

Eternal Life through the Bread of Life

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[0:00] Amen. So, I'm going to just change around the program.! Oh, that was really quick and efficient.

! So, we're going to look together at John chapter 6. Language, Italian Bible in one hand, English Bible in the other, or whatever.

That's absolutely fine. So, I don't want to do the whole of the thing. In fact, if we do the whole of it, we'll get bogged down. But let's try and put ourselves in the right place.

So, it starts off with the feeding of the 5,000. Chapter 6, verses 1 to 15. Feeding of the 5,000. Then Jesus walks on water. Verses 16 to 21.

Big event. Very, very significant. Verse 25. They ask him, having walked on the water, when did you get here?

[1:22] Which seems a remarkably stupid question to ask. I mean, how did you get here would be a better question. And Jesus goes straight to the point.

I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw the sign, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. So, he's saying, you're asking the questions and you're motivated, not because you saw what I did.

Well, they did see what he did. They were there. They ate from the multiplication of the loaves. But Jesus says, you see, what you're motivated by is that you ate the loaves and had your fill.

You are not seeing what really happened. You are not seeing what it's really all about. And hence, a discussion on these two levels about bread and about what Jesus is really getting at with this matter of bread.

And they, the subject connects to verse 31. So, we can fill this in. We've got a microphone, but I think you could just shout out here.

[2:34] What's the bread bit? That's bread. In verse 31, what is it connected to or compared with? Manna. Yeah.

So, just to remind us, manna was the food that the Israelites ate in the desert. So, there are the Israelites.

There's the desert. And the manna was little white bits of stuff. And the word manna means what's it?

Because they said, what is it? That's manna. Okay, we'll call it that then. And in the Old Testament, it said God gave them bread from heaven.

So, that's Old Testament stuff. And the Jewish people would say, that's our heritage. God gave us bread from heaven. And Jesus says, yeah, that's fair enough.

[3:36] But, let's just see where he says it. He says it in, say, verse 58. What's the, if you look at verse 58, what is the really important difference between the miracle of the manna, bread from heaven, and what Jesus comes to bring?

eternal life. Eternal life. Yep. What, what sort of life did the manna give? They ate the manna, and they died.

Verse 58. Your forefathers ate the manna, yep, miracle, yes, and they died. So, these people die. But, the bread that Jesus gives, he says, if you eat this bread, you will not die.

They said, we'll live forever. Verse 58. Yeah? So, we're talking about, where should I put this?

Eternal life. So, if I put, but, Jesus gives eternal life.

[5:00] And he's going to define what eternal life means. So, life forever. Not just a temporary, longer life, so you don't die of

starvation, but eternal life, life forever.

Okay. So, let's try and zero in on this a little bit better. Verse 35.

Jesus says, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry. He who believes in me will never be thirsty.

Can we?

Can we? Verse 50. Here is the bread which comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die.

[6:14] Verse 51. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. Right, we'll stop at that point. So, I think we need to just be clear about two things.

Where is this bread to be found? What does he, when he says living bread, which he keeps on saying, bread, living bread, bread of life, what's he actually referring to?

Okay, himself. Are you quite sure about that? Does it, how do we know that? Okay, verse 35, I am the bread of life.

So, he's not talking about a thing, but a person. So, I've put here, verse 35, provision in Jesus himself.

So, you're quite sure about that. I am the bread of life. Because you could read this and you might think it was referring to communion. So, we're going to eat bread later.

[7:31] So, he's not referring to the communion bread. You see, he's not saying, if you eat the communion bread, you will live forever. He says, if you eat me, you will live forever.

Now, the communion bread refers us to Jesus, but our security is not that we've eaten the bread, that bread, but that we've found Jesus.

Yes? Is that fair? Now then, so what is this eating thing? So, with bread, you eat it, it does you good. So, he says in verse 35, there's a way which will make you never go hungry and something which will never be thirsty.

