

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

The Glory of the Bread of Life – Part 1

Introduction

The feeding of the 5,000 was truly a miracle; as was the crossing of the Sea. These were signs – signposts that pointed to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. To the Jews that witnessed these signs, it brought to them an outstanding reality: Jesus is better than Moses.

The idea that the expected Messiah ought to be better than Moses was also a Jewish idea. This was not a new idea. This was not a Christian idea. Dr. D.A. Carson notes that first century Jews understood Moses' prophecy of a coming prophet to be the anticipated Messiah. He shows records that some Rabbis taught that this end time Messiah would even call down manna from heaven, as well as bring peace and prosperity to the Nation.

So, it's important to note that these Jews expected the Messiah to be greater and more significant than Moses. Jesus had to rebuke them, not because of that, but because of how they defined "greater and significant".

The remaining portion of Chapter 6 is a very, very important chapter in this Gospel. I have chosen to organize it into 3 parts:

- #1. Today we will consider why Jesus is Better than Moses (6:22-34);
- #2. In the second section we consider the amazing idea of the impossibility of believing along with the security of the believer (6:35-40); and
- #3. Lastly, on a subsequent Sunday we will see the nature of true belief (6:41-59)

The instruction by our Lord is not difficult to understand. It's difficult to accept. *"When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"* (John 6:60, ESV). There's a very good chance that someone of you, before we are finished, will have a high degree of difficulty accepting this teaching from our Lord. We pray that it would be otherwise.

#1. Better Than Moses? Why?

Text: John 6:22–35 (ESV)

Background

The crowd was confused as to the whereabouts of Jesus and the disciples. Eventually they tracked Him down on the other side of the Lake. *"When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"*" (John 6:25, ESV). Jesus responded with a scathing rebuke as to the motivation of their search for Him. *"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.” (John 6:26, ESV). Their attraction to Him is simply materialistic, earthy, carnal, etc.

Jesus’ message to them is organized under two “truly, truly’s” in this passage:

A. TRULY, TRULY LOOK TO THE ETERNAL (vv25-29)

“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.” (John 6:27, ESV)

These people are expending time and energy on things that will perish. “Don’t work for food that will perish.” Don’t be expending your energy on things that don’t last. So, what’s the alternative? Work for food that is eternal – food which the Son of Man (the Messiah) will give you. Why? That is whom the Father has set His seal on. He’s the real deal. He’s the authentic one. He’s the one with God’s approval.

Jesus makes an important statement here. “The idea is that God has certified the Son as his own agent, authorizing him as the one who alone can bestow this food.”¹ Here Christ emphasizes that He alone is credentialed to be the Savior. He alone is God’s one and only Redeemer for mankind. He alone is the Messiah. There is salvation in none other (Acts 4:12). “He is the Sent One (3:17, 34; 5:23–24), the agent or envoy certified by God with authority over his creation.”²

The question of the crowd is how (v28) – how do we fulfill God’s requirement? “*Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”*” (John 6:29, ESV).

Jesus is not confused. He is not confusing categories? He is not saying you must work for the gift. Jesus is using a rhetorical device as he did in the story of the woman at the well. “*Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”*” (John 4:31–34, ESV).

Jesus embraces the language of the others and transforms it into spiritual conversation. This is an important conversational style of Jesus. He takes something expressed very plainly, that is commonly understood, like water, birth, food, work and describes it in symbolic language. He will do the same thing later in the chapter when he talks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

To this crowd that is looking for freedom from Rome, looking for a vibrant, healthy agriculture and economy, looking for peace and prosperity – Jesus says, “Exert your effort to fulfill God’s requirement.”

¹ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 284). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

² Osborne, G. R. (2018). *John: Verse by Verse*. (J. Reimer, E. Ritzema, D. Thevenaz, & R. Brant, Eds.) (p. 158). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

What is that requirement? Believe. Believe in him, in Christ, whom the Father has sent. He's the One and Only Savior. He is better than Moses, but in what way?

C. TRULY, TRULY, BETTER THAN MOSES? HOW?

There is no doubt that the crowd got the point. This One that has God's seal on Him; this One that has been sent by the Father; this One who is better than Moses – ought to do things in a greater, more significant, more earth-shaking way than Moses. They ask the obvious: "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you?"³ That's not a crazy question. "If Jesus is superior to Moses, as his tone and claims suggest, then should not his followers be privileged to witness mightier works than those seen by the disciples of Moses?"⁴

Here's the answer by our Lord: "*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. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."*" (John 6:32–33, ESV). Here are some verses we may not read quickly. Jesus answers their concern, "How are You better than Moses?" Here's the answer:

- #1. Moses (actually God) fed the nation of Israel in the wilderness. Jesus says His food is for the whole world.
- #2. Moses fed the people then. Jesus feeds the people now – in the present, not past, not future – NOW.
- #3. Moses' manna fed the people for six days; and then six more days, etc., but it came to an end. Jesus feeds in such a way that all who believe in Him are eternally satisfied.
- #4. Lastly, Moses' manna was earthly food. Jesus' manna is "true manna". Now that does not mean that the manna God gave Israel wasn't actual manna. The word "true" is used in a technical way by John.

John uses the word "true" as the object that is pointed to. If you walk down the hallway of a public building, you might see a sign that has a picture of a toilet. That picture is real. It is not your imagination. But what it's pointing to is the true toilet.

When Jesus is called "the true light" (in John 1:9), He is presented as the true light that all other lights point to. Likewise, in John 15:1 He is called the true vine. Israel was the vine (Isaiah 5:1-7) – Jesus is the true vine. Now we see that Jesus is "the true bread" (6:32), meaning He is the antitype, the fulfillment of all earthly nourishment.

Summary

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 6:30). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴ Carson, D. A. (1991). [The Gospel according to John](#) (p. 286). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

In summary, Jesus is teaching the crowd something they should have known. Listen to these words by the prophet Isaiah:

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.” (Isaiah 55:1–3, ESV)

Did you hear that? Those of you who are hungry and thirsty; those of you that have no money – come and buy! How can they buy without money? Answer? Believe on the only Divinely certified Savior and He will eternally satisfy your longing soul.

Invitation

Verse 35 provides a transition from this theme to the next, but it also provides a conclusion to what we have just considered. It’s an invitation: *“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”* (John 6:35, ESV)

“Saint Augustine famously said, “You made us for yourself, and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you.” I want to keep the spirit of his statement but tweak the words just a bit. If he was reading this passage, he might say, “You made us to hunger for you, and our starving souls find no nourishment until they feast on you.” Only Jesus can fill the emptiness inside. Only Jesus can quiet the growling of your soul. Only Jesus can give you life.”⁵

⁵ Carter, Matt. Exalting Jesus in John (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.