

## ***I AM the Bread of Life***

John 6:1-71

sermon series: *Who Is Jesus?*, pt. 4

Pastor Gerald L. Stigall

### **Introduction<sup>1</sup>:**

Throughout his gospel, John has recorded several signs that contrast the new way of Jesus with the old way of Judaism. Jesus' new wine, made from the water of ritual purification, is far better than the old wine (2:10). Jesus' body is the new Temple that will make the old one obsolete (2:19-21). The old way of law-keeping will not help a Pharisee enter the Kingdom; he must be born anew (3:3). The old ways of worshiping are being replaced by worship "in spirit and truth" (4:23). A second theme John has introduced is how Jesus gives life. Living water replaces the dead water the Samaritan woman was drinking (4:13-14); the royal official's son is saved from near death (4:50); the paralytic receives a healthy life (5:8)—the Son is the source of life (1:4; 5:21, 24-26). Both of these themes—newness and life—appear in chapter 6. Ask God to reveal the truth about Himself to you as you read 6:1-71.

### **Five thousand fed (6:1-15)**

- **Because they saw the miraculous signs** (6:2). John omits most of this ministry in Galilee on which the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) focus. It is now almost another Passover (6:4), so either six months or a full year have passed since the events of chapter 5.
  - **Gave thanks** (6:11). Jews customarily blessed God (not the food) before they ate, saying something like, "Blessed are You, O Lord God of the universe, who has given us bread from the earth."
  - **The Prophet** (6:41). Moses fed the Israelites with manna (Exodus 16). Elisha also miraculously fed a hundred men (2 Kings 4:42-44). Therefore, the Jews concluded that Jesus must be the Prophet like Moses foretold in Deut. 18:15.
1. How does this fourth miracle recorded by John function as a sign?
    - a. How does it point toward God (and to what aspect of God's nature does it point)?
    - b. What does it reveal about Jesus' mission and character?
    - c. What response does it invite?
  2. For the first time, Jesus had His disciples participate in a miracle. Why do you think He did?
  3. As in 3:3, Jesus ignores what the people say (6:25) and instead speaks to the thoughts in their hearts. What is wrong with the reason the people are seeking Jesus (6:26-27)?
- **Seal** (6:27). Since many people were illiterate in those days, a seal was often stamped in wax on an object to show who owned it. Also, a seal authenticated a document as bearing a particular person's authority and approval. An object such as a sacrificial animal could be sealed to show that it was set apart for a particular purpose (10:36).

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<sup>1</sup> I'm indebted to the insights and thought questions of LifeChange Bible Series listed in this insert. GLS

- **What must we do** (6:28). The Jews missed what Jesus said in 6:27 about giving them the food that endures to eternal life. The rabbis sometimes spoke of the Law as the heavenly food that God gives and by which a person can attain life.
  - **The work of God** (6:29). This is another of John's double meanings: it can be the work that God desires people to do, or the work that God accomplishes in people.
4. In what sense is faith in Jesus a human "work" (6:29)? In what sense is it different from a work done to earn God's favor?
  - **What will you do** (6:30). If Jesus had given the people a list of commands by which to please God, they might have been content. But He says, "Believe in Me." For that they want a sign greater than the one that confirmed Moses' ministry. So far, Jesus has only fed five thousand men once, but Moses (actually, God) fed the whole nation for forty years.
  5. The people want Jesus to reenact the miracle of the bread from heaven. What does Jesus say about the bread from heaven in 6:32-35, 48-59?

**True bread** (6:32). "True" is a frequent and important word in John's Gospel. The manna was a foreshadow; Jesus is the real bread, the reality to which the manna pointed. Also, bread symbolized the Law in Jewish writings, but Jesus is the bread that fully satisfies, as the Law cannot. In the same way, Jesus is the "true light" (1:9), the real light that was only foreshadowed by the light of the Law. He is also the "true vine" (15:1).

6. Belief in Jesus is essential (6:35, 47). How is it possible for a person to believe (6:36-40, 43-46)?
- **Eat the flesh... drink his blood** (6:53). Eating flesh was a crude, graphic, attention-getting way of expressing Jesus' thought. Drinking blood was probably even more disgusting to Jews than eating human flesh, for Leviticus 17:10-12 explicitly forbids drinking blood.
- **Remains** (6:56). This word, which is translated "endures" in 6:27, is another key word for John. KJV and the NASB often render it as "to abide." It is especially frequent in 15:1-10. It suggests a constant, permanent relationship of being together with.
7. What does Jesus mean by saying that we must eat His flesh & drink His blood (6:53)?
- **Disciples** (6:60). Jesus had many followers besides the Twelve, whom He called apostles. The miracles had inspired many to a certain degree of belief and desire to follow this rabbi.
- **Hard** (6:60). The Greek word implies "harsh," that is, hard to accept, not hard to understand.
8. Why did many of Jesus' disciples cease to follow Him after hearing the discourse in 6:25-59? (See 6:41-42, 52-66.) Why didn't the Twelve abandon Jesus (6:67-69)?
9. Summarize what 6:1-71 in your own words.
10. **Application:** What truth from this chapter would you like to actively apply to your own life this week? How is it relevant to you? What action can you take to put this truth into practice? Think about your "job description". How might you intentionally trust, obey, and worship Jesus in the coming week?