

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

RISING OPPOSITION TO JESUS' MINISTRY, JOHN 5:1-12:50

JESUS' MINISTRY IN GALILEE, JOHN 6:1-7:9

INTRODUCTION

- A. Outline of the *Gospel of John* (1:1-4:42)
1. Prologue (1:1-18)
 2. Preparation for Jesus' ministry (1:19-51)
 3. Jesus' early ministry (2:1-4:54)
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 - a. Jesus' second visit to Jerusalem (5:1-47)
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 - 1) The Feeding of the 5,000 (6:1-15)
 - 2) Jesus walking on water (6:16-21)
 - 3) Jesus' conversations on the Bread of Life (22-59)
- B. Notes
- Thomas Constable, *The importance of this sign is clear in that all four Gospels contain an account of it. Apparently John was familiar with the other evangelists' versions of this miracle as well as being an eyewitness of the event. His story complements the others (cf. vv. 5, 15).*
 - Richard Lenski, *As chapter 5 relates the rise of opposition in Jerusalem, so chapter 6 relates the rise of opposition in Galilee.*
 - Charles Swindoll, *Sometime after His clash with the religious elite in Jerusalem, Jesus returned to Galilee, where events gave Him an opportunity to offer His disciples a divine perspective on earthly challenges. This was to be a crucial lesson for those whom He would later commission with the words, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (20:21).*
 - Thomas Constable, *This section of the Gospel records the high point of Jesus' popularity. His following continued to build, and antagonism also continued to increase. This is the only section in John that narrates Jesus' later Galilean ministry, which occupies so much of the Synoptic Gospels.*
 - Warren Wiersbe, *Since John's Gospel is selective (John 20:30-31), he does not record events in the life of Jesus that do not help him fulfill his purpose. Between the healing of the paralytic (John 5) and the feeding of the 5,000, you have many events taking place, some of which are mentioned in Luke 6:1-9:10 and Mark 3:1-6:30. During this period our Lord preached "the Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5-7) and gave the parables of the kingdom (Matt. 13).*
 - Edwin Blum, *The significance of the sign was expounded by the Lord in a long discourse (vv. 22-71). The miracle was spectacular, and it caused a peak in the people's messianic expectations. But in its aftermath many of His followers no longer followed Him (v. 66).*
 - Synoptic recordings of the feeding of the 5,000 are found in John 6:1-15 are Matthew 4:13-21, Mark 6:32-44 and Luke 9:10-17.
- C. Setting
- The time was before Passover in the early spring, a year before the crucifixion of Jesus.
 - Jesus was rejected by those in His hometown of Nazareth and received the news of the murder of John the Baptist.
 - The location was at the northern end of the Sea of Galilee, some believe it was near either Capernaum or Bethsaida.

THE FEEDING OF THE 5,000, JOHN 6:1-15

- A. Introduction (1-4)
1. Jesus departed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (1-3), *After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. 2 And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. 3 Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples.*
 - a. Related verses
 - 1) John 6:15, *Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.*
 - 2) John 5:1, *After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*
 - 3) John 7:2, *Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand.*

b. Comments

1) *After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee ...*

- a) Thomas Constable, *Evidently John's readers knew this lake as the Sea of Tiberias. Tiberias was the chief city on its western coast of the lake ... Multitudes followed Jesus because they wanted to benefit from His miraculous powers, as well as to hear Him teach (cf. 2:23–25).*
- b) Edwin Blum, *... it can be learned from the Synoptics that Herod Antipas had killed John the Baptist (Mark 6:14–29; cf. John 3:24), the disciples had preached throughout Galilee (Mark 6:7–13, 30–31), multitudes of people were curious about Jesus, and Herod Antipas was seeking Jesus (Luke 9:7–9). So the time between the events in John 5 and 6 was probably six months.*
- c) Louis Barbieri, *The other side of the Sea of Galilee refers to the eastern shore ... The miraculous signs (v. 2) that Jesus did for those who were sick drew a large, curious crowd of followers.*
- d) Leon Morris, *The multitude "kept following" Jesus because they "continually saw" the signs that he "habitually did" on the sick. John does not record a great number of miracles, but this statement shows that he knew that there were many.*
- e) William Barclay, *At first, Jesus went up into the hill behind the plain and he was sitting there with his disciples. Then the crowd began to appear in droves. It was nine miles round the top of the lake and across the ford, and they had made the journey with all speed.*
- f) F. F. Bruce, *... they were impressed by the signs which they saw, but they yielded Jesus an adherence which was only superficial because they did not appreciate the inward import of the signs.*
- g) Grant Osborne, *It is clear that, like those mentioned in 2:23–25, theirs is an inadequate faith centered entirely on the miracles rather than on the person.*

2) *Jesus went up on the mountain ...*

- a) William Barclay, *There were times when Jesus desired to withdraw from the crowds. He was under continuous strain and needed rest. Moreover, it was necessary that sometimes he should get his disciples alone to lead them into a deeper understanding of himself. In addition, he needed time for prayer. On this particular occasion, it was wise to go away before a head-on collision with the authorities took place, for the time of the final conflict had not yet come.*
- b) Thomas Constable, *Jesus went up on the mountainside in order to be alone with His disciples, who had just returned from their mission throughout the towns of Galilee (Mark 6:30–32; Luke 9:10). He had just heard that Herod Antipas had beheaded John the Baptist (Matt. 14:12–13). The crowd soon found Him, and He healed many of the people and taught them (Matt. 14:14; Mark 6:33–34; Luke 9:11).*
- c) Louis Barbieri, *Mountain may refer to the sloping hills ... of the Golan Heights. As was common for rabbis, Jesus sat down with His disciples, probably to teach (Mt 5:1; 13:2; Mk 4:1; 9:35), the common rabbinic posture for instruction.*
- d) Charles Swindoll, *The other gospels tell us that the disciples had just completed an extensive preaching tour of their own and were in need of rest and encouragement (Mark 6:30–31), so Jesus took them to a "secluded place" somewhere in the wilderness east of Bethsaida (Luke 9:10) ... But still they couldn't escape the crowds. The Lord knew the vast majority sought Him for selfish gain and nothing more; nevertheless, unlike His disciples, He felt compassion for them even when they became a nuisance.*

2. He noted that Passover was approaching (4), ***Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.***

a. Related verses

- 1) John 2:13, *The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*
- 2) John 5:1, *After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*
- 3) John 7:2, *Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand.*

b) Comments

- 1) Louis Barbieri, *This Passover (v. 4) would have been one year before Jesus' crucifixion. The Passover commemorated the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians through Moses (cf. v. 32), and messianic hopes ran high during this festival.*
- 2) Charles Swindoll, *Several months passed after the events of chapter 5. John tells us that Passover (March–April) was not far in the future (6:4), so if the "feast" mentioned in 5:1 was the Feast of Tabernacles (September–October), the time interval is not likely to have been less than six months. The Jews observed both Hanukkah (November–December) and Purim (February–March) in the interim, but neither celebration required people to travel to Jerusalem. During this time, the Lord continued to minister in Judea and Galilee.*
- 3) Thomas Constable, *Evidently John identified the nearness of the Passover because of Jesus' later references to Himself as the Bread of Life (vv. 33, 35, 51) and thus the fulfillment of what the Passover bread typified ... This was John's second reference to a Passover feast during Jesus' ministry (cf. 2:13, 23; 11:55; 13:1). Evidently this event happened two years after Jesus' first cleansing of the temple and one year before He died on the cross. It would have taken place in April of A.D. 32.*

- 4) Charles Swindoll, *His reference to the coming Passover tells us something about the people's frame of mind, much like our beginning a story with the words, "Christmas was just around the corner" ... With Passover just around the corner, a large congregation of Hebrews gathered in the wilderness. In such a setting, Moses, paschal lambs, unleavened bread, the wilderness wanderings, and manna would have mingled easily in the minds of everyone present. Jesus recognized an opportunity and decided to make the most of it. In a single miraculous "sign," He would teach His disciples a valuable lesson, clearly define His mission on earth, winnow the multitude for authentic believers, and set a course for Calvary.*
- 5) F. F. Bruce, *Three Passovers are mentioned in this Gospel. For the first (John 2:13) and the third (John 11:55ff.) Jesus went up to Jerusalem, but for this one he remained in Galilee. John's purpose in mentioning the Passover may be not only to fix the time of year at which the following incident took place; he probably thought the Passover season particularly appropriate both for the incident and for the discourse which arose out of it.*

B. Jesus was concerned for the needs of the approaching crowd (5-8)

1. He asked Philip where they could buy bread for the crowd (5-6), ***Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.***
 - a. Related verses, John 1:44, *Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.*
 - b. Comments
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *Only John recorded that Jesus approached Philip about the need. This would have been understandable, since Philip was from Bethsaida, the nearest sizable town (1:44). John also explained that Jesus' question was a test in Philip's discipleship training, not an indication that Jesus wondered what to do initially.*
 - 2) Edwin Blum, *The answer to Jesus' question was that it was impossible, humanly speaking, for thousands of people to get bread late in the day from the little neighboring villages. John wrote, as he thought back on the incident, that Jesus was asking this to test Philip. God tests people to refine their faith, never to tempt them to do evil (cf. Gen. 22:1-18; James 1:2, 13-15; 1 Peter 1:7).*
 - 3) Louis Barbieri, *Since God had provided manna for His people in the wilderness, Philip should have known that the Messiah would do the same for the multitude. Jesus did not feed the 5,000 based on a last-minute expedient, but He Himself knew ahead of time what He was intending to do.*
 - 4) R. Kent Hughes, *Jesus knew what to do, but he asked the question in order to expand the disciples' spiritual understanding. He wanted them to see how to appropriate his power and sufficiency, to see how that could make a difference in their lives. In the disciples' responses we will see a shadow of ourselves.*
2. Philip had no reasonable answer (7), ***Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little."***
 - a. Thomas Constable, *Philip too, like Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, was thinking only on the physical level. Two hundred denarii represented about eight months' wages for a working man. Such a large sum might be the minimum they could scrape by with, but it would not provide enough bread to satisfy the people—even a little. Philip, like an accountant, put his mental calculator to work and concluded that the situation was hopeless.*
 - b. Edwin Blum, *Even if the bread had been available, the disciples did not have nearly that much money. The disciples were supported by people who responded to Jesus' ministry (cf. Mark 6:7-13).*
 - c. Warren Wiersbe, *Too often, we think that money is the answer to every need. Of course, Jesus was simply testing the strength of Philip's faith.*
 - d. Leon Morris, *Philip's reply stresses the hopelessness of the situation judged from the meager resources of the little band. Two hundred denarii's worth of bread would not suffice to give all this crowd a little taste. Philip does not point to a solution, but to an impossibility.*
 - e. Charles Swindoll, *Philip didn't answer the question he was asked. Jesus asked about "where;" Philip answered with "how much."*
 - f. The answer to the question "where" is Jesus.
3. Andrew noted that a boy had five loaves and two fish (8-9), ***One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?"***
 - a. Related verses
 - 1) John 1:40, *One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.*
 - 2) 2 Kings 4:42-43, *A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said, "Give it to the people and let them eat." 43 But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" So he repeated, "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have some left.' "*

b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *Andrew had discovered a little boy ... who had five small barley biscuits and two small fish ... Andrew seems to have felt embarrassed that he had even suggested such an inadequate solution to the problem ... The main point, however, was the lack of adequate food plus Jesus' ability to feed a multitude with such meager rations.*
- 2) Edwin Blum, *Andrew, in contrast with Philip, had gone into the crowd to determine its resources (cf. Jesus' command, "Go and see"; Mark 6:38). All he could come up with was a little boy's lunch. Man's inability set the stage for a manifestation of Jesus' compassion and power.*
- 3) Kenneth Gangel, *John's record offers so many interesting observations, not the least of which is that the two fish Andrew found were definitely small. The word opsarion is used only by John, and it emphasizes the insignificance of these tiny sardines.*
- 4) Louis Barbieri, *According to Mk 6:38, Jesus had instructed the disciples to determine how many loaves were available. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother (like Philip, both were from Bethsaida, 1:44), mentioned a lad there (v. 9) who has five barley loaves and two fish. While Jesus could have supplied food from nothing, He chose to multiply the barley loaves of the young boy (the loaves are identified as barley only in John), purposefully replicating a miracle done by the prophet Elisha (2Kg 4:42-44). The prophet Elisha fed 100 men with 10 barley loaves and verified he was sent by God. Jesus demonstrated by the feeding miracle that He is the Prophet sent from God (see the comments on Dt 34:10-12).*
- 5) William Barclay, *There is a regulation in the Mishnah about the offering that a woman who has committed adultery must bring. She must, of course, bring a trespass offering. With all offerings a food offering was made, and the food offering consisted of flour and wine and oil intermixed. Ordinarily the flour used was made of wheat; but it was laid down that, in the case of an offering for adultery, the flour could be barley flour, for barley is the food of animals, and the woman's sin was the sin of an animal. Barley bread was the bread of the very poor.*
- 6) Charles Swindoll, *Everything about Andrew's statement emphasizes inadequacy. The Greek term for "lad" is a double diminutive; he was "a little boy." In terms of provision, little children were of no use at all. His "barley loaves" were common to the Mediterranean diet, though considered inferior to wheat bread. They would have been leavened at least a little, formed into little disks about four or five inches (10 to 13 cm) in diameter, and then baked. And the Greek term for "fish" is the diminutive form of a word, meaning "little fish."*
- 7) F. F. Bruce, *Andrew drew attention to it simply to underline its ludicrous inadequacy for so many hungry people, but it was enough for the Lord's purpose.*
- 8) Grant Osborne, *The detail of the barley loaves may well echo the Elisha miracle, with its multiplication of twenty barley loaves. If so, Jesus is being depicted as the greater Elisha.*

