



Bread from Heaven

John 6:16-40

Notes: The primary reference used in developing this Bible Study was the *Life Application Commentary*. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.

Walking on Water

John 6:16-21

6:16-17 – Where did Jesus and His disciples go after the 5,000 were fed?

Jesus withdrew to a mountain to be by Himself (verse 6:15) and He had sent the disciples on ahead by boat to Capernaum which was across the Sea of Galilee.

How should we reconcile the parallel passages of Mark 6:45 where Jesus told the disciples to go to Bethsaida, with Luke 9:10 which said the feeding of the 5,000 was in Bethsaida and John 6:17 where the disciples set off across the lake for Capernaum?

There were two Bethsaida, one near Julias on the Northeast side of the Sea of Galilee per Luke 9:10 and the other was a village near Capernaum on the Western shore per Mark 6:45-46.

Why did the disciples go boating in the dark?

Many of the disciples were fishermen and thus experienced boatmen who would be as comfortable sailing at night as in the daytime.

6:18 – What was the Sea of Galilee like this night?

The sea had started out calm but became rough due to a strong wind as the evening progressed.

6:19 – What frightened the disciples and why?

The disciples saw Jesus walking on the water in the midst of the storm. They hadn't really gotten used to who Jesus was yet. According to Mark 6:49, they thought what they saw had to be a ghost, a spiritual apparition. Certainly the Jesus they knew had a physical body and what they saw defied the laws of physics.

What part of the Sea of Galilee were the disciples in when they saw Jesus walking on the water?

They were three or four miles into their journey across a lake that was 7 miles across at the widest point... so they were in the middle of the lake.

6:20 – How did Jesus help calm the fears of the disciples?

Jesus spoke to them, telling them who He was. The literal reading for "It is I" is the same as "I am" (Greek, ego eimi) which effectively made what Jesus said, "the I AM is here" or "I, Yahweh, am here." This is the same term that God used for Himself when Moses asked God who was sending him to deliver the Israelites from Egypt.

6:21 – What happened after the disciples recognized Jesus?

The disciples were willing for Jesus to come into the boat with them as soon as they realized who He was. They now doubt remembered His calming the storm on a previous occasion (Mark 4:35-41). Immediately after Jesus got in the boat with them, they found themselves at their destination.

What should we learn from this story that may be applied to our own lives when we are storm-tossed?

We should be quick to let Jesus come into our boat with us. If we trust in Christ, He will give us peace no matter what kind of storm we face. After all, what is the worst that could happen to us? We could die but death for the Christian is simply a graduation to an immortal life with Christ.

Recognizing that the disciples were slow to believe that Jesus could walk on water despite His feeding of the 5,000, what should we do to avoid this same weakness?

Faith is a mind-set that expects God to act. We accept that Jesus can walk on water yet we are amazed when He works in our own lives. We should be quicker to accept that Jesus can do amazing things in our lives so that we don't miss His blessings. The next time you face a storm in your life, look for Jesus coming to you in the midst of it.

Bread from Heaven

John 6:22-40

6:22-24 – What became of the 5,000+ people who had eaten the miracle lunch?

They hung around the area looking for Jesus until they figured out that He had evaded them. Then they went to Capernaum in search of Him assuming He must have linked back up with His disciples.

6:25 – What did the people think when they found Jesus in Capernaum?

The people were astonished because they did not know how He could have gotten there. They had seen the disciples leave without Him and yet there he was with them as if He had been with them the whole time. Obviously witnessing the miracle of the replicated lunch did not help them realize who Jesus really was.

6:26 – Why were the people seeking Jesus?

Jesus challenged the people by exposing their motivation to find Him so that they could have another free meal. They sought after Jesus for the same reason people go to magic acts in Las Vegas, to be amazed by more incredible feats. They wanted to see what other tricks Jesus would do to benefit them, they were miracle groupies. And according to John 6:15, they wanted to make Him king. They were convinced that He was the Messiah but their view of the Messiah was limited to what He could do for them in this world, not for all time and all places.

6:27 – What is the food that endures to eternal life?

