

Jesus - the Bread of Eternal Life

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[0 : 00] Well, good afternoon, folks, and welcome to our lunchtime Bible talk. It's very good to have you with us this afternoon.

My name is Paul, one of the ministers here in the church, and if I've not yet met you, please introduce yourself after our service, but it's great to have you with us. We are in the midst of working through John's gospel, so please do turn up John chapter 6.

John chapter 6, and we're looking at verses 41 to 59. If someone has a page number, please shout out 892, page 892.

So we're really focusing there from verse 41, but we're going to start the reading from verse 35. So John chapter 6 and verse 35.

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life.

[1 : 11] Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me, and yet do not believe.

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven.

They said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?

How does he now say, I have come down from heaven? Jesus answered them, Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day.

[2 : 35] It is written in the prophets, and they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

Not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God. He has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever.

And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? So Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

[3 : 49] Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.

This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not like the bread that the fathers ate and died.

Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.

Jesus said these things in the synagogue as he taught at Capernaum. Well, let's pray, shall we, before we think about this together.

Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that it is in your word that we find life, eternal life. So please would you help us now as we listen, as we sit under your word.

[5 : 00] Help us to listen, help us to respond, and to believe. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, there's a great deal of confusion in our society about the big questions in life.

Can we be certain about anything? The general consensus seems to be anything goes. You can make up your own reality. You can make up your own truth, your own religion.

You can even make up your own gender. Can we then be certain about anything? Well, the answer that John's gospel gives us is an emphatic yes.

Yes, we can be certain. There is a better way, and yes, we can be certain. We can be certain about the biggest, most fundamental questions we face as human beings.

Because what is on offer in John's gospel is life itself. Life in all its fullness is offered to us, and it comes through believing in Jesus Christ.

[6 : 11] And that belief is based on evidence. That is why John has gone to all the effort of writing his account. Let me read to you two verses at the end of his gospel.

This is John chapter 20. You don't need to turn there. Just listen. This is why John wrote his account. He says, Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Do you see what John is saying? That's his whole reason for writing. He's giving us his purpose in writing this account. You see, we don't get to make up, do we?

We don't get to make up our own idea of what a Bible book is about. It's not down to us to create the meaning. Rather, the Bible itself tells us what it means and how we're to understand it.

And John tells us what his aim is here. And his purpose is not an academic one. It's not merely a biography. He's not just recording some sayings of Jesus because he found them particularly interesting.

[7 : 30] No, he's not doing that. He's not just recording. He's preaching. John is preaching with a purpose. And he's preaching with a very clear purpose in mind. Namely, that all who read this account, everyone who reads this book you have open in front of you now, would make a commitment to follow Jesus Christ and so know eternal life.

That's why John's written so that you, so that people just like you, would have eternal life. Eternal life is what is on offer.

And we see that so clearly in John chapter 6, the passage we just read together. Jesus gives testimony that he is the bread of life.

The stakes could not be higher with this claim. He says, eat of me and you'll live forever. Again and again, that's what Jesus says through this passage.

Look at verse 44. He says, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

[8 : 43] Verse 47. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. verse 50. This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat of it and not die.

Verse 51. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. Verse 54. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.

Verse 57. As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father so whoever feeds on me, he will also live because of me. Verse 58.

This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not like the bread the Father ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. Huge claims.

Eternal life is on offer. Now we saw last week looking at the previous section in chapter 6 Jesus talks about the bread of life. And we saw last week that Jesus is offering a solution.

[9 : 58] The solution to our greatest need. Not necessarily our greatest felt needs but actually he's offering what our greatest need is.

He offers himself so that we can have a total life. The stakes could not be higher could they? And his word what Jesus says here well it ruffles feathers doesn't it?

Look at verse 41. Jesus makes his amazing claims and verse 41 so the Jews grumbled about him because he said I am the bread of life that came down from heaven.

They cannot in their minds square the claims that Jesus is making from what they think they know. Two big questions arise in this passage.

First where does Jesus come from? Second what does it mean to eat the bread of life? If we can't answer those questions we can't understand this passage.

[11 : 01] They're the two big questions that are asked and answered in this passage. So first here's the first big question where does Jesus come from? And that's the question on the lips of

those Jews.

He claims to come down from heaven. He says that over and over again in this passage in verse 41 and verse 50 and verse 51. He says I'm the living bread that's come down from heaven.

That's Jesus' claim. But there's a massive contrast of understanding in the passage. Look at the opinion of the Jews there in verses 41 and 42.

They grumble about him because he said I'm the bread that came down from heaven. And they said is not this man Jesus the son of Joseph?