C. All the people were fully fed (10-14)

1. They were told to sit on the ground (10), **Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number.**
 - a. Thomas Constable, *When the disciples had confessed their own inadequacy, Jesus proceeded to demonstrate His adequacy. He instructed the disciples to seat the multitude on the comfortable, abundant grass. Perhaps we should picture Jesus as the Good Shepherd here making His sheep lie down in green pastures (cf. Ps. 23:2). Perhaps Jesus seated them also in order to discourage the people from rushing madly for the food once they realized what was happening. All four evangelists recorded the size of the crowd in terms of the males present. This was customary, since these people lived in a predominantly paternalistic culture.*
 - b. Edwin Blum, *According to Mark 6:40, the people were seated in groups of 50 and 100. This made the crowd easy to count and the food easy to distribute. Five thousand men were there, plus women and children (Matt. 14:21). Thus probably more than 10,000 people were fed.*
 - c. Kenneth Gangel, *Like Moses' ancient rod, Samson's donkey jawbone, and David's sling, this simple lunch shows again that seemingly useless things can become important in Jesus' hands. He alone is all-sufficient.*
 - d. Charles Swindoll, *I imagine the Lord flashing a reassuring grin as He instructed His disciples. In the vernacular of the day, He said, "Have the people recline." Back then people ate while leaning back on one elbow ... Imagine the scene. The disciples organize the people into groups of fifty (Mark 6:39-40; Luke 9:14) and instruct them to prepare for a meal.*
 - f. Grant Osborne, *Jesus is unfazed by the size of the crowd and tells everyone to sit down for a meal as if it is just a family gathering. The disciples had to have been astounded, looking around to see where the food might be coming from.*

2. Jesus gave thanks for the food which was then distributed to the people (11), **Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.**
 - a. Related verse, John 6:23, *Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.*
 - b. Comments
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *Jesus first thanked God for the food in prayer, as pious Jews normally did (cf. v. 23). In this He set a good example. Evidently Jesus multiplied the food while He broke it apart and distributed it to the people. John stressed the lavishness of Jesus' supply. The Son of God has always been the perfectly sufficient Provider of people's needs (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9).*
 - 2) Warren Wiersbe, *Matthew, Mark, and Luke all state that Jesus looked up to heaven when He gave thanks. By that act, He reminded the hungry people that God is the source of all good and needful gifts. This is a good lesson for us: instead of complaining about what we do not have, we should give thanks to God for what we do have, and He will make it go farther.*
 - 3) F. F. Bruce, *If Jesus used the regular form of thanksgiving on such an occasion, he would have said, "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth."*
 - 4) Edwin Blum, *As Jesus distributed the food (with the aid of the disciples [Mark 6:41]), the miraculous multiplication took place.*
 - 5) Grant Osborne, *The miracle itself is extravagant, and the people ate "as much as they wanted" of the bread and the fish. The common food for the poor turned into a lavish banquet, and they stuffed themselves. God's supply is boundless, and he provides far beyond everyone's expectations.*
 - 6) R. Kent Hughes, *Why would Christ use this food? He wanted his disciples to see that no matter what they had—even the tiniest or most menial thing—if they really gave it to him, he could use it. Little is much when God is in it. He wanted them to see that truth in a most dramatic demonstration.*

3. He told the disciples to gather up the leftover food (12-13), **And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." 13 So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.**
 - a. Thomas Constable, *Jesus satisfied everyone's appetite. There was even quite a bit of food left over that Jesus instructed His disciples to collect in order to avoid waste ... All four evangelists noted that there were 12 large Jewish baskets (Gr. kophinos) of bread fragments left over ... Each of the Twelve had his own evidence of Jesus' supernatural power and His adequacy.*
 - b. Arthur Pink, *We need never be anxious that there will not be enough left for our own needs. God never allows a generous giver to be the loser. It is miserliness which impoverishes. The disciples had more left at the finish than they had at the beginning!*
 - c. Edwin Blum, *The disciples' gathering of the 12 baskets of fragments was part of their education, to show them that He is more than adequate for their needs. Later He appealed to their spiritual stupidity (cf. Mark 8:17-21). Even though the disciples were closer to Jesus than the crowds, they too were in spiritual blindness (Mark 6:52).*
 - d. Kenneth Gangel, *Yes, Jesus can supply all our needs. And he often works miracles to provide for us physically. But there is always the need for faith and the intent to teach us to trust him for both physical and spiritual needs. As God provides for our physical needs, we should let down our defenses and allow him to put his arms around us and tame our sinful and rebellious spirits.*
 - e. Louis Barbieri, *Since John favors symbolism, the twelve baskets (v. 13) may symbolize the Messiah's sufficiency for the twelve tribes of Israel. Only the leftover bread is mentioned since that alone relates to the bread of life teaching that follows (vv. 32-58).*
 - f. Grant Osborne, *Probably the best interpretation is the restoration of the twelve tribes in Jesus' choice of twelve disciples to form the nucleus of the new Israel. God is pouring out his generous provision into his new community centered on the Messiah.*
 - g. Charles Swindoll, *At the end of the day, the disciples should have learned a clear lesson. Never gauge the size of a challenge in terms of our capability. What we have to offer is never enough. God never calls us to provide; that's His responsibility. Instead, He calls us to commit whatever we have—even if it's no more than a sack lunch.*
 - h. F. F. Bruce, *However plentifully the Lord bestows his grace, he has always enough and to spare for others; he is never impoverished by the generosity of his giving. So too his people, when they imitate his liberality, will prove the truth of the proverb, "One man gives freely, yet grows all the richer" (Proverbs 11:24).*

4. The people proclaimed that Jesus was the coming Prophet (14), ***When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”***

a. Related verses

- 1) John 4:19, *The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet.*
- 2) John 7:40, *When they heard these words, some of the people said, “This really is the Prophet.*
- 3) Matthew 21:11, *The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”*
- 4) John 11:27, *She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”*

b. Comments

- 1) Edwin Blum, *Seeing this miraculous sign (semeion), the people recalled Moses’ prediction that a Prophet like him would arise (Deut. 18:15). Moses had fed the people. Moses had led them out of bondage. Jesus had fed the people. Jesus could lead the people out of the hated Roman bondage.*
- 2) Leon Morris, *Once more John refers to a “sign” ... It pointed people to God. But these folk saw only a reference to a prophet, though admittedly the prophet that they held would be the greatest of them all, namely the one foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15.*
- 3) Charles Swindoll, *John comments briefly on the response of the people, which will be important to the story later on. The Lord performed this “sign” to instruct the people as well as His disciples. There in the wilderness, having consumed miracle bread to their stomachs’ delight, they recognized Jesus as “the Prophet” (Deut. 18:15–18; John 1:21).*
- 4) F. F. Bruce, *As their forefathers had been fed miraculously in the wilderness in the days of the first Moses, so the one who had now fed them miraculously in another wilderness must be the second Moses, the great prophet of the end time whose advent so many in Israel were expecting.*

D. Jesus removed Himself from the crowd (15), ***Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.***

1. Thomas Constable, *Moses additionally had provided military leadership for the Israelites and had liberated them from the oppression of the Egyptians. These later Jews concluded that Jesus could do the same for them, and so they now sought to secure His political leadership forcefully. This decision marks the high point of Jesus’ popularity. Jesus realized their intention and withdrew from the crowd by ascending the mountainside farther by Himself in order to pray (Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:46). The time was not right for Him to establish His kingdom on earth.*
2. Edwin Blum, *The people saw His sign, but they did not perceive its meaning. They wanted to seize Him and make Him King ... Could He have the kingdom without the Cross? No. Jesus’ kingdom would be given to Him by the Father (cf. Ps. 2:7–12; Dan. 7:13–14). It will not come from this world (John 18:36). The path of the Father’s will lies in another direction. Before He can be the reigning Lion of Judah, He must be the Lamb who bears the sin of the world (1:29).*
3. Kenneth Gangel, *Jesus could not accept the popular movement to make him king. The people were ready to offer him worship, but it was false worship. This was one of the things Satan had promised during the temptation in the wilderness—Jesus’ own people wanting to make him king.*
4. Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus compelled the disciples to get into the boat (Matt. 14:22; Mark 6:45) because He knew they were in danger. The crowd was now aroused and there was a movement to make Him King. Of course, some of the disciples would have rejoiced at the opportunity to become famous and powerful! Judas would have become treasurer of the kingdom, and perhaps Peter would have been named prime minister! But this was not in the plan of God, and Jesus broke up the meeting immediately.*
5. Leon Morris, *He who is already King has come to open His kingdom to men; but in their blindness men try to force Him to be the kind of king they want; thus they fail to get the king they want, and also lose the kingdom He offers.*
6. William Barclay, *They looked for a Messiah who would be king and conqueror, who would set his foot upon the eagle’s neck and drive the Romans from the land. They had seen what Jesus could do; and the thought in their minds was: ‘This man has power, marvellous power. If we can harness him and his power to our dreams, things will begin to happen.’ If they had been honest, they would have had to admit that they wished to make use of him.*
7. Charles Swindoll, *Jesus rejected the path to the throne taken by most earthly kings. He refused to ride the swell of popular support into Jerusalem. He knew His path to be the way of suffering, as it had been prophesied for centuries and planned from the beginning by the Father (18:36). Moreover, He knew the people had felt prompted by their stomachs rather than their hearts. Jesus chose not to address the crowd immediately; instead, He retreated further into the wilderness hill country.*

8. F. F. Bruce, *Jesus had already shown his power to banish disease; now he had shown his power to banish hunger. If only he would show his power to secure his people's liberation, nothing could stand in his way. Here, surely, was the leader for whom they had been waiting. With him as their captain and king, victory and freedom were as good as won! If he would not take the initiative and present himself to them as their leader, they would compel him to do so.*
9. Grant Osborne, *The Jewish people, including the Twelve, had no understanding of a suffering Messiah as in Isaiah 53–54. To them, Isaiah 53–54 portrayed Israel's suffering, not the coming Messiah. They thought only of the Messiah as the King who would repeat Moses' deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians by defeating the Romans. They saw in Jesus the warrior-Messiah who offered them the opportunity for liberation, and they were perfectly willing to force him to go along if necessary.*

SUMMARY

- Warren Wiersbe, *The practical lesson is clear: whenever there is a need, give all that you have to Jesus and let Him do the rest. Begin with what you have, but be sure you give it all to Him.*
- William Barclay, *That crowd would have followed Jesus at that moment because he was giving them what they wanted and they wished to use him for their own purposes. That attitude still lingers. We would like Christ's gifts without his cross; we would like to use him instead of allowing him to use us.*

INTRODUCTION

- Thomas Constable, *The disciples went from the thrill of great success to the agony of potential defeat—even loss of life. The feeding of the 5,000 was a lesson, and Jesus' walking on the water was the test following the lesson.*
- John Mitchell, *Here we read of another incident where He revealed Himself as God manifest in the flesh. By walking on the water, He revealed Himself as El Elyon, the possessor of heaven and earth (see Genesis 14:19).*
- Leon Morris, *It seems clear that John recounts this as one of the "signs" of which he is so fond, even though he does not apply that word to it.*
- Grant Osborne, *This story seems out of place, interrupting the movement from the multiplication of the loaves to Jesus as the Bread of Life. However, it actually fits well, identifying him as the divine provider and as the "I am."*

JESUS WALKING ON WATER, JOHN 6:16-21

- A. The disciples headed by boat to Capernaum (16-18), ***When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.***
1. Thomas Constable, *Thomas Constable, The disciples' destination was Bethsaida, to the north northwest of where Jesus had fed the 5,000 (Mark 6:45) ... But because of the storm, they ended up at Gennesaret, farther to the northwest (Mark 6:53).*
 2. Edwin Blum, *According to Mark 6:45, Jesus compelled His disciples to get into the boat and go to Bethsaida while He dismissed the crowds. From Bethsaida they went on toward Capernaum. Both villages are at the north end of the Sea of Galilee ... As they got out on the lake, the sun went down and the wind picked up. Jesus was up in the hills praying while watching them in their toil (Mark 6:45–48) ... The west wind, which often picks up at evening, caught them in the open water. They were headed directly into it and found themselves making little progress. They were "straining at the oars" (Mark 6:48). The Sea of Galilee is notable for its sudden and severe storms.*
 3. Warren Wiersbe, *The disciples had experienced great joy in being part of a thrilling miracle. Now they had to face a storm and learn to trust the Lord more. The feeding of the 5,000 was the lesson, but the storm was the examination after the lesson.*
 4. Louis Barbieri, *The Sea of Galilee is well known for its sudden storms. Cooler Mediterranean winds from the west get funneled through several valleys that descend to the lake, often colliding with hotter inland air, resulting in strong winds.*
 5. Charles Swindoll, *As evening fell, the crowd dispersed and the disciples boarded their fishing boat for Capernaum as instructed by the Lord (Matt. 14:22–23; Mark 6:45–46). Jesus perceived them (supernaturally, no doubt) struggling to stay afloat and on course in the wee hours of the morning (Matt. 14:25). A fierce squall had descended on the sea, as often happens. The Sea of Galilee is situated 686 feet (209 meters) below sea level in a deep rift between the Arabian Desert and the Mediterranean Sea. Winds frequently whip down through the gorge and turn the Sea of Galilee into a choppy nightmare, especially for the crude sailing boats of the first century.*
 6. Grant Osborne, *Likely John wants to stress that the disciples are alone, facing the darkness by themselves (see 1:5; 3:2). The darkness and Jesus' absence are interrelated, and the crisis that follows is linked to these facts.*