Jesus Christ Himself is that which we need to take into our lives to have eternal life. This is very similar to the analogy of the living water that Jesus spoke about to the woman at the well in John 4:14. As we consume food or drink, we need to receive Jesus into our lives in order to have eternal life.

For what are we not to labor and why?

We are not to work for food that spoils. The food that spoils is limited to this world. We are not to consider the labor for anything in this world as having any value toward our eternal salvation.

How do we work for the food that endures to eternal life?

We can not work for the food that makes it possible to have eternal life. This food is given to us by Christ. But our works do have eternal value in that their will be rewards in heaven for those who labored for the cause of Christ. The issue is our motivation for why we work: the correct motivation is to work out of gratitude for what Jesus has done for us, not to work to earn His favor to save us.

Why did Jesus refer to Himself as the Son of Man?

This term “Son of Man” was one of Jesus’ favorite titles for Himself. It is a Messianic term from the prophecies about Him in Daniel.

On whom has God placed His seal?

God the Father has placed His seal on Jesus. This seal is His proof of authenticity that Jesus was in fact God the Son: the witnesses to His miracles, the promptings of the Holy Spirit,

the prophecies fulfilled and Jesus’ own words proclaim who he was.

6:28 – Why did the crowd ask this question?

The crowd was not listening to Jesus... when He spoke, they heard what they expected to hear which was that salvation was by works. This is all they know and so they processed everything through their “salvation-by-works filter.” So they missed the part where Jesus said He would give them the food that lasts for eternal life and instead focused on His words about working.

6:29 – What work did Jesus prescribe?

The only “work” that Jesus requires is to believe in God the Son, Jesus Christ. Satisfying God’s requirements for salvation does not come from the work we do but from whom we believe.

What does it mean to believe in Christ?

The first step is to believe that Jesus was who He claimed to be: the Son of God. This term Son of God was understood by the Jews as meaning the same as God; we should take it the same way. Accepting that Jesus is the Son of God has many ramifications to it: if we truly accept Him, we’ll give Him control over every area of our lives. We will yield our wills, desires, plans strengths, and weaknesses to Christ’s direction. It means obeying Him in everything, all the time. Believing in Him brings us into a personal relationship with Him where we trust Him in everything.

6:30-31 – What did the people expect Jesus to do?

The people wanted to see more miracles. They thought that if Jesus could supply them with one meal, He could provide them with a continuous supply as done for their ancestors who ate manna in the wilderness.

Why would providing manna have been an acceptable miracle to the crowd?

The Israelites expected the Messiah to be like Moses per Deuteronomy 18:15-18. A midrash (Jewish commentary) on Exodus 16:4 says that just as the former redeemer (Moses) caused manna to ascend from heaven, so also the latter Redeemer would cause manna to descend.

6:32 – How was the crowd’s concept of the Messiah flawed?

Moses was only a type of the true Redeemer, not the Redeemer who could only be God Himself. Moses hadn’t performed the miracle of the manna; it was God who supernaturally provided it.

How can this same kind of misunderstanding creep in to our own thinking?

We can give ourselves credit for God answering our prayers thinking that the source of power was the prayer rather than

God Himself. Our praise for answered prayer should be for the One who answered rather than the one who prayed.

6:33 – Who is the Bread of God and why is this term used?

In context with John 6:35, Jesus is the bread of God who came down from heaven to give life to the world. The manna was symbolic of the work that God would do in Christ. As the manna sustained the Israelites physically; so too would Christ sustain His followers spiritually and give them eternal life.

What is the significance of the present tense being used here for “comes” and “gives”?

This use of the present tense indicates a continuous supply. God’s deliverance for us is not limited to a one-time event; it is active and on-going.

6:34 – What did the people want?

Like the woman at the well who wanted the living water so that she wouldn’t have any more physical thirst, the crowd wanted Jesus to make their lives easier. They wanted Him to provide them with a continuous food supply so that they wouldn’t have to work so hard. Thus they were missing the point.

6:35 – Who did Jesus claim to be?