So, let me just emphasize those two things. When he says hungry and thirsty, he means it in a Middle Eastern context.

So, in a European context, hungry is, ooh, I could do with a little snacky-do just now. I could do with, ooh, I happen to have some watsits, strangely named after manna, but a completely different thing, of course, or some crisps or some of those wavy things whose name I forget.

[8:52] Quavers, okay, that's hungry and thirsty is, ooh, I fancy a cup of tea. Haven't had a cup of tea for a couple of hours or I fancy a Coca-Cola or whatever it is, whatever your favorite beverage is.

That is not hunger and thirst in a Middle Eastern context. In a Middle Eastern context, hunger is when you go out into the desert and there is nothing to eat at all.

And if there is nothing to eat at all, you get starvation and die and you end up being one of those skeletons with the sand blowing across you.

Yeah? And first is dehydration when you actually have nothing to drink and you die. And you still end up being one of those skeletons you know the, you can visualize it, can't you?

The sand dune and you see a camel skeleton or a skull or a sheep or something like that. So when Jesus says, when you come to me, you will not be hungry and da-da-da, you will not be thirsty, he says, this is the way that you don't end up being a skeleton and that's it, dead and gone.

[10:10] So that's what he's saying. So there's an intensity to it and it's a life or death intensity. Now my question is, what is the method by which we get this benefit?

So what would be the eating or the equivalent of eating? If bread, you eat it. I'll show you how you eat. You open your mouth, put it in, chew it like that in case you didn't know.

So what is it with Jesus? Believing. Could you substantiate that from a text? Verse 47.

Thank you. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. Okay, could we substantiate it, confirm it from any other text? 35.

35. Yeah. Okay, now those look like parallels, don't they? So Jesus says X, Y, Z, squiggle, squiggle, and then he says the same thing again, P, Q, R, squiggle, squiggle, and they are two things which say the same thing in different words.

[11:35] That's a parallelism. And this seems like a parallelism. He who comes to me will never go hungry.

He who believes in me will never be thirsty. So the first bit was come and the second bit was believe.

and the idea being that Jesus is saying the same thing in two different sets of words. Does that make sense? Yeah. So coming to him and believing in him are two ways of saying the same thing and in both cases you get the benefit of what's on offer, the bread.

Yeah? Have I taken that too far? Are you with me on that? So again what I'm trying to say is it's not about communion. It's not saying if you drink the wine and eat the bread you have eternal life.

Physical eating, physical drinking. It's saying if you come to Jesus you have eternal life. And coming to Jesus is a movement towards him and another way of saying is that is a faith of meeting him in faith.

[12:57] That's what it all hinges on. And I suppose I should stop and say have you ever done that? Would you say that there was a time when you had not come to Jesus and at some point which you might or might not be able to focus on exactly you came to him and you came to him and what was coming to him?

It wasn't coming to church, it wasn't even being baptized, it wasn't coming to communion, it was putting your trust in him in a way that you gave your whole life to him and said Lord I need you, I give myself to you, I trust you absolutely completely, I let go of everything else and entrust myself to you.

That's coming to Jesus and I say have you done that? If you haven't I should just do that. That's what you need to do to become a Christian to get these benefits that are spoken of here.

So the provision is in Jesus himself by coming to him by coming to him in faith.

Okay. So that's where we're going in verse 35. Now in verse 36 we have non-belief but as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.

[14:37] So this is the phenomenon of non-belief and Jesus is going to deal with this, well how is it if Jesus is so great, his works are so clear and so brilliant, how is it that people don't come to him?

Well apparently they don't, they don't see the point and they don't respond and they don't have faith in him and he says, and these are the people he's speaking to, as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe in me.

So that's what I'd like us to think about and I'm going to run out of time so I'll do what I can but I won't trespass into our communion time. Let's look at the verses in which he describes this.

All that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never drive away for I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

Who's that? Who's him who sent him? The Father, yeah. And this is the will of him who sent me that I shall lose none of all that he has given me but raise them up at the last day.