- B. Jesus calmed their fears when they saw Him walking on the water (19-20), ***When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. 20 But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.”***
1. Related verses, Luke 24:38-39, *He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”*
 2. Comments
 1. Thomas Constable, *Some scholars, wishing to downplay this miracle, have translated the Greek preposition epi as “by” the sea rather than “on” the sea. However, the context and the Synoptics clearly present Jesus as walking on the water, not on the shore beside the water ... The fear of the disciples, plus Jesus’ ability to calm their fear, is the point of John’s record of this miracle.*
 2. Edwin Blum, *They had rowed three or three and a half miles, so they were in the middle of the lake. They were terrified to see a figure walking on the water. They thought it was a ghost (Mark 6:49). Rational explanations have included the idea that Jesus was walking on the sand by the shore or floating on a large beam or log, but neither notion does justice to the text ... The clause It is I is literally “I Am,” and was used by Jesus (in 8:58) with strong theological meaning. In this setting it seems to mean only that Jesus was identifying Himself.*
 3. Warren Wiersbe, *Sometimes we are caught in a storm because we have disobeyed the Lord. Jonah is a good example. But sometimes the storm comes because we have obeyed the Lord. When that happens, we can be sure that our Saviour will pray for us, come to us, and deliver us ... We can st on several assurances ... He brought me here ... He is praying for me ... He will come to me ... He will help me grown ... He will see me through.*
 4. Leon Morris, *The sight of Jesus walking on the sea and nearing their boat filled them with fear. Again we must supplement this narrative by that of the Synoptists to find the reason—they thought that they saw a phantom ... Jesus immediately reassured them. His well-known voice with its words of comfort identified him to them. What they saw was real. It is possible that his words are meant to give a hint of deity. Certainly spoken in these circumstances at the culminating point of the miracle they must have been impressive, and it is probably no coincidence that all three accounts tell us that he said, “It is I; be not afraid” (the Synoptists prefix “Take courage”).*
 5. Louis Barbieri, *John did not call Jesus’ walking on the water a “sign” (see comment on 2:11). Instead, it was a private manifestation of His messianic glory to His disciples ... Jesus’ walking on water is united with His unique claim to deity, It is I (lit., “I am”).*
 6. Charles Swindoll, *Jesus watched the men put all their strength against the oars to make landfall at Capernaum, but the winds resisted them for hours. This is another vivid example of human inadequacy. Eventually, Jesus demonstrated mastery over the elements by walking across the water to rescue them.*
 7. F. F. Bruce, *... there would have been no cause for fear if the disciples had seen Jesus walking by the sea. It was the sight of him walking on the sea that made them cry out, thinking (as we are told in Mark 6:49), that it was an apparition.*
 8. Grant Osborne, *There is no place for fear when Jesus takes charge of the elements, for they are part of his creation.*
 9. William Barclay, *In the hour of the disciples’ need, Jesus came to them. When the wind was contrary and life was a struggle. Jesus was there to help. No sooner had a need arisen than Jesus was there to ellpt and to save.*
- C. They welcomed Jesus into the boat and they were immediately on the other side (21), ***Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.***
1. Thomas Constable, *When the disciples realized that it was Jesus, they willingly received Him into the boat. Perhaps Jesus met the disciples fairly close to their destination, and so it did not take them long to arrive there. Perhaps with Jesus in the boat, the remaining trip appeared to them to be a short one—or with the wind subdued, it may not have taken them long to reach land. Any of these explanations could account for John’s description: “immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.” Some commentators believed that John recorded a second miracle in this verse, and that the boat supernaturally reached Gennesaret swiftly.*
 2. Edwin Blum, *When the disciples recognized Him, they welcomed Him into the boat. By the words and immediately the boat reached the shore another miracle is probably intended. The two signs on the land and the lake reveal Jesus as the Provider of a “bread” which gives life (as the next section will expound) and as the Savior who intercedes for and protects His own. He intervenes in their times of troubles and brings them to safety.*
 3. A. B. Bruce, *The storm on the lake, besides being an apt emblem of the trial of faith, was for the twelve an important lesson in faith, helping to prepare them for the future which awaited them. The temporary absence of their Master was a preparation for His perpetual absence. The miraculous interposition of Jesus at the crisis of their peril was fitted to impress on their minds the conviction that even after He had ascended He would still be with them in the hour of danger.*

4. Charles Swindoll, *And after he stepped into the vessel, they were “immediately” at their destination. John offers this without explanation or comment, presumably because the point is clear. Jesus once again brought His abundant power to the rescue of human inadequacy, turning an impossible situation into an opportunity to strengthen the confidence of His believers.*
5. Grant Osborne, *Some think that no new miracle is intended, but I think there is an allusion to Psalm 107:29–30, where it says that God “stilled the storm to a whisper” and “guided them to their desired haven.” Christ has seen their plight, taken extraordinary steps to watch over them and keep them safe, and then got them to their God-ordained destination. His vigilance over his chosen people is indeed miraculous.*

SUMMARY

- Thomas Constable, *The feeding of the 5,000 presents Jesus as the Provider of people’s needs. His walking on the water pictures Him as the Protector of those who trust and obey Him. The second of these two signs taught the disciples that Jesus had authority over nature (cf. Job 38:8–11; Ps. 29:3–4, 10–11; 65:5–7; 89:9; 107:29). John undoubtedly recorded the incident in order to teach his readers the same lesson. Both miracles demonstrated Jesus’ equality with the Father, whom Old Testament writers described as doing these very things.*
- Grant Osborne, *The second sign-miracle, the walking on the water, shows how poorly prepared the disciples were for the events to come. Several of them were professional fishermen and had grown up on this lake with its sudden squalls. Yet when this especially severe one hit, they were not ready and forgot all about the message of the feeding miracle, that Jesus and his Father would take care of them ... The message to us is clear: God and Jesus are indeed watching out for us and can see a lot farther than we think!*
- God sends trials upon us to enlarge our faith, to teach us the depth of His love for us, to confirm the message and the Messenger.

INTRODUCTION

- Thomas Constable, *Jesus proceeded to clarify His identity by teaching the crowds and His disciples. He did so by developing the metaphor of the Bread of Life, which He claimed to be. Jesus used the feeding of the 5,000 as a basis for explaining His identity to the multitudes. He compared Himself to bread.*
- Warren Wiersbe, *In grace, our Lord fed the hungry people; but in truth, He gave them the Word of God. They wanted the food but they did not want the truth; and, in the end, most of them abandoned Jesus and refused to walk with Him. He lost His crowd with one sermon!*
- Kenneth Gangel, *The final paragraph of this portion of chapter 6 offers us a lesson in purpose for the crowd ... What did they want? More food? Another deliberate attempt to force him into political office? Whatever it was, they were hardly prepared for what they heard.*
- Charles Swindoll, *While most of them returned to their homes, many searched the hill country on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee for their newfound provider and leader. But they discovered to their disappointment that their meal ticket had departed.*

JESUS’ CONVERSATION ON THE BREAD OF LIFE, JOHN 6:22-59

- A. The crowds sought Jesus when they could not find Him the next day (22-25)
 1. The crowd sought Jesus the next morning but could not find Him (22), ***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.***
 - a. Thomas Constable, *The multitude on the “other side” must have still been near the northeast shore, after Jesus had fed the 5,000, south of Bethsaida. They were across the lake from the northwestern shore, where Jesus and the disciples were now (cf. Mark 6:53). They could not figure out where Jesus could have gone. The disciples had left in one boat alone, without Jesus. There was only one other boat still there, so they knew that Jesus had not used it to leave the area.*
 - b. Edwin Blum, *The crowd who had been fed were still on the eastern shore of the sea. They saw Jesus compel His disciples to get into the one boat which was there. But since Jesus did not get into the boat, the crowd supposed that He had stayed in the area. After some time they realized He was no longer there.*
 - c. Warren Wiersbe, *The disciples may have been impressed that so many people stayed through a storm in order to seek their Master, but Jesus was not impressed. He knows the human heart. He knew that the people originally followed Him because of His miracles (John 6:2), but now their motive was to get fed!*
 - d. Leon Morris, *The main point is that the crowd saw no way by which Jesus could have crossed the lake.*
 - e. Charles Swindoll, *Matthew and Mark tell us that the Lord sent the disciples ahead to Capernaum while He dispersed the crowd, although a contingent remained behind, seeking Jesus.*

2. Many in the crowd took boats to Capernaum to search for Jesus (23-24), **Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 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.**
 - a. Thomas Constable, *While they waited for Jesus to appear, other boats with people from Tiberias, on the western shore, arrived. Eventually the crowd realized that Jesus was not there in that region, so they boarded the small boats that had come from Tiberias, and set out for Capernaum. They probably thought that they could find Jesus there because Capernaum was His headquarters.*
 - b. Edwin Blum, *Some boats from Tiberias landed, so the people decided to seek Jesus in the Capernaum region and got into the boats.*
 - c. Kenneth Gangel, *Unable to find him there, they eventually made their way to Capernaum. What did they want? More food? Another deliberate attempt to force him into political office? Whatever it was, they were hardly prepared for what they heard.*
 - d. Leon Morris, *The boats from Tiberias may have come before the miracle, and have been there still. More probably they arrived after the disciples left, probably blown in by the storm ... The crowds, seeing neither Jesus nor the disciples, and seeing that there were boats there, decided to sail across the lake to Capernaum, looking for Jesus. There was apparently little difficulty in finding him once they reached Capernaum (it was a small town).*
 - e. Louis Barbieri, *The crowd had dwindled enough by now (Jesus had dismissed them; Mt 14:22; Mk 6:45) that they could all fit in the small boats that came from Tiberias on the southwest shore of the lake (vv. 23–24).*
 - f. Charles Swindoll, *The boats had come from Tiberias, a city on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, founded by Herod Antipas and named for Emperor Tiberius, the heir of Caesar Augustus' titles and power. Because it had been built on the site of Jewish burial grounds, religious Jews refused to live there, which left it open to Hellenized Jews and Herod's political allies.*

3. The crowd asked Jesus a question when they found Him (25), **25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"**
 - a. Related verse, John 1:38, *When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?"*
 - b. Comments
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *When they did find Him, they wanted to know how He got there ... Why did John bother to relate this seemingly unimportant information? Apparently he did so in order to document the fact that Jesus really had crossed the lake by walking on the water. Another reason could be that his description supports Jesus' statement that the people were looking for Him (v. 26). In view of what these people proceeded to demand of Jesus (vv. 30–31), it was important that John show that they were the very people who had witnessed the sign of the miraculous feeding.*
 - 2) Edwin Blum, *The people's question, When did You get here? introduces His long discourse in Capernaum (v. 59). Jesus did not explain how or when He crossed the lake, for His walking on the water was a private sign for the disciples only.*
 - 3) Kenneth Gangel, *These half-hearted seekers had no penetrating theological question to ask the one they called Rabbi. They only wanted to know when he had arrived. But the Lord cut through all the sham of their pretended interest. As he did with Nicodemus, he answered a question they did not ask.*
 - 4) Leon Morris, *Somewhat strangely they ask him when he came there. After their puzzlement about the ships we might have expected them to ask "How?" which we know to be the significant question.*
 - 5) Charles Swindoll, *The people were surprised to find Jesus so far from where He was last seen in so short a time, but their question suggests more than a desire to know when He had arrived or how. Based on Jesus' response, they wanted to know why He was there (and perhaps not where they thought He should be) and why He had deliberately eluded them.*
 - 6) Grant Osborne, *It does not take the crowd long to find Jesus. They are curious about what had happened the previous night and so ask in verse 25, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" This was a far cry from their earlier demand for him to become king (6:15), and he was generally known as a rabbi (1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 4:31), an official, respected teacher. Their question implies that they are unhappy he left them there overnight.*