Jesus tried to make it as clear to the crowd as He could by directly telling them that He was the bread of life. This means that He is the sustenance of spiritual and eternal life. Apart from taking Jesus into your life, there can be no true spiritual life in the here and now and eternal life when the mortal phase of our lives is over. Also, Jesus used the “I AM” term which indicated His unique divine identity.

6:36 – Why didn’t the crowd accept Jesus as the Son of God?

Seeing Jesus do miracles can not overcome a hardness of the heart. They tried to fit what Jesus had to say into their preconceived system of salvation and it didn’t work. They resisted the necessary conclusion that He was divine.

6:37 – Who will come to Jesus?

Those who the Father gives to Jesus will come to Him. It is the Spirit of God who prepares the heart of people and makes it possible for them to seek Jesus for their salvation. It is God Himself who makes it possible for us to have a correct understanding of who Jesus is:

Matthew 16:15-17 - He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. (NKJV)

What does it mean to come to Christ?

To come to Christ means to reach a point in your life where you realize that you can not save yourself and go to the only one who can save you. It means that you believe Him recognizing that Jesus is God and you trust in Him for your eternal salvation.

Will Christ reject any who seek Him?

No, all who sincerely come to Christ for salvation will be saved because only those who the Father has given the Son will come to Him. Certainly people can “go through the motions” of coming to Christ in order to be part of a fellowship but every person knows whether their coming to Christ is only an outward show or if they are truly yielded to Him.

What different roles does God the Father, God the Son and we ourselves have in our salvation?

The Father gives us to the Son, the Son made the way of salvation for us and preserves us, and we respond by coming to Jesus. Please note that it is not possible for a person to have been given by the Father to the Son without that person coming to the Son for salvation. Coming is the result of being given.

What does this verse have to say about eternal security?

This verse reinforces the doctrine of “once saved, always saved.” We can not lose our salvation. This verse is a promise that those who come to Jesus for salvation do so because the Father gave them to the Son and the Son will accept all who come to Him. This is great assurance to all who have come to Jesus that we can not lose our salvation.

6:38 – Where did Jesus come from and what is the ramifications of this?

Jesus came from heaven, the spiritual realm where God is. This means that He has to be God because only God could come from the abode of God. Please note that Paul described three heavens: (1) the physical universe (2) the Second heaven where the angelic beings dwell, see Ephesians 6:12, and (3) the Third Heaven, see 2 Corinthians 12:1-4. Jesus is obviously talking about the Third Heaven here because it is in the context of the Father sending Him.

Why did Jesus come to earth?

Jesus came to do the will of the Father who sent Him. The Son’s plan to redeem mankind was not His own but was made in concert with The Father and The Holy Spirit. The Father gave His Son so that we may be saved and the Son was a party to this in that He came willingly.

6:39 – What is the will of God the Father?

God’s will is that Christ would lose no one that the Father has given Him but that they would all be resurrected into a permanent body.

What does this have to say about eternal security?

This promise reinforces that once we are saved, we can not lose our salvation. The very character of God the Father is at stake in making sure that all who go to Christ for salvation will be resurrected to eternal life.

To what does the term “last day” refer?

The “last day” is the last day of the church age or the age of grace where the Lord is calling out a people for Himself and building His church. The “last day” marks the end of this dispensation where the Lord is working through the church to reveal Himself to mankind. Following the “last day,” He will return to working through Israel...

Romans 11:25-26 - For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; (NKJV)

6:40 – What does this verse add to our understanding about the will of the Father?

The Father's will is that all who recognizes the Son for who He really is and puts their trust in Him for salvation will be resurrected to eternal life.

Why doesn't it say, “I will raise them up” rather than “I will raise him up”?

The Lord is emphasizing a personal response here rather than being part of some corporate activity. Being saved requires a personal response to the Lord, not being part of some ecclesiastical body even one that has a correct view of the Lord.

Why is the “last day” emphasized here again?

The day is coming when there will be no more opportunities to begin trusting in Christ. It is an appeal to believe in Christ while there is yet time. Paul later elaborated in context to the rapture of the church that it would be more difficult for people to believe in Christ after that event...

II Thessalonians 2:11-12 - And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (NKJV)