We know his mum and dad. How does he now say I've come down from heaven? They can't compute. It's not adding up is it in their minds.

[12:02] They think they know where he comes from. He claims to be the bread of life that's come down from heaven but he's just a guy from Nazareth isn't he? What's going on?

How can he claim that? That's Mary and Joseph's boy. We know who you really are is what they're saying and you're not who you claim to be. You've not come from heaven.

You're just from Nazareth. But who's right? Where is Jesus really from? There's a lot riding on the answer to that question.

If he's just the guy from Nazareth then all these words he speaks about here are of little consequence aren't they? But if Jesus is indeed as he claims sent from heaven well that makes all the difference in the world.

Where someone is from well that shapes a lot of what we think about them doesn't it? It's often one of the first questions we ask when we meet somebody. Where are you from? It's a fundamental question.

[13:03] If you ask me where I'm from you get quite a complicated answer. So I was born in Spain to Irish parents, grew up in the south of England and I now live in Scotland.

So you're going to get a different answer depending on who's asking and where I am. So when I'm here in Scotland I tend to downplay the Englishness and big up the Irishness. When it comes to six nations I'm very firmly on the side of the Irish.

But when it comes to football I quite like Spain. So there we go. But where someone is from it is significant. But where Jesus is from that is infinitely more significant because he comes from heaven.

That's his repeated refrain here isn't it? I came down from heaven. You look all the way back in verse 33 and verse 38, verse 41, verse 50, again and again he says it.

According to his own testimony, Jesus has come from God, from heaven itself. But the Jews, the people here listening to him, well they refuse to believe that.

[14:20] Why? Why do they refuse to believe what Jesus says about himself? Well look down with me from verse 43 where we get the explanation. So verse 43, Jesus answered them.

He said, do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up on the last day.

It is written in the prophets and they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the father comes to me.

Not that anyone has seen the father except he who is from God. He has seen the father. Do you see what Jesus says there?

Back in verse 43, no one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him. Do you see what Jesus is saying? Coming to the son, coming to Jesus for life is entirely down to the drawing work of the father.

[15:26] As he draws people to the son, he does it through his words. That's what's meant in verse 45. Jesus says everyone who has heard and learned from the father comes to me.

The implication of what Jesus is saying is this. If the Jews were grumbling about Jesus here, if they had really heard, really learned from the father, if they had really paid attention to the scriptures, then they would have accepted Jesus' testimony.

They would have come to him. That's the argument here. Jesus gives his testimony and those who respond, those who come, they come because the father has drawn them and they come because they've listened and heard and believed.

That is how the father draws people to Jesus. That is how people come to believe that Jesus is who he says he is. That's how people accept that Jesus did in fact come down from heaven.

It's through paying attention to the father's word. That is how people are drawn to the son. Read the scriptures. So in reading them says Jesus that you'll be drawn to me.

[16:40] That is the only way. And that is an explosive truth. He's saying to these Jews, you've not listened, you've not heard, you do not know your scriptures.

If you did, then you would have come to me. It's an explosive truth. Notice the emphatic, this is the only way language. Verse 44, no one can come to me unless.

No one can come unless. Verse 46, not that anyone has seen the father except he who is from God. He's saying, I'm the only one. Only I have come from God. Only I can reveal to you the father. It's exclusive language. Jesus, he is unique. Only he has seen the father. Only through believing his testimony is the hope of eternal life.

Because only Jesus has been with the father. Only Jesus has been sent by the father. There's nobody else. Only him. Only Jesus can give this gift of everlasting life.

[17:49] He is the true bread of life. He's not like the bread that was eaten by the forefathers of these Jews. That bread didn't bring eternal life, did it?

Didn't bring eternal rescue. Verse 49, your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died. In contrast to that bread, verse 50, he says, this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. See, because of Jesus' origin, he wasn't just a man from Nazareth, he was sent from heaven.

Because of where he came from, his offer of true bread and everlasting life is absolutely solid. Now, if I come along and claim that, it's absolute nonsense, isn't it?

Because I'm some guy from Spain or Ireland or wherever it is. I can't make that claim, but he can because of where he's from. Only Jesus can make this offer and his offer is solid.

[18:58] Jesus is the only way to feast on this true bread. Jesus is the only way to come to the Father. And for those people gathered around him here, that was an intolerable claim.

They sought to kill him for that claim. It was a controversial claim then and it is today. Jesus is the only way because only he comes from the Father.

These are major claims that John's making here through his gospel. The Jesus of John's gospel, the Jesus of the whole Bible, he claims rule over all of heaven and earth because he's God.