B. Jesus redirected the crowd's question to spiritual truth (26-34)

1. The Son of Man gives food that lasts for eternity (26- 27), **Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."**

a. Related verses

- 1) John 6:24, *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.*
- 2) Isaiah 55:2, *Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.*
- 3) John 6:35, *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.*
- 4) Daniel 7:13, *I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.*
- 5) John 5:36, *But I have a testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me.*

b. Comments

- 1) *... you are seeking me ... because you ate your fill of the loaves.*
 - a) Louis Barbieri, *Their question when did You get here? expressed their confusion. Jesus did not explain when He arrived but addressed their motive in seeking Him (v. 26).*
 - b) Thomas Constable, *He understood that their interest in Him was mainly because of His ability to provide for them physically. They were not interested in Him or the significance of His signs, which identified Him as the God-man, but because Jesus could fill their stomachs ... Jesus proceeded to explain what the miracle that they had witnessed signified.*
 - c) A. T. Robertson, *They were more concerned with hungry stomachs than with hungry souls.*
 - d) Edwin Blum, *He rebuked them for their materialistic motivation and their lack of spiritual perception. They saw miraculous signs, but to them it was only an easy meal. They failed to see what it signified.*
 - e) Kenneth Gangel, *They were not wrong to be hungry, and perhaps not even wrong to look for Jesus. But they wanted Jesus for their own purposes, to serve their own ends.*
 - f) Leon Morris, *Faith that rests on the miracles is not the highest kind of faith, but it is better than no faith at all. But these people were crass materialists. They had not reflected on the spiritual significance of the sign they had seen. "Instead of seeing in the bread the sign, they had seen in the sign only the bread." They came because their hunger had been satisfied. They were moved not by full hearts, but by full bellies.*
 - g) Grant Osborne, *They certainly saw the miracle and even tried to make him the messianic prophet and royal Messiah (6: 14–15), but they missed that the true significance of the "sign" (see comments on 2: 11) pointed to Jesus as the Bread of Life, not just as a miracle worker. A true sign demands an encounter with Jesus, and that will be the theme of 6:35–50.*
 - h) John Mitchell, *Do you go to church for some material need? social need? religious need? Or do you go to meet Him?*
- 2) *... do not work for food that perishes ...*
 - a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus had previously spoken to the Samaritan woman about living water (4: 10, 14), and now He spoke to these Galileans about food that lasts. He was, as previously, contrasting physical and spiritual nourishment ... The people apparently understood His reference to bread that lasts for eternal life as meaning physical bread that does not become stale and moldy.*
 - b) Edwin Blum, *When Jesus said, Do not work for food that spoils, He was not condoning laziness. Rather He was saying that people should expend their efforts for what will last forever. "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Physical food is short-lived but spiritual food leads to eternal life. The Son of Man (who has access to heaven [John 3: 13]) will give people this spiritual food, which is ultimately Christ Himself (6:53).*
 - c) Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus pointed out that there are two kinds of food: food for the body, which is necessary but not the most important; and food for the inner man, the spirit, which is essential. What the people needed was not food but life, and life is a gift. Food only sustains life, but Jesus gives eternal life ... The people picked up the word labor and misinterpreted it to mean they had to work for salvation. They completely missed the word give. Steeped in legalistic religion, they thought they had to "do something" to merit eternal life. Jesus made it clear that only one "work" was necessary—to believe on the Saviour.*

- d) Leon Morris, *The food they were seeking would perish. There is another kind of food, that which remains forever and issues in eternal life. This Gospel habitually associates life with Christ. If people seek this food, then the Son of Man (see Additional Note C, pp. 150–52) will give them eternal life. Life is not the reward for work. Life is always his gift.*
- e) Charles Swindoll, *Physical food represents any and all things that satisfy legitimate bodily desires: nourishment, clothing, shelter, medicine, sex, exercise, rest. Spiritual food, however, represents the need of the human soul to be sustained by its Maker.*
- f) Grant Osborne, *The crowd’s consuming (pun intended) interest in perishable food (v. 27) is similar to Jesus’ challenge to the Samaritan woman that her water would only make her thirst again, while the “living water” would become a “spring of water welling up to eternal life” (4:13–14). In the same way, he now tells the crowd to stop seeking food that spoils and go after “food that endures to eternal life”*
...

3) *For on Him God the Father has set his seal*

- a) Thomas Constable, *As the Son of Man, Jesus claimed to have authority to give this food because God the Father had set His seal of approval on Jesus. The Father had authorized the Son to act for Him (cf. 5:32–47). This was one of the functions of a seal in Jesus’ culture, and God setting His seal on something or someone was a common expression for that thing being true.*
- b) Edwin Blum, *God the Father Himself authenticated Jesus’ claim that He is true heavenly “food.”*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, *The rabbis taught that, when Messiah came, He would duplicate the miracle of the manna (see Ex. 16). If Jesus was truly sent by God (see John 6:29, 38, 57), then let Him prove it by causing manna to fall from heaven [Jesus did that the day before in the feeding of the 5,000].*
- d) Leon Morris, *The affixing of a seal was common in antiquity as a mark of ownership ... the seal showed that the seal’s owner approved. This is the meaning here. The Father has set the seal of his approval on the Son.*
- e) Louis Barbieri, *God’s seal on Christ is the Spirit (Jn 1:32–33; 3:34; Ac 10:38) [God’s seal on every Christian is the Spirit, as well].*
- f) Grant Osborne, *The only way we can achieve eternal life is through the Son of Man, who united heaven and earth (John 1:51) and was appointed by God as Savior (3:17; 4:42) and Judge (5:27; 8:15–16) .. The reason Christ can do this is that God has placed “his seal of approval” on him, which might refer to his incarnation or baptism but is probably meant generally of his ministry as a whole.*

2. Jesus answered the crowd’s question concerning the work of God (28-29), ***Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” 29 Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”***

a. Related verses

- 1) 1 John 3:23, *23 And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.*
- 2) John 3:17, *Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

b. Comments

- 1) *What must we do, to be doing the works of God?*
 - a) Thomas Constable, *The people were still thinking on the physical level. They thought Jesus was talking about some physical work that would yield eternal life. Not only that, they assumed that they could do it, and that by doing it they could earn eternal life ... There is something within the fallen nature of human beings that makes working for eternal life more attractive than receiving it as a gift. That thing is pride.*
 - b) Edwin Blum, *The people recognized that Jesus was saying God had a requirement for them. They would do God’s requirement if He would inform them what it was. They believed that they could please God and thus obtain eternal life by doing good works (cf. Rom. 10:2–4).*
 - c) Merrill Tenney, *To Jewish questioners, attaining eternal life consisted in finding the right formula for performing works to please God.*
 - d) Leon Morris, ... *“What must we do?” shows that the questioners had not grasped Jesus’ point that life was his gift. They looked for salvation as the result of their own effort (as people in their natural wisdom always do).*

- 2) ... *believe in him whom he has sent.*
 - a) Thomas Constable, *The only work that God requires of people for salvation is faith in His Son* (cf. 3:11–17). *The work that Jesus specified was not something physical at all. It was what God requires, namely, trust in Jesus* (cf. Rom. 3:28). *However, it is a work that He also enables ... In this discourse, Jesus equated believing* (vv. 29, 47) *with coming to Him* (v. 35), *and eating this Bread* (vv. 50, 51).
 - b) Edwin Blum, *Jesus' response to their question was a flat contradiction of their thinking. They could not please God by doing good works. There is only one work of God, that is, one thing God requires. They need to put their trust in the One the Father has sent ... God demands that people recognize their inability to save themselves and receive His gift* (Rom. 6:23).
 - c) Kenneth Gangel, *As good Jews they wanted some way to work in order to gain God's favor, but the Lord pointed them to faith and grace—to believe in the one he has sent.*
 - d) Leon Morris, *Jesus replaces their "works of God" with the singular "work of God." But one thing is needful. And this one thing, he makes plain, is faith ... God does not require that we pile up merits to obtain a heavenly credit. He requires that we trust him.*
 - e) Louis Barbieri, *Jesus redefined the "works of God" (pl.) as the work of God (sg.): to believe in the Son* (v. 29). *By this wordplay on "work," Christ declared that eternal life is really not gained by works* (Eph 2:8–9; Rm 4:4; Ti 3:5).
 - f) William Barclay, *The essence of the Christian life is a new relationship to God, a relationship offered by him and made possible by the revelation which Jesus gave us of him, a relationship which issues in that service, purity and trust which are the reflection of God. This is the work which God wishes us and enables us to perform.*
 - g) F. F. Bruce, *Jesus assures them that God's basic requirement for those who would receive the food which imparts eternal life is faith—faith in the "messenger of the covenant" whom God had sent in accordance with his ancient promise* (cf. Malachi 3:1).
 - h) Grant Osborne, *Paul in Romans and Galatians centers on this truth: we can be right with God only by faith and not by works* (Rom 3:21–4:17; Gal 3:1–4:7).
 - i) Charles Swindoll, *The only "work" required is belief in the Son, which involves no work at all.*

3. **The crowd wanted to know what Jesus would do so they might believe in Him (30-31), *So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'*"**
 - a. **Related verses**
 - 1) Matthew 12:38, *Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you."*
 - 2) John 6:58, *This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.*
 - 3) Psalm 78:24, *he rained down on them manna to eat, and gave them the grain of heaven.*

 - b. **Comments**
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *Jesus had just plainly told the people what work they needed to do in order to obtain eternal life* (v. 29). *Now they asked Him what work He would do to prove that He was God's authorized representative, as He claimed to be* (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22). *They suggested that producing bread from heaven like Moses did might convince them. Their unwillingness to believe the sign that Jesus had given them the previous day shows the hardness of their hearts. No matter what Jesus did, the unbelievers always demanded more.*
 - 2) Edwin Blum, *They thought God's order is see and believe. But the divine order is believe and see* (cf. John 11:40). *They did not have faith or spiritual perception, but they understood that Jesus was proclaiming something new.*
 - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *It was God, not Moses, who gave the manna; so they must take their eyes off Moses and focus them on God. Also, God gave the manna in the past, but the Father is now giving the true bread in the person of Jesus Christ. The past event is finished, but the present spiritual experience goes on!*
 - 4) Kenneth Gangel, *Were not these the same people who ate the bread just a few hours earlier? Sure. But that was then and this is now. In the great tradition of people steeped in religion but not faith, they quoted a text to prove they were right.*
 - 5) Leon Morris, *They dared to impose on God the sign they must have before they would believe. "You" is emphatic. They do not think for one moment that Jesus can produce the sign they demand. "See it and believe" puts the priority on sight. They do not understand the nature of faith ... Jesus had done something wonderful in supplying bread. But could he go on from there and produce manna? They support their plea with a quotation, apparently from Psalm 78:24 ...*

- 6) Louis Barbieri, *Later rabbis also saw a link between Moses feeding Israel manna in the wilderness with the future Messiah, as seen in the Midrash (the ancient rabbinic exposition of the Bible). "As the first redeemer (Moses) was, so shall the latter Redeemer (Messiah) be... As the former redeemer caused manna to descend ... so will the latter Redeemer cause manna to descend" ...*
 - 7) William Barclay, *Jesus' answer was twofold. First, he reminded them that it was not Moses who had given them the manna; it was God. Second, he told them that the manna was not really the bread of God; it was only the symbol of the bread of God. The bread of God was he who came down from heaven and gave men and women not simply satisfaction from physical hunger, but life. Jesus was claiming that the only real satisfaction was in him.*
4. Jesus' responded by declaring that God provides bread from heaven (32-33), **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 gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."**
- a. ... *it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven*
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *The people were viewing Moses as the source of their blessing in the past. They believed that the manna was given through his merits and ended with his death. There is also some evidence that they believed that Moses was interceding for them in the present as well. Jesus pointed them beyond Moses to the true source of the manna, namely, God. He wanted them to look to God for their needs, not to a human channel of God's blessing.*
 - 2) Edwin Blum, *In a solemn revelation (I tell you the truth; cf. vv. 26, 47, 53) Jesus corrected their ideas in three ways. (1) The Father, not Moses, gave the manna. (2) The Father, was still giving "manna" then, not merely in the past. (3) The true Bread from heaven is Jesus, not the manna. Thus the supposed superiorities of Moses and his sign vanish. Manna was food for the body, and it was useful. But Jesus is God's full provision for people in their whole existence.*
 - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *In His reply, our Lord sought to deepen the people's understanding of the truth. It was God, not Moses, who gave the manna; so they must take their eyes off Moses and focus them on God.*
 - 4) Kenneth Gangel, *Their third question came back to miraculous signs, and the Lord responded in two ways. First, Moses did not give the Israelites manna; it came from God. Second, physical bread was not the issue. Spiritual bread was—the bread of life about whom Jesus would soon speak in detail.*
 - 5) Leon Morris, *"My Father" indicates a consciousness that Jesus stood in a relation to the Giver that his hearers did not. He assures them not that God once gave the gift of the manna, but that he continually gives. This would present us with a difficulty if it were the manna that he continually gives, but it is something more; God keeps giving the true bread.*
 - 6) Louis Barbieri, *"True" means spiritual and eternal as opposed to temporal and physical.*
 - b. ... *the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven ...*
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *God, not Moses, had given manna in the past, but He was giving a different type of bread now. Jesus described it as coming down out of heaven and providing life for the entire world—not just Israel. With this response, Jesus effectively took Moses and his sign, which the people had put in a superior place over Himself, and placed them in an inferior place under Himself.*
 - 2) Edwin Blum, *The Son has life in Himself (1:4; 5:26) and He has come to give real and lasting life to people. Sin cuts them off from God, who is Life, and they die spiritually and physically. Christ has come down from heaven to give life to the world. Jesus is thus the genuine Bread of God.*
 - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus clearly identified what the bread is: He is the true Living Bread that came down from heaven. But He came, not only for Israel but for the whole world. And He came, not just to sustain life, but to give life! Seven times in this sermon, our Lord referred to His "coming down from heaven" (John 6:33, 38, 41–42, 50–51, 58), a statement that declared Him to be God. The Old Testament manna was but a type of the "true bread," the Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - 4) Leon Morris, *His discourse is a vigorous protest against unworthy views of messiahship and a strong affirmation of the essentially spiritual character of the life he came to bring.*
 - 5) Louis Barbieri, *The feeding miracle pointed to Jesus, the true bread of God (v. 33). This Bread is far superior because it gives eternal life to the world, not just temporal life to the Jews.*
 - 6) Charles Swindoll, *Jesus again associated the provision of manna with God's grace, the greater portion of which was the provision of His Word (Deut. 8:2–3). This also alludes to the Father's provision of His Word in human flesh, the Son of God Himself.*

