, his death once for all puts away sin. Hebrews 9:28, his one-time death carries away all of our sin, so his death takes away, puts away, carries away all the sins of all who would trust in Christ. Hebrews 10:20, his death sanctifies, which means makes us holy, cleanses us from all of our sin so that according to 1 John 2:2, his

death is a propitiation, which is a fancy word, but we actually just sang it when we said the father's wrath completely satisfied.

Because of our crimes against God, he rightfully was angry towards our crimes, angry towards us for our crimes. And yet in the death of Christ, he unleashes his wrath on Christ, and in that sacrifice, he is propitiated. He no longer angry at those who believe. 1 Peter 3:18 brilliantly just puts it together where he says Jesus suffered on the cross to "bring us to God." He brings us to God. He makes a way for us. He gives us access to this God that we are at war with, and he did all of this, he died, Romans 5:6, for the ungodly.

Because you could hear this and you could think, no, no, wait a minute, all of that is great, but man, I got to fix some stuff in my life and then I'll come to Jesus. No, he dies for the ungodly. He dies for rebels. We can't clean ourselves up. We can't earn our forgiveness. It's not possible. But even though we are ungodly, Jesus dies for the ungodly. Jesus already died so that now and forever you can be right with God. You can be accepted in his eyes. Jesus dies as your substitute when you believe in him.

See, we die eternally unless he dies in our place. The cross is a real payment for a real debt that we all really owe to a real God for real crimes against him that Jesus really paid in full, truly and forever satisfying the real wrath of God so that we can really be accepted by God, really reconciled to him, really adopted into his real family as his kids, real heirs of a real eternal life. That is why Jesus says in verse 47, truly, truly, this is reality. The death of Jesus is not something we can ever negotiate, be silent about, downplay, downsize, look down on.

It is the core of everything. This reality right here will be the reality that you will be tempted to minimize when talking to someone about Jesus. You will be tempted to minimize him by saying things like, well, he can make your life better. You know you're not killing it. You're not firing on all cylinders. Well, Jesus will help you do that. Who doesn't want that, a Jesus that makes me better than I could make myself? No, this is the core reality and all of us here will die eternally. No one will live eternally unless Jesus died.

No one here is right with God unless Jesus died. No one here is freed from the penalty, the power, and the presence of sin unless Jesus died. No one here is freed from God's wrath, God's wrath against them personally unless Jesus died. No one here is at peace with God unless Jesus died. No one here is washed and cleansed and forgiven forever for all of their sins unless Jesus died and that your trust is in him. Now, let's not forget the context again.

Jesus is saying all of this to people who are looking at him with eyes of rejection, complaining about him, grumbling about him, displeased with who he is and what he's saying. You think about it like him, the God of the universe, the one who gives them life and breath and everything else, that when he makes the synapses in their head fire so that they can express their rebellion? The God who led their ancestors out of Egypt, who parted the Red Sea, who fed them with manna, that God is standing right in front of them? And to that people he shows grace. To that people he offers forgiveness, for looking at him and trying to stand over him as his judge,

rejecting him, complaining about him, complaining about what he says. It makes me wonder, could Jesus be showing you the same grace right now?

Are you currently rejecting him, weighing in your mind whether or not he's actually worth turning your life over to, actually worth turning from your rebellion and giving your life to, thinking that maybe your sin, your imaginary freedom is better, it's more satisfying, it's more wonderful, it's more joy giving than Jesus could possibly be for you? You find yourself complaining because the life you have is not the life you made a deal with God for? He's not keeping the end of the bargain that you think you made with him.

This is not the life you would've chosen for yourself, that you want something better than what God has given you maybe underneath all of that, the life you deserve to have? Are you displeased with God like, he's not the kind of God that I would want? That you'd want a God that's different than the God that Jesus reveals himself to be? A God that if you're honest is a lot more like you, that fits into what you think and made in your image, more acceptable to you because he's not the standard, you are? More like you would want him to be if you could create a God?

You see, just like the people there that day complaining about Jesus, displeased with who he is and what he was saying, you see that maybe you have the same pride, the same rebellion, the same animosity towards him that the people in our text had towards him, and yet just like them, here he is with you offering to forgive you and cleanse you and wash all of your sin away, making you as white as snow so that God will accept you, that God will adopt you and call you his own, all because he died for a rebel like you and me.

Listen, if you hear his voice right now, do not harden your heart. Come to Christ. Believe in him. If you'd like to talk, people will be up here to pray. The person next to you will pray with you, talk to you. I'll be at that back door. That's why I stand there, to talk to people, to make sure that if God is working on you right now, that you do not let this moment pass. You do not go home without believing, without giving your life to Christ. Why? Because he is the living bread that came from heaven. Let's pray.

Jesus, it would've been so nice if you said things that were easier. Maybe like everyone who eats ice cream goes to heaven, everybody who breathes go to heaven. What you said actually attacks us at our very core. It demands that we recognize our sin. It demands that we own it, and that we turn to you when we trust in you, when we fall down on our knees and cry out, "Be merciful to me, the sinner." In this moment, that's my prayer. My heart goes out to the people who hear all of this, just like the people in our text who heard all of this and rejected you still. Use your truth to soften their hearts. Use your word to draw them to yourself and for the rest of us here who most of this message is a reminder. I have no idea who is saved here and who's not. But for those of us who know all of these things, may this reminder increase our gratitude for you like we sang earlier, may this reminder increase our love for you, that you would die for us. Because you said, if you love me, you'll keep my commandments. It's continual reminders of your death on our behalf, your death for our sins that motivates, that fuels our obedience to you. It fuels our desire

to live for you because you would be so gracious to us. Please use these words in all of our lives because you are so good and so kind and so wonderful, Jesus. Amen.