He's God in human flesh. And that is an exclusive claim to truth, isn't it? This isn't one possible truth amongst many. It can't possibly be, can it?

If this is true, there's no other truth. Either Jesus is part of the Godhead and the creator and stainer of all things, or he isn't.

[20:08] Either Jesus did really walk this earth, say the things he did, die on a cross, rise again, ascend to heaven, and promise to come back as judge, or he didn't.

Either Jesus is the bread that came down from heaven and all you eat of it will live forever, or he isn't. And it's totally futile. It's either true or it isn't.

Christianity is either true or it isn't. It can't possibly be one truth amongst many, holding equal status with Islam and Sikhism, whatever else. To say all religions are the same or are equally true, it's just a nonsense.

They can't possibly be right. They can't all be true. Jesus presents himself here not as one possible option. He's not presenting himself as one possible path to God.

No. He claims to be unique. Now we may choose to disbelieve him, but he cannot be one truth among many.

[21:15] We don't have that option. Jesus' testimony is, I've come from heaven. That's the first big question in the passage.

Where is Jesus from? Well, he claims to be from heaven. And that's an explosive reality. Second, looking from verse 52 to the end of our passage, given that Jesus is the bread of life sent from heaven, given that the way to eternal life is for all who eat of this bread, it begs the question, what does it mean to eat the bread of life?

What does that mean? Well, that's the question the Jews puzzle over. Look at verse 52. The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, how can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Jesus' response is clear, isn't it? Verse 53 and following. So Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day, for my flesh is true food. My blood is true drink.

[22 : 31] Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me also will live because of me.

This is the bread of life that came down from heaven. Not like the bread the Father ate and died.

Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. Jesus reiterates his point.

He says, you do need to eat my flesh. You do need to drink my blood. It's pretty key, therefore, that we understand what Jesus means here by feeding on my flesh.

You don't want to get that wrong, do you? He can't surely mean, can he, you literally eat my flesh. Pretty clearly and pretty strongly in the background of all this, of what's happening here, are the events of Passover.

All this talk of eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking his blood in connection with this bread would tie Jesus' death to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb.

[23 : 37] Jesus' death would be a rescue event, an event that brings a once-for-all sacrifice for sins for his people, an event that would bring life beyond the grave, resurrection.

It's there in verse 54. Eternal life, raising on the last day. So Jesus is saying in these verses that not only does Christ give the bread of life to men, he is himself that bread.

It's therefore in personal relationship with him that souls are fed and satisfied for all eternity. Jesus is speaking here about his coming sacrifice when his flesh would be put to death, his blood would be spilled, a sacrifice that brings forgiveness for sins.

And it's the benefits of this sacrifice that people, every person must take hold of themselves. How do we do that? How do we take hold of the benefits of that sacrifice for sins?

Well, according to Jesus, it's by feeding on the bread, feeding on him. And throughout this chapter, feeding is equated with believing.

[25 : 02] Look back to verse 35, which we read at the start. 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.

Verse 40, for this is the will of my father, that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. Verse 47, whoever truly I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

Jesus is not at all talking about feeding on physical bread, physical flesh. It's about believing that he is the son. sent by the father, come to bring rescue through his death on the cross.

Only by feeding, only by believing that he is who he says he is, is there salvation. Only by believing that what he did on the cross, sacrificing his own flesh, spilling his own blood, believing that is the way for forgiveness.

Only that, only through that, is there salvation and life eternal. evil. So when Jesus speaks of eating and drinking, he's using picture language to speak about his death on the cross.

[26 : 22] He wants us to believe in him, to come to him, to look to him. That is what Jesus means by eating of my flesh, drinking my blood.

it's believing, trusting what he's done on the cross. Now what is an offer here? It's absolutely extraordinary. The stakes could not be high, could they?

He offers life, life unending, life in communion with the Father, the creator of all things. And all we need to do is believe.

that is how we eat of the bread of life. Jesus said, I am the living bread that came down from heaven.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. That's the answer to humanity's greatest need and yours. And if you're not yet fed on the bread of life, then can I plead with you that you must.

[27 : 33] Eternities are in the balance. The stakes could not be higher. Well, let me pray. Father God, we do thank you that we do not have to scabble around in the dark searching for meaning, searching for purpose.

God, but all we need to do is look to you and to the Lord Jesus Christ, whom you sent, the one in whom we find life, eternal life. So would you help us in all our mixed feelings and emotions and confused thoughts?

Help us to cling to you, to believe to believe in Jesus and to have eternal life. Help us, Lord. Help our unbelief and help us together as individuals to believe.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.