5. The crowd asked for the bread from heaven (34), *They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”*
 - a. Thomas Constable, *Jesus had commended the new bread sufficiently now for the people to request it of Him, like He had commended the living water to the Samaritan woman. He had set the people up for the revelation that He was that bread.*
 - b. Kenneth Gangel, *The spiritual bread that the Lord can provide is necessary for life, suited for everyone, must be eaten daily, and produces spiritual growth in those who believe it. How appropriate and essential for us to pray daily, give us this bread.*
 - c. Louis Barbieri, *The woman from Sychar mistakenly asked for a continual supply of physical water (4:15). Similarly, these listeners requested never-ending physical bread (always give us this bread).*
 - d. Warren Wiersbe, *The crowd wanted the bread so they would not have to toil to maintain life. People today still want Jesus Christ only for the benefits He is able to give.*

C. Jesus declared of Himself and His purposes (35-40)

1. Jesus is the bread of life (35), *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.*
 - a. Related verses
 - 1) John 6:41, *So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.”*
 - 2) John 6:48, *I am the bread of life.*
 - 3) John 6:51, *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”*
 - b. Comments
 - 1) B. F. Westcott, *The Jews asked for something from Christ: He offers them Himself.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *Jesus now identified Himself as the bread about which He had been speaking (cf. v. 47; Isa. 55:1–2). The Jews regarded the real bread from heaven as the Law. Jesus did not say He had the bread of life, but that He was that bread ... It is by feeding on Him that we obtain life initially and continue to flourish spiritually.*
 - 3) C. K. Barrett, *If a man truly has life-giving contact with Jesus he never ceases to be dependent on him ...*
 - 4) F. F. Bruce, *He has come to give himself that men and women may live by him. To partake of the bread of life they must come to him, they must believe in him. This total self-commitment to Christ, this appropriating him by faith, is the secret of eternal life and perpetual soul refreshment.*
 - 5) Edwin Blum, *This corrected two more errors in their thinking: (1) The food of which He spoke refers to a Person, not a commodity. (2) And once someone is in right relationship to Jesus, he finds a satisfaction which is everlasting, not temporal. This “I am” statement is the first in a series of momentous “I am” revelations (cf. 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5). “Bread of Life” means bread which provides life. Jesus is man’s necessary “food.” In Western culture, bread is often optional, but it was an essential staple then.*
 - 6) Warren Wiersbe, *Seven times in this sermon, our Lord referred to His “coming down from heaven” (John 6:33, 38, 41–42, 50–51, 58), a statement that declared Him to be God. The Old Testament manna was but a type of the “true bread,” the Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - 7) William Barclay, *“The bread of life” is another way of linking life in the closest fashion with Christ. He himself is the food, the sustenance that nourishes spiritual life. It is only from this bread that we really obtain life ... Since Jesus is the bread of life people are invited to come to him, and to believe on him.*
 - 8) Louis Barbieri, *“Will not hunger” and “will never thirst” are emphatic in Greek and demonstrate that eternal life is a permanent possession.*
 - 9) William Barclay, *... what did Jesus mean when he said: ‘I am the bread of life’? It is not enough to regard this as simply a beautiful and poetical phrase. Let us analyse it step by step. (1) Bread sustains life. It is that without which life cannot go on. (2) But what is life? Clearly by life is meant something far more than mere physical existence. What is this new spiritual meaning of life? (3) Real life is the new relationship with God, that relationship of trust and obedience and love of which we have already thought. (4) That relationship is made possible only by Jesus Christ. Apart from him, no one can enter into it. (5) That is to say, without Jesus there may be existence, but not life. (6) Therefore, if Jesus is the essential of life, he may be described as the bread of life. The hunger of the human situation is ended when we know Christ and through him know God. The restless soul is at rest; the hungry heart is satisfied.*

2. Jesus judges unbelief (36), ***But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.***
 - a. Thomas Constable, *Jesus charged these Galileans with unbelief, like He had formerly charged the Judean residents of Jerusalem with it (5:36–38). They had seen Him physically, and on the physical level they had concluded that He might be the predicted Prophet. However, they had not seen who He really was spiritually. They did not believe that He was the divine Messiah. Physical sight and spiritual insight are two different things.*
 - b. Edwin Blum, *Jesus then rebuked the crowd for their lack of faith. They had the great privilege of seeing Him and yet they did not believe. Seeing does not necessarily lead to believing (cf. v. 30).*
 - c. Alva J. McClain, *At heart, the common people were no more ready for the Kingdom of Christ than their rulers. The main difference was that in the case of the rulers there were certain vested rights at stake, while the people in general thought they had nothing much to lose in any event.*
 - d. Leon Morris, *His hearers had seen him, and were still seeing him, but they were far from appreciating the significance of what they saw. They did not believe.*
 - e. George Murray-Beasley, *They had witnessed the miracle, but they did not believe, for they saw nothing beyond loaves and power. To see and not believe is tantamount to a refusal of faith.*

3. Jesus keeps everyone given to Him by the Father (37), ***All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.***
 - a. Related verses
 - 1) John 10:28, *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.*
 - 2) John 17:12, *While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.*
 - b. Comments
 - 1) *All that the Father gives me will come to me*
 - a) Thomas Constable, *The ability to believe on Jesus requires divine enablement. It is only those whom the Father enables to believe that come to Jesus in faith. These are all the people whom the Father gives to the Son as gifts. Jesus viewed the ultimate cause of faith as God's electing grace, not man's choice.*
 - b) Edwin Blum, *Jesus then gave the ultimate explanation of their lack of faith: the Father works sovereignly in people's lives. There is an election of God which is the Father's gift to the Son. The Son has no concern that His work will be ineffective, for the Father will enable people to come to Jesus.*
 - c) Warren Wiersbe, *These are among the most profound words He ever spoke, and we cannot hope to plumb their depths completely. He explained that salvation involves both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. The Father gives men and women to the Son (John 6:37, 39; 17:2, 6, 9, 11–12, 24), but these men and women must come to Him, that is, believe on Him ... When a church member asked Charles Spurgeon how he reconciled these two, he replied, "I never try to reconcile friends." It is the Father's will that sinners be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9) and that those who trust Christ be secure in their salvation. Believers receive eternal life and Jesus can never lose them.*
 - d) Kenneth Gangel, *Verse 37 is one of the key verses in Scripture on the issue of election. It demonstrates both election and free-will in the same verse. The Father literally gives certain believers to the Son. On the other hand, the gospel always proclaims, "Whosoever will may come." Does God choose us or do we choose him? The only possible answer is, "Yes." These two strands run side by side like two lanes of a super highway throughout the Scriptures.*
 - e) Merrill Tenney, *How can one be sure that the Father has really given him to Christ? Will he come only to be rebuffed? Jesus made plain that human salvation is no surprise to God. He summons men to himself by his Word and by his Spirit. They can come only at his invitation. The invitation, however, is not restricted to any particular time or place, nor is it exclusively for any one nation, race, or culture. No man needs to fear that he will come in vain, for Jesus said emphatically that he would not refuse anyone. Man does not make his opportunity for salvation; he accepts its free offer. A superficial attachment to God is not enough, for if the desire for salvation is not inspired by God, true salvation will not result ...*
 - f) Leon Morris, *People do not come to Christ because it seems a good idea to them. It never does seem a good idea to sinful people. Apart from a divine work in their souls (cf. 16:8) people remain more or less contentedly in their sins. Before they can come to Christ it is necessary that the Father give them to him.*
 - g) Grant Osborne, *There is a two-way street here: Jesus brings people to God, but they already belong to God and are God's gift to his Son. God has chosen them from before the foundation of the world, and they will come to Jesus.*

- 2) *and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.*
 - a) Leon Morris, *The second part of the verse brings us Jesus' warm welcome to all. He rejects none*
 - b) Thomas Constable, *Jesus promised not to turn away ("cast out") anyone who comes to Him in faith ... Jesus had confidence that the Father would draw the elect to Him, and the believer may have confidence, too, in the Son receiving and retaining him or her. How can a person know if he or she is one of the elect? Let him or her come to Jesus in faith.*
 - c) Edwin Blum, *Jesus has confidence. But people may have confidence also ... One who comes to Jesus for salvation will by no means be driven away (cf. 6:39).*
 - d) Warren Wiersbe, *He assured them that nobody who came to Him would ever be lost but would be raised at the last day. Even death cannot rob us of salvation! (In regard to the "last day," see John 6:40, 44, 54. Jesus was referring to His return and the final events that climax God's program for mankind.)*
 - e) F. F. Bruce, *In the work of salvation the Father and the Son are completely at one, the Father giving the believing community to the Son, the Son receiving and guarding those who come to him, because he is utterly devoted to the Father's will.*

4. Jesus proclaims His purposes for coming from heaven (38-40)

- a. To do God's will (38), ***For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.***

1) Related verses

- a) John 3:13, *No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.*
- b) John 4:34, *Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.*
- c) John 5:30, *I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.*

2) Comments

- a) Edwin Blum, *Jesus then repeated His claim about His heavenly origin. The reason He came down from heaven was to do the will of the Father who sent Him.*
- b) Thomas Constable, *The purpose of the Incarnation was that the Son would fulfill the Father's will.*
- c) Leon Morris, *In this whole work of salvation Jesus is in the most perfect harmony with the Father. He came down from heaven specifically to do the will of the Father (see on 4:34). The thought of his coming down from heaven is repeated seven times in this chapter (vv. 33, 38, 41, 42, 50, 51, and 58).*
- d) Grant Osborne, *His origin is heavenly, and he has descended to earth for the sole purpose of obeying his Father's will rather than doing it his way (see also 5:30).*

- b. To give eternal live to all who believe in Him (39-40), ***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. 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.***

1) Related verses

- a) John 10:28-29, *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.*
- b) John 17:12, *While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.*
- c) John 6:44, *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.*
- d) John 6:54, *Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*

2) Comments

- a) Edwin Blum, *The Father's will is that those whom He gives to the Son will not suffer a single loss and all will be raised to life in the resurrection (cf. vv. 40, 44, 54). This passage is strong in affirming the eternal security of the believer ... One who looks and believes on Jesus for salvation has his destiny secure. The divine decree has insured it (cf. Rom. 8:28-30). He has eternal life (John 6:47, 50-51, 54, 58) and will be raised at the last day (cf. vv. 39, 44, 54).*
- b) George Beasley-Murray, *Herein lies the reason for his "descent," i.e. for his Incarnation; he is charged to lose none of those given him by the Father, but to give them eternal life now and to raise them in the last day ... No clearer verses can be found that affirm the ultimate safekeeping of the believer. Our eternal security depends on Jesus fulfilling the will of the Father, which He will never fail to do.*

- c) Thomas Constable, *The Father's will was that the Son should lose not a single individual ("nothing") of all whom the Father gave Him. Preserving them includes raising them from the dead to eternal life ... If one believer failed to reach heaven, it would be a disgrace for the Son, since it would indicate His inability or unwillingness to fulfill the Father's will. Judas Iscariot may appear at first to be an exception, but God did not choose him for salvation (vv. 70–71; 17:12), even though Jesus chose him as one of the Twelve.*
- d) Leon Morris, *This thought is of the greatest comfort to believers. Their assurance is based not on their feeble hold on Christ, but on his sure grip on them (cf. 10:28f.).*
- e) Gerald Borchert, ... *The great Christian doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is not based merely on human effort but on the confidence that God is active both in the saving as well as in the preserving of those who commit themselves to serve God in Christ" ...*
- f) Leon Morris, *It is unthinkable that death should blot out forever the life that Christ gives. Because he is what he is, he will assuredly raise up those to whom he gives life.*
- g) William Hendriksen, *In these and many other passages Scripture teaches a counsel that cannot be changed, a calling that cannot be revoked, an inheritance that cannot be defiled, a foundation that cannot be shaken; a seal that cannot be broken, and a life that cannot perish ... In this verse the matter which in the preceding verse was viewed from the point of view of divine predestination is described from the aspect of human responsibility ...*
- h) William Barclay, *The offer of Christ is life in time and life in eternity. That is the greatness and glory of which we cheat ourselves when we refuse his invitation.*
- i) Charles Swindoll, *God in human flesh, came to earth to gather His own, who can be identified by their belief in Him.*
- j) F. F. Bruce, *The seeing of the Son spoken of in verse 40 is much more than the superficial seeing of him, unaccompanied by faith, which has been mentioned in verse 36. It is that divinely imparted vision which discerns the glory of God in the Word become flesh.*
- k) Grant Osborne, *The final balance between security and responsibility is a mystery and will never be truly solved until eternity arrives. In the meantime, John's Gospel is a perfect book for working on the issue, since both sides are clearly present and held in proper tension.*

D. The Jews grumbled in response to Jesus' declaration (41-51)

1. Introductory comments

- a. Thomas Constable, *Jesus' claim to be the bread of life that had come down from heaven was something His hearers found hard to accept. Consequently Jesus further clarified what He meant.*
- b. Leon Morris, *Jesus' words were not what the crowd expected or wanted. They rebel against the claims implied in what he said, feeling that they know very well who he is. In the face of this Jesus emphatically repeats what he has said, and takes the thought a stage further by speaking of the bread that he will give as his flesh.*
- c. William Barclay, *This passage shows the reasons why the Jews rejected Jesus and, in rejecting him, rejected eternal life.*

2. Text

- a. The Jews grumbled that Jesus said He came from heaven because they thought He was the son of Joseph (41-42), ***So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 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'?"***

1) Related verses

- a) John 6:33, *For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*
- b) John 6:35, *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.*
- c) John 6:38, *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.*
- d) Matthew 13:55, *Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?*
- e) John 7:27, *Yet we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.*

2) Comments

- a) F. F. Bruce, *On this occasion "the Jews" must be the synagogue congregation in Capernaum, or rather the leaders of the congregation. The phrase is used more generally here than in 5:18, where it was the teaching establishment in Jerusalem that was so incensed by the way in which he spoke of God as his Father. He was a visitor in Jerusalem, but he was a resident in Galilee; this was what offended his hearers.*

- b) Kenneth Gangel, *The word for grumble describes a sound which goes through a crowd when they are angry at what a speaker has said and want to show their opposition. Perhaps the modern counterpart would be hissing and booing.*
 - c) Thomas Constable, *Some of Jesus' hearers had known Him all His life. Even more of them had come to know Him and His family since Jesus had moved to Capernaum, where Jesus gave this discourse (v. 59). His claim to have come down out of heaven seemed to them to contradict what they knew about His human origins. Again they were thinking only in physical terms. If they had known the truth about His virgin birth and incarnation, they would have seen that it was consistent with His coming down from heaven.*
 - d) Edwin Blum, *Like their ancestors in the wilderness, these Jews murmured (Ex. 15:24; 16:2, 7, 12; 17:3; Num. 11:1; 14:2, 27). Their thinking was seemingly logical: one whose parents are known could not be from heaven (cf. Mark 6:3; Luke 4:22). They were ignorant of His true origin and full nature.*
 - e) Louis Barbieri, *"Came down" is the language of incarnation (Jn 1:14; Gl 4:4; Php 2:7-8). Their familiarity with Jesus' human lineage like His father and mother (cf. Mk 6:3; Lk 4:22) prevented them from seeing His true nature as God come in human flesh (cf. 1:14).*
 - f) Warren Wiersbe, *Our Lord's statement "For I came down from heaven" (John 6:38), disturbed the religious leaders, for they knew it was a claim of deity. They thought they knew Jesus, who He was and where He came from (see Matt. 13:53-58; John 7:40-43). Jesus, of course, was the legal son of Joseph but not his natural son, for He was born of a virgin (Luke 1:34-38).*
 - g) William Hendriksen, *One who is born of a virgin—and who, accordingly, never had a human father (in the ordinary sense of the term), and is not a human person (though he has a human nature)—must have come down out of heaven!*
- b. Grumbling can turn to faith in Jesus which brings eternal life (43-47)
- 1) Jesus told them that the Father draws people to the Son (43-44), **Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.**
- a) Related verses
 - 1] John 6:39, *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.*
 - 2] John 6:65, *And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father."*
 - 3] John 12:32, *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."*
 - b) Comments
 - 1] Thomas Constable, *He rebuked their grumbling dissatisfaction by reminding them of what God had given them: the offer of salvation. However, He explained that those of them whom the Father had chosen for salvation would believe in Him, regardless of their inability to reconcile His earthly and heavenly origins ... He does not just draw everyone in the general sense of extending the gospel invitation to them. He selects some from the mass of humanity and brings them to Himself for salvation ... This truth does not contradict 12:32, where Jesus said that He would draw (Gr. helkyo) all men to Himself. There He was speaking of all peoples (ethnic groups) without distinction, not just Jews but also Gentiles. He did not mean all people without exception.*
 - 2] Edwin Blum, *No one can come to Jesus or believe on Him without divine help. People are so ensnared in the quicksand of sin and unbelief that unless God draws them (cf. v. 65), they are hopeless ... Those who will be saved will also be resurrected (cf. 6:39-40).*
 - 3] Leon Morris, *The thought of the divine initiative in salvation is one of the great doctrines of this Gospel, and indeed of the Christian faith. People like to feel independent. They think that they come or that they can come to Jesus entirely of their own volition. Jesus assures us that this is an utter impossibility. No one, no one at all, can come unless the Father draws him.*
 - 4] William Hendriksen, *The drawing of which these passages speak indicates a very powerful—we may even say, an irresistible—activity. To be sure, man resists, but his resistance is ineffective. It is in that sense that we speak of God's grace as being irresistible ... both at the beginning and throughout the entire process of being saved, the power is ever from above; it is very real, strong, and effective; and it is wielded by God himself!*
 - 5] F. F. Bruce, *The responsibility of men and women in the matter of coming to Christ is not overlooked (cf. John 5:40), but none at all would come unless divinely persuaded and enabled to do so ... Then for the third (but not yet the last) time in this discourse the resurrection of the believer is emphasized as the final and crowning stage of the saving work which Christ undertakes to accomplish in every one who comes to him.*

2) Those drawn by the Father come to Jesus who is from God (45-46), ***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— 46 not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.***

a) Related verses

- 1] Isaiah 54:13, *All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the prosperity of your children.*
- 2] 1 Corinthians 2:13, *And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.*
- 3] 1 Thessalonians 4:9, *Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,*
- 4] 1 John 1:20, *But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.*
- 5] John 6:37, *All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.*
- 6] John 1:18, *No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.*
- 7] John 7:29, *I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me."*
- 8] John 8:38, *I declare what I have seen in the Father's presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father."*

b) Comments

- 1] Edwin Blum, *In support of this doctrine of salvation by God's grace, Jesus cited the Old Testament. The quotation, They will all be taught by God, is from the Prophets, probably Isaiah 54:13, though Jeremiah 31:34 has the same thought. This "teaching" of God refers to His inner work that disposes people to accept the truth about Jesus and respond to Him ... Yet this secret teaching of God is not a mystical connection of people with God directly. Knowing God comes only through Jesus, the Logos of God (cf. 1:18). As one is confronted by Him and hears His words and sees His deeds, the Father works within him.*
- 2] Thomas Constable, *Jesus clarified what God's drawing involves. He cited recognized authority for His statement that all whom the Father had chosen would come to Him. Old Testament prophets had revealed that God would teach His people (Isa. 54:13; cf. Jer. 31:34). The person whom God enlightened about Jesus' identity would believe in ("comes to") Him. That enlightenment comes primarily through the Scriptures, which is God's principle tool ... Jesus further clarified how God draws people to Himself by explaining how He does not do it. It is not by giving a mystical revelation of Himself in His unveiled splendor to people. Jesus is the only One who has seen God fully (cf. 1:18). He is the only mediator of that knowledge of God, without which no one can know God. God teaches people about Himself through Jesus. Listening to Jesus then becomes essential for learning about God.*
- 3] Louis Barbieri, *Everyone who has heard and has actually learned from the Father comes to or believes in Jesus ... [Jesus] is the only One who has learned from the Father by actually seeing Him.*
- 4] Gerald Borchert, *Salvation is never achieved apart from the drawing power of God, and it is never consummated apart from the willingness of humans to hear and learn from God.*
- 5] Leon Morris, *God will teach his people himself, that is he will teach them within their hearts. Only those who are taught in this fashion come to Jesus. But he makes it quite clear that all those who are taught in this way, who hear God, and learn what they hear, do come to him ... No human has the vision of God, no one apart from the Son. The reality of intimate intercourse is stressed by the addition, "he has seen the Father."*
- 6] William Hendriksen, *... Scripture never merely places side by side the divine and the human factors, predestination and responsibility, God's teaching and man's listening. On the contrary, it is always definitely indicated that it is God who takes the initiative and who is in control from start to finish. It is God who draws before man comes; it is he that teaches before man can listen and learn. Unless the Father draws, no one can come. That is the negative side. The positive is: everyone who listens to the Father and learns of him will come. Grace always conquers; it does what it sets out to do. In that sense it is irresistible.*

- 3) Those who believe in Jesus have eternal life (47), ***Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.***
- a) Related verse, John 3:36, *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath.*
- b) Comments
- 1] Leon Morris, *Jesus' main concern is with life and how people obtain it ... Now he solemnly repeats the way to life.*
 - 2] Kenneth Gangel, *The dramatic emphasis of verse 47 shows us how important God considers eternal life to be. For the third time in this passage we see the double amen (vv. 26, 32) and this is a solemn declaration: faith is the road to life.*
 - 3] Thomas Constable, *He repeated what He had told Nicodemus more concisely (3:15). In spite of the truth of the Father's drawing the elect to Himself, it is still imperative that they believe in Jesus. This is the human responsibility. However, belief in Jesus is not something that deserves a reward from God; it is not meritorious. It is simply the proper response to God's working. The result is eternal or everlasting life, which the new believer begins to enjoy the moment he or she believes in Jesus. All of this is part of what Jesus meant when He claimed to be the bread of life.*
 - 4] Edwin Blum, *He who believes ... has eternal life, which is a present and abiding possession.*
- c. Jesus's flesh is the bread of life from heaven which produces eternal life (48–51)
- 1) Jesus repeated His declaration concerning Himself (48), ***I am the bread of life.***
- a) Related verse, John 6:35, *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.*
- b) Comments
- 1] Leon Morris, *The statement stands here in isolation and simplicity, which makes it very impressive. Jesus lets his claim be seen in all its stark grandeur.*
 - 2] Kenneth Gangel, *Jesus offered the gospel of himself as the bread-eating metaphor persisted. Israelites who ate the manna in the desert died; it was only physical bread designed to sustain their lives on earth a bit longer. But the living bread is not like that; it provides eternal life.*
 - 3] William Hendriksen, *This bread does what no other bread, including even the manna from heaven, has ever done or can ever do: it imparts and sustains life, and it banishes death.*
 - 4] Louis Barbieri, *Christ's claim I am the bread of life (v. 48; cf. vv. 35, 51) uses one of the most basic sources of nourishment to express metaphorically His role in sustaining everlasting life.*
 - 5] William Barclay, *To refuse the offer of Jesus is to miss life in this world and in the world to come; whereas to accept his offer is to find real life in this world and glory in the world to come.*
 - 6] Grant Osborne, *Everything has led again to this point, which frames the entire discussion. The Jewish listeners here had no access to God because they had no faith. Salvation is not based on one's pedigree or good works or relation to the law of Moses. It stems entirely from one's relation to the "bread of life."*
- 2) The manna in the wilderness did not prevent death (49) ***Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.***
- a) Related verses
- 1] John 6:31, *Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'*
 - 2] John 6:58, *This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."*
- b) Comments
- 1] Thomas Constable, *Jesus had been speaking of everlasting life, and had claimed that He, as the bread of life, could provide it. Now He clarified the distinction between the physical bread that God provided in the wilderness, and the spiritual bread that He provided in Jesus.*
 - 2] Warren Wiersbe, *There was no cost to God in sending the manna each day, but He gave His Son at great cost... It is not difficult to see in the manna a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. The manna was a mysterious thing to the Jews; in fact, the word manna means 'What is it?' (see Ex. 16:15). Jesus was a mystery to those who saw Him. The manna came at night from heaven, and Jesus came to this earth when sinners were in moral and spiritual darkness.*
 - 3] Edwin Blum, *Manna met only a limited need. It provided temporary physical life. The Israelites came to loathe it, and ultimately they died.*

- 4] George Beasley-Murray, *The contrasting statements [48-49] serve to warn the hearers (and readers!) lest they share the fate of the forefathers and to appeal to them to “eat” and live.*
 - 5] Louis Barbieri, *By referring to your fathers, Jesus identified His opponents with the rebellious Israelites who ate the manna in the wilderness, and died.*
 - 6] Charles Swindoll, *The Israelites of the wilderness generation fed on manna, and yet they died. For all its wonderful properties as “the grain of heaven ... the bread of the angels” (Psalm 78:24 f.), it could not impart eternal life. Those who received it sustained bodily life by it, but even so they died at last.*
- 3) Jesus’ flesh gives eternal life (50-51), ***This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.***
- a) Related verses
 - 1] John 6:33, *For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*
 - 2] John 6:58, *This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.*
 - 3] John 3:13, *No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.*
 - 4] John 6:57, *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.*
 - 5] Luke 22:19, *Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”*
 - b) Comments
 - 1] A. B. Bruce, *In words dark and mysterious before the event, clear as day after it, the speaker declares the great truth, that His death is to be the life of men; that His broken body and shed blood are to be as meat and drink to a perishing world, conferring on all who shall partake of them the gift of immortality.*
 - 2] Edwin Blum, *To eat of this Bread is to live forever (cf. vv. 40, 47, 50, 54, 58). Jesus’ revelation about the Bread was then advanced in that not only is the Father giving the Bread (Jesus), but also Jesus is giving Himself: This Bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Salvation is by the sacrificial death of the Lamb of God (1:29). By His death, life came to the world.*
 - 3] Warren Wiersbe, *John 6:51 is a declaration that the Son of God will give Himself as a sacrifice “for the life of the world.” The substitutionary death of Jesus Christ is a key doctrine in John’s Gospel. Jesus would die for the world (John 3:16; 6:51), for His sheep (John 10:11, 15), for the nation (John 11:50–52), and for His friends (John 15:12).*
 - 4] Leon Morris, *“Flesh” is a striking word. In distinction from “my body” or “myself” it puts marked emphasis on the physical side of life. It is a strong word and one bound to attract attention. Its almost crude forcefulness rivets attention on the historical fact that Jesus did give himself for others.*
 - 5] William Hendriksen, *To believe in Christ means to accept (appropriate and assimilate) him as the Crucified One. Apart from that voluntary sacrifice, Christ ceases to be bread for us in any sense.*
 - 6] George Beasley-Murray, *The “bread” is defined as “flesh” rather than the “body,” almost certainly by reason of the Evangelist’s insistence that the Word became flesh (1:14).*
 - 7] Louis Barbieri, *The bread is now defined as His “flesh” or body that He will voluntarily offer (I will give) on the cross to bring salvation for everyone (for the life of the world).*
 - 8] F. F. Bruce, *The reader of John’s record can recognize this language as sacrificial, remembering, for example, the Baptist’s designation of Jesus as “the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). To give one’s flesh can scarcely mean anything other than death, and the wording here points to a death which is both voluntary (“I will give”) and vicarious (“for the life of the world”).*
 - 9] Grant Osborne, *The great paradox of Christianity is that life comes through death. Jesus died that we may live, and we die to the things of the world so that we may live for God (Rom 6:4–6) ... We appropriate this life by faith, eating this bread and trusting in his fleshly sacrifice that atones for our sin.*

E. The importance of Jesus' flesh and blood (52-59)

1. The Jews' questioned Jesus statement concerning His flesh (52), *The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"*
 - a. Related verses
 - 1) John 10:19, *Again the Jews were divided because of these words.*
 - 2) John 6:60, *When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"*
 - 3) John 3:9, *Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"*
 - b. Comments
 - 1) Edwin Blum, *As often happens, Jesus' teaching was not understood (cf. 2:20; 3:4; 4:15; 6:32–34). A violent argument started in the crowd regarding what He meant.*
 - 2) Kenneth Gangel, *The word translated argue sharply is emachonto, which describes a debate. The indication seems to be that some favored what Jesus was saying while others opposed him.*
 - 3) Thomas Constable, *As Jesus' hearers had objected to what He had said about His identity (vv. 41–42), so they now expressed confusion about what He meant by eating flesh. An intense argument (Gr. emachonto) erupted among them. They were struggling to understand His meaning. In what sense would Jesus give His flesh to eat as food?*
 - 4) F. F. Bruce, *It was an offensive way of speaking, they thought, even if he was speaking figuratively. And if he was speaking figuratively, they could not fathom what the figurative sense of his words might be. Some had one interpretation, some another, and a wordy strife broke out among them.*
 - 5) Warren Wiersbe, *Being orthodox Jews, the listeners knew the divine prohibition against eating human flesh or any kind of blood (Gen. 9:3–4; Lev. 17:10–16; 19:26). Here we have another example in John's Gospel of the people misunderstanding a spiritual truth by treating it literally (see John 2:19–21; 3:4; 4:11). All Jesus said was, "Just as you take food and drink within your body and it becomes a part of you, so you must receive Me within your innermost being so that I can give you life."*
 - 6) Lois Barbieri, *Jesus' analogy of eating His flesh was purposeful. Eating someone's flesh is abhorrent. Likewise, sinful humanity is repulsed by the need to believe in Christ ... With the imagery of "eating" and "drinking," Christ helped communicate the need to assimilate by faith Christ's death for one's self.*
 - 7) William Hendriksen, *Unbelief never understands the mysteries of salvation. Moreover, it is ever ready to scoff, and to say, "This or that is a sheer impossibility."*
2. Jesus responded to their question (53-59)
 - a. One must eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man to have eternal life (53-54), *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. 54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*
 - 1) Related verses
 - a) John 6:27, *Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal."*
 - b) John 20:31, *But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.*
 - c) John 6:40, *This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day."*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) Thomas Constable, *It should be obvious to any reader of this discourse by now that Jesus was speaking metaphorically and not literally. By referring to His flesh and blood, Jesus was figuratively referring to His whole person ... Jesus was illustrating belief—what it means to appropriate Him by faith (v. 40).*
 - b) Edwin Blum, *Jesus' hearers must have been shocked and puzzled by His enigmatic words. But the puzzle is unlocked by understanding that Jesus was speaking of His making atonement by His death and giving life to those who personally appropriate Him (cf. John 6:63). Faith in Christ's death brings eternal life (cf. vv. 40, 47, 50–51) and (later) bodily resurrection (cf. vv. 39–40, 44).*
 - c) Leon Morris, *He adds to what he has said before. He has spoken about eating bread that is himself, and as giving his flesh. Now he speaks explicitly of eating his flesh, and he adds the drinking of his blood, an idea that would be especially abhorrent to Jews because they were forbidden to partake of blood (Gen. 9:4, etc.) ... Eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood thus appears to be a very graphic way of saying that people must take Christ into their innermost being ... The words, then, are a cryptic allusion to the atoning death that Jesus would die, together with a challenge to enter the closest and most intimate relation with him.*

- d) William Hendriksen, ... *when Jesus speaks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood he cannot have reference to any physical eating or drinking. He must mean: "He who accepts, appropriates, and assimilates my vicarious sacrifice as the only ground of his salvation, remains in me and I in him." As food and drink are offered and accepted, so also is Christ's sacrifice offered to believers and accepted by them.*
- e) Charles Swindoll, *Jesus didn't try to clarify their misconceptions. Their problem was not intellectual. Instead, He intensified their confusion. There is, however, no danger of losing genuine believers. Despite His cryptic language and difficult teaching, He reassured authentic followers for a third time in His speech: "I will raise him up on the last day" (6:39-40, 44, 54).*
- f) Grant Osborne, *Blood symbolized life in the sacrificial system and signified violent death in the ancient world, so Jesus was going way beyond normal bounds to make his point that it is to be a complete consumption and a total encounter ... He adds to this in verse 54, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day," returning to the emphases of 6:39-40, 44. Here he shows more deeply that the meaning of "life" from verse 53 is both everlasting and involves the promised resurrection of the saints.*
- g) Concerning communion
- 1] Thomas Constable, *Many interpreters of these verses have seen allusions to the Lord's Supper in what Jesus said ... However, Jesus had not yet said anything about the Christian communion service. Besides, He was clearly speaking of belief metaphorically, not the communion elements ... Most importantly, the New Testament presents the Lord's Supper as a commemoration of Jesus' death, not a means for obtaining eternal life. Nevertheless these verses help us appreciate the symbolism of the Eucharist.*
 - 2] Warren Wiersbe, *Some interpreters tell us that Jesus was speaking about the Lord's Supper ... why would He discuss the Lord's Supper with a group of disagreeable unbelievers? He had not even shared that truth with His own disciples! Why would He cast this precious pearl before the swine?*
 - 3] Leon Morris, *Both "eat" and "drink" are aorists, denoting once-for-all action, not a repeated eating and drinking, such as would be appropriate to the sacrament.*
 - 4] Donald Carson, *In short, John 6 does not directly speak of the eucharist; it does expose the true meaning of the Lord's supper as clearly as any passage in Scripture.*
- b. Jesus' flesh is true food and His blood is true drink (55), ***For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.***
- 1) Thomas Constable, *This verse explains why Jesus' statements in verses 53 and 54 are true. Jesus' Person, symbolized by His flesh and blood, is what truly satisfies and sustains life. This is the true function of food and drink.*
 - 2) A. B. Bruce, *The contrast was most striking just at this point. The manna was merely a substitute for ordinary food; it had no power to ward off death: the generation which had been so miraculously supported passed away from the earth, like all other generations of mankind. Therefore, argued Jesus, it could not be the true bread from heaven; for the true bread must be capable of destroying death, and endowing the recipients with the power of an endless existence.*
 - 3) Edwin Blum, *Just as good food and drink sustain physical life, so Jesus, the real (reliable) spiritual food and drink, sustains His followers spiritually. His flesh and blood give eternal life to those who receive Him.*
 - 4) Leon Morris, *Jesus has already pointed out that the fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died (v. 49). His opponents had altogether the wrong idea of what constituted true bread. With Christ's signs before them they still sought their sustenance apart from him. This verse is an emphatic statement that true food and drink for our deepest needs are to be found in Christ, and by implication in him alone.*
 - 5) F. F. Bruce, *The true sustenance and refreshment of our spiritual life are to be found only in him who died that we might live.*
 - 6) Grant Osborne, *It is "real" or "true" (Greek: alethes) because it lasts forever, while all earthly provision perishes. He said this same thing to the woman at the well in 4:13-14 when he told her he could give her living water that "wells up to eternal life."*
- c. The way to abide in Jesus (56), ***Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.***
- 1) Related verses
 - a) John 15:4-5, *Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.*
 - b) 1 John 4:15-16, *God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. 16 So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.*

2) Comments

- a) Thomas Constable, *Because Jesus' Person is what truly satisfies and sustains life, those who believe in Him remain (Gr. meno, abide) in Him. This is a new term in the discussion, but it is synonymous with having eternal life. Jesus was saying that believers continue to possess eternal life; they will never lose it. Believers remain in Christ, and He remains in them. Jesus was not speaking here about the importance of believers abiding in fellowship with God, as He did later in chapter 15. Here He was speaking to unbelievers about entering into a saving relationship with God.*
 - b) Edwin Blum, *One who partakes of Christ enjoys a mutual abiding relationship with Christ. He remains (menei) in Christ, and Christ remains in him. Meno is one of the most important theological terms in John's Gospel (cf. comments on 1:38). The Father "remains" in the Son (14:10), the Spirit "remains" on Jesus (1:32), and believers "remain" in Jesus and He in them (6:56; 15:4). The implications of this "remaining" are many. A believer enjoys intimacy with and security in Jesus. Just as He has His life from the Father, so believers have life because of Jesus.*
 - c) Kenneth Gangel, *... when we receive the Word of God, the living word, we are appropriating Christ and he becomes part of us, the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) ...*
 - d) Leon Morris, *The thought of abiding is a prominent one in John. It reminds us that the believer enters no temporary state, but a permanent one, with fellowship with the Lord as the predominant note.*
 - e) George Beasley-Murray, *As the Son lives "through the Father," i.e., has his life from and is sustained by the Father, so the believer has life from and is sustained by the Son. This is the consequence for humanity of the Son acting as the Mediator between God and man; the Father has given to the Son to have life in himself, and through him alone can that divine life be known by man.*
 - f) Grant Osborne, *This union with Christ has been labeled "mutual indwelling" and is a major theme of John's writings, appearing in 14:20; 15:4-7; as well as 1 John 2:24; 3:24; 4:15. The Father and the Son are one (John 10:38; 14:20; 17:11, 21), and when we become one with the Son, we share in that union. Moreover, when we are one with the Godhead, we are one with one another (17:20-26).*
- d. The reception of life is through the Father and the Son (57), ***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.***

1) Related verses

- a) John 5:26, *For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself;*
- b) Matthew 16:16, *Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*
- c) John 3:17, *"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

2) Comments

- a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus traced the eternal life, which the believer receives when he or she trusts in Jesus, back through the Son to the living God (cf. 5:21, 24-27). This helps us see that eternal life is essentially God's life that He imparts to believers. It also clarifies Jesus' central role as the Mediator of eternal life from the Father to humankind.*
 - b) Kenneth Gangel, *The terminology of verse 57 changes just a bit to speak no longer of flesh and blood, but just of eating Christ—the present tense feel of chapter 15. We might paraphrase Jesus' words as, "The one who keeps on feeding on me will live because I live within him."*
 - c) George Beasley-Murray, *... the Father has given to the Son to have life in himself, and through him alone can that divine life be known by man.*
 - d) Louis Barbieri, *This is the only place in the Bible that God is called the living Father [note living God in Matthew 16:16].*
 - e) F. F. Bruce, *The Son who derives his own life from the Father has authority to impart that life to those who believe in him, with this distinction: what he receives is "life in himself"; what they receive is life in him ... Here again is a theme which is to be fully developed in the upper room discourses and prayer (cf. John 15:9f; 17:18; 20:21).*
- e. This bread is different from the one the fathers ate in the wilderness (58), ***This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.***

1) Related verses

- a) John 6:33, *For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."*
- b) John 6:49-51, *Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."*

2) Comments

- a) Thomas Constable, *The Jews often substituted the term heaven for God out of respect for God's name, and Jesus did that here ... The Israelites who ate the physical bread that came down from God died in the wilderness (vv. 30–31), but those who believe in ("eat") the spiritual bread that came down from Him will live forever.*
- b) Edwin Blum, *The conclusion to Jesus' exposition and exhortation, based on the manna incident from Exodus 16, repeats the major themes: Moses' bread did not give lasting life (salvation does not come by the Law); God has given the genuine life-giving Bread ... from heaven; those who trust Jesus have eternal life.*
- c) William Hendriksen, *He who spiritually digests me as the true bread of life will live forever (first, with respect to the soul, afterward also with respect to the body which on the last day will be raised gloriously).*
- d) F. F. Bruce, *The manna was in a sense "spiritual food," as Paul puts it (1 Corinthians 10:3)—"supernatural food" (RSV)—but it was "spiritual" by virtue of the spiritual reality to which it pointed, not because of any inherent quality of its own.*
- e) George Beasley-Murray, *The discourse concludes with a summary statement that harks back to its beginning (v 31): the bread from heaven is the Christ in his incarnate life and redemptive death, alike Revealer and Redeemer, giving life where death reigned.*
- f) Kenneth Gangel, *Finally, we learn that spiritual appropriation provides eternal life. The real bread that came down from heaven was not manna but the life of God's Son given on our behalf. Eating the physical bread of the Old Testament ultimately led to death. But eating the spiritual bread of the New Testament, participating in Christ's death at Calvary, provides eternal life.*

f. Jesus' instruction took place in the synagogue in Capernaum (59), ***Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.***

- 1) Related verse, John 6:24, *So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.*

2) Comments

- a) F. F. Bruce, *"These things" should probably be understood to comprise the discourse of verses 27–58. It deals in three stages with the true bread of life—a theme which was doubly appropriate in view of the recent feeding of the multitude and in view of the time of year, when the Old Testament references to the manna were fresh in the minds of many, especially if the relevant section of the Pentateuch formed part of the synagogue lessons that day.*
- b) Thomas Constable, *John now identified the historical context in which Jesus gave this teaching. Jesus gave this discourse in the synagogue in the town of Capernaum, which He had adopted as the home base of His ministry in Galilee (cf. 2:12). This verse evidently marks the conclusion of the discussion that took place within that synagogue.*
- c) Edwin Blum, *Jesus gave this discourse on the Bread of Life in the synagogue in Capernaum. He often spoke in Jewish synagogues, where men had opportunities to give expositions and exhortations (Mark 6:1–6; Luke 4:16–28; Acts 13:15–42).*
- d) William Hendriksen, *From the fact that Jesus delivered his discourse in the synagogue it does not necessarily follow that the day on which it was spoken was a sabbath. There were also services on Monday and on Thursday.*

g. Responses to Jesus' bread of life teaching (60-71)

- 1) Many of Jesus' disciples took offense at His teaching (60-65)

a) Introductory notes

- 1] Grant Osborne, *This passage contrasts shallow disciples who lose heart and fall away and desert Jesus (vv. 60–66) with those faithful who are the chosen (vv. 67–71). As we have seen throughout John, Jesus' ministry fomented division, for while he did spectacular sign-miracles, he said things that were both confusing and extremely unsettling. As the Living Revealer of God (the Word, see 1:1), he shone on every person with the light of God (1:4, 7, 9) and overcame the darkness of the world (1:5). However, those of darkness did not want the light and opposed it (3:19–20), and so there could be no neutrality ... The hard sayings of 6:35–58 force final choices, so many of his so-called disciples departed.*
- 2] Leon Morris, *During the first part of Jesus' ministry people were attracted by his teaching and flocked around him. Many attached themselves to him, some of them wholeheartedly, some very loosely. But then came a time when their allegiance was tested. The real nature of the claims of Jesus became apparent. The true disciples were sifted from the false, the deep from the shallow ... His claims for himself and his claims on his followers are such that it is no longer possible to follow him unreflectively and without committing oneself.*

- 3] Thomas Constable, *Considerable discussion followed Jesus presentation of Himself as the bread of life. John noted the responses of many people who were following Jesus around, then the response of the Twelve, and finally the response of most of the Jews. What followed probably happened in the adjoining courtyard, or outside the synagogue, or perhaps inside after Jesus had concluded His discourse.*
- b) They said it was hard to listen to what Jesus had said (60), ***When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?”***
- 1] William Hendriksen, *The present section (6:60–65) describes the reaction of the disciples. This is the group of more or less regular followers of the Lord, as 6:66 clearly indicates. There were probably scores, if not actually hundreds, of them in Galilee ... These disciples of Jesus were clearly offended by his words. To say that they were disgusted is probably correct. Their hearts were rebellious. It is in that light that we can understand the Lord’s question which immediately follows.*
 - 2] Thomas Constable, *Not only the Jews generally (v. 52), but many of Jesus’ followers (“disciples”), found His teaching about the bread of life unpleasant and offensive (Gr. skleros, “difficult” or “hard”). The term disciple (lit. learner) is clearly not synonymous with the term believer in the Gospels ... This teaching about the bread of life persuaded many in this inquisitive category of disciple to abandon Jesus.*
 - 3] Edwin Blum, *As the people began to understand His teaching, they found it to be totally unacceptable. Besides the hostile Jewish leaders, many of the Galilean disciples turned away from Him. The popular enthusiasm for Jesus as a political Messiah (v. 15) was then over. They saw that He was not going to deliver them from Rome. He might be a great Healer, but His words were a hard (i.e., harsh) teaching. Who could accept it, that is, obey it? How could they personally appropriate Him?*
 - 4] Kenneth Gangel, *Jesus tried to help them understand that a wooden, literal interpretation of his words about flesh and blood would not lead them to the truth. It is the Holy Spirit who explains the spiritual meaning of his words.*
 - 5] Louis Barbieri, *Many of Christ’s disciples found it difficult to accept the teaching that one needed to eat Jesus’ flesh and drink His blood (i.e., believe in Christ) to gain eternal life ... The cross (cf. v. 51) is the primary offense to man’s persistence in self-righteousness (1Co 1:23; Gl 5:11).*
 - 6] William Barclay, *The real difficulty of Christianity is twofold. It demands an act of surrender to Christ, an acceptance of him as the final authority; and it demands a moral standard of the highest level. The disciples were well aware that Jesus had claimed to be the very life and mind of God come down to earth; their difficulty was to accept that as true, with all its implications. To this day many refuse Christ, not because he puzzles intellect, but because he challenges their lives.*
 - 7] F. F. Bruce, *Although they knew that he must be speaking figuratively when he talked about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, yet such language was more than they could endure. This was not simply because they thought the metaphor outrageous but because the whole tenor of his argument implied a claim to be greater than Moses—to be, in fact, uniquely associated with God. His language was hard to take not merely because it was difficult to grasp but because they found it offensive.*
 - 8] Grant Osborne, *The hard sayings of Jesus force them to make difficult choices, and so at the synagogue in Capernaum a large group gathers and expresses their consternation.*
- c) Jesus asked how they would respond if they saw Him ascend to heaven (61-62), ***But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?”***
- 1] Related verses
 - a] John 2:24-25, *But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.*
 - b] Mark 16:19, *So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.*
 - c] John 3:13, *No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.*

2] Comments

- a] Thomas Constable, *Evidently Jesus spoke these words to a large group of His followers that included the Twelve. He suggested that He would yet reveal things that would be even harder for them to accept than what they had heard so far. He had told them that He had come down from heaven (v. 38), and this had scandalized (Gr. skandalizei) them. What would they think if they actually saw Him ascend back into heaven?*
- b] B. F. Westcott, *The Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, were steps in the progress of the 'ascending up' through suffering, which is the great offence of the Gospel.*
- c] Edwin Blum, *Paul wrote that the crucified Messiah was a "stumbling block" (skandalon) to the Jews (1 Cor. 1:23). The Ascension of the Son of Man is also an offense. But His glorification is His heavenly vindication. He was crucified in weakness but He was raised in power (1 Cor. 15:43).*
- d] Leon Morris, *This is the occasion of another demonstration of Jesus' unusual powers of knowledge (see on 2:24; 4:18). Jesus knew what was going on in his disciples ... If people stumbled at the discourse, much more would they stumble at the cross! To them it would seem like defeat, like a going down to Sheol. In reality it would be victory, the first in a series of events that would bring Christ back to his Father ... The crucifixion and resurrection and ascension are linked in an unbreakable sequence. The one implies the others. And what to the shallow-minded is a cause of stumbling and going away becomes to the believer the deepest cause of comfort and assurance.*
- e] William Barclay, *It is a forecast of the ascension. It means that the resurrection is the guarantee of the claims of Jesus. He was not one who lived nobly and died gallantly for a lost cause; he was the one whose claims were vindicated by the fact that he rose again.*
- f] Grant Osborne, ... *the cross is at one and the same time his deepest offense and his greatest glory. The way these disciples react to this crowning moment will determine their eternal destiny.*
- g] Louis Barbieri, *Where He was before is part of the offense since it teaches Christ's preexistence (cf. 1:1).*

d) He declared that His words were spirit and life (63), ***It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.***

1] Related verses

- a] 2 Corinthians 3:6, *who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*
- b] John 3:6, *What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.*
- c] John 6:68, *Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.*

2] Comments

- a] Thomas Constable, *Some of Jesus' disciples turned from Him because they preferred the material realm to the spiritual realm, for which Jesus had an obvious preference. He admonished them that the Spirit gives real life (cf. Gen. 1:2; Ezek. 37:14; John 3:6), whereas the flesh provides nothing of comparable importance.*
- b] Edwin Blum, *Without the Holy Spirit, man (flesh) is utterly unable to understand Jesus' person and His works (John 3:6; 1 Cor. 2:14) ... by the work of the Holy Spirit in an individual, Jesus' words provide spiritual life.*
- c] Leon Morris, *Those whose lives are taken up with material things, things of the here and now, cannot understand Jesus' teaching. People whose horizon is bounded by the things of earth cut themselves off from his teaching and their kind of living "counts for nothing." Only as the life-giving Spirit informs us may we understand these words.*
- d] Louis Barbieri, *The truth about Jesus' death by crucifixion seems unthinkable from a human perspective ("the flesh"). But the Spirit works through Jesus' words, not fleshly reasoning.*
- e] Grant Osborne, ... *Jesus wants them to know in verse 63 that "the flesh counts for nothing," yielding only temporary life, and cannot produce God's salvation. So Jesus turns to the Spirit and completes the trinitarian emphasis in this discourse. Salvation is the work of the Triune Godhead, and within this matrix, "the Spirit gives life" ... It is the Spirit, not human effort (i.e., "flesh"), that brings about eternal life.*

e) He knew some did not believe in Him (64), ***But there are some of you who do not believe.*** (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.)

1] Related verses

- a] John 6:66, *After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.*
- b] John 6:71, *He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.*
- c] John 13:11, *For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."*

2] Comments

- a] Thomas Constable, ... *Jesus said He recognized that some of His disciples did not believe on Him. This was a tragic irony. They had followed Jesus and had listened to Him, but they did not believe Him. Again, a disciple is not necessarily a believer ... John added that Jesus knew who did not believe on Him—even which one of His disciples would betray Him (vv. 70–71)—in order to show that human unbelief did not take Jesus by surprise.*
- b] Merrill Tenney, *Jesus had given ample opportunity for faith to all those who followed him; yet from the beginning his spiritual discernment made him aware of those whose faith was genuine and those whose attachment was only superficial.*
- c] Edwin Blum, *The life Jesus gives must be received by faith. The words do not work automatically. From the start Jesus knew which followers were believers and which ones were unbelievers. This is another evidence of His supernatural knowledge (cf. 1:47; 2:24–25; 6:15).*
- d] Leon Morris, *The truths of which Jesus has been speaking are accessible only to faith. They are hid forever from such as Judas. Human wisdom can never win an understanding of them, for only those in whom God works come to Christ.*
- e] Louis Barbieri, *Without pointing out individuals, Jesus told His disciples, There are some of you who do not believe. In His omniscience (cf. v. 61; also 1:47; 2:24–25; 6:15), Jesus knew the ones who did not believe. The parallel words and who it was that would betray Him identify Judas as an unbeliever (cf. 6:71; 13:11).*
- f] F. F. Bruce, *The Evangelist once more (in verse 64b) emphasizes Jesus' foresight and insight into the human heart. He was not taken by surprise when many turned away from him.*
- g] Grant Osborne, *He knows that the reaction of many is not just doubt but actual unbelief, and he wants them to be aware that he knows. His omniscient insight, so much a part of this Gospel (1:38, 47; 4:17–18), is on full display, as John tells us he knew their hearts "from the beginning."*

f) The Father grants the ability to come to Jesus (65), ***And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."***

1] Related verses

- a] John 6:44, *No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day.*
- b] John 3:27, *John answered, "No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven."*

2] Comments

- a] Thomas Constable, *Again Jesus expressed His belief that the human decision to believe or not believe rested ultimately in God's elective purpose (vv. 37, 44). Thus He did not view the unbelief of His disciples as an indication that He had failed.*
- b] Warren Wiersbe, *The preaching of the Word of God always leads to a sifting of the hearts of the listeners. God draws sinners to the Saviour through the power of truth, His Word. Those who reject the Word will reject the Saviour. Those who receive the Word will receive the Saviour and experience the new birth, eternal life.*
- c] Leon Morris, *Unbelief is to be expected apart from a divine miracle. It is impossible for anyone to come to Christ unless the Father gives the grace to do so. Left to themselves, sinners prefer their sin. Conversion is always a work of grace.*
- d] Louis Barbieri, *The words no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him (v. 65) show again the divine side of human faith. Unless God brings about faith in the heart of a person, he or she will not believe. In salvation, God is the "prime mover" (i.e., "drawing," v. 44).*

- e] F. F. Bruce, *These words echo what has been said in verses 37 and 44. None can come to Christ in faith but those who are persuaded and enabled to do so by the Spirit, but all these will come, drawn by the irresistible grace of heavenly love, and none who comes is rejected.*
- f] Grant Osborne, *Salvation is nothing we earn but is entirely a gift from above.*

TO BE CONTINUED, LORD WILLING!

- 2) The response of the twelve (66-71)