[16:04] for my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day.

Let's see what we can do to work into those statements. I think the first thing to ask is there's a clarification about what eternal life looks like.

Can anybody spot the particular thing that Jesus says eternal life involves or results in? Thank you.

Verse 39, raise them up at the last day. I think that's important to say. Eternal life starts now but there's much more to it than the spiritual life that we would have now because he says I will raise them up at the last day.

So that's a physical resurrection. Raise up on the last day. And Jesus keeps coming back to this actually.

[17:19] It crops up. But that's what he's on about. Not die means not stay dead but even if we do physically die we will be raised up on the last day.

So he's looking forward not just in this life but in the life to come and that's what he's thinking about. Those who believe in me will rise on the last day.

Okay, that's good to be clear about that. Now let's look at the will of the Father. let's look at the will of the Father. Let me put an idea into your head first which is of water.

There's water and here's an iceberg. There's David Attenborough looking at a penguin. No it isn't, I just put that in for facetiousness.

Above the surface of the water there's the iceberg, yes, and below the surface there's more iceberg. And usually we just see the top bit, but there's stuff underneath as well.

[18:34] Okay? And I'd like to suggest that the will of the Father, which he speaks about here, has got something on top of the waterline, which is easy to see, and under the water line, which is not so easy to see, but is still there.

Okay? So just have that idea in your mind, you might find that helpful, and you might not. God. Let's look at the will of the Father. Let's look at the will of the Father in verse 40.

for my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

So, I would say this is above the waterline. It's very clear to see, here's somebody, what does the will of the Father say to this person, according to that verse?

What could you tell that person about the will of the Father? Verse 40. Yeah? Right.

[19:54] Raised on the last day. Is that what you mean? The person will be raised at the last day. Yeah, okay. So you can say to this person, you'll be raised on the last day, if what?

What is on condition of what? Looking to the Son. Yeah, so yeah, this person looks to the Son. So what he says is that they look, and another way of saying that is to have faith, to believe.

Faith and belief are the same thing for this purpose. and if you look to the Son, as Ben said, you can promise that this person will be raised on the last day.

So I don't know how to put that in here. Raised on the last day. Raised on last day. Okay. Now, how many people, to how many people can you make this promise?

Everyone. How do you know it's to everyone? Because it says it. What does it say? Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life.

[21:15] So this bit says very clearly to everyone, if you look to the Son, to Jesus, you will have eternal life and you will be raised on the last day.

okay? It's clear. No limitation. It just says, you can say that to anyone and everyone. If you look, everyone who looks will have eternal life.

They will be raised up at the last day. You can bet your bottom dollar on it. You wouldn't put it quite like that, would you? But you can depend! Depend on it. Nobody in the universe will ever say to God, I looked, I believed, and I didn't get eternal life.

Nobody will be able to say that because the promise is if you look, everyone who looks will have eternal life. Yes? That's what it says, isn't it? Yeah, that's great. That's the will of the Father.

For my Father's will, verse 40, is that everyone who looks. Okay, there's another statement of the will of the Father. verse 39, this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

[22:38] Who is this speaking of? Who are the people described in this sentence? Okay, let's take it a step at a time.

What's the word that's in the text? Those that he has given me. So we need now to think, and I'm going to put this under the water line, and I'm going to put a circle, and these are the given ones. And who gives them to whom? The Father gives them to the Son. Okay, and what are we told about these people, these given ones?

What are we told about them? They shall not be lost, but raised at the last day. This is, and how many of them do you think Jesus will lose in the process?

Zero. None. So I think we could put it this way, Jesus is tasked with, okay, to task, to give a task to, and the Father says to the Son, I'm going to give you these people, and I want you to make absolutely sure that not a single one is lost, but you keep them, and Jesus is still doing this because this hasn't been completed yet, and when the last day comes, I want you to raise up every single one of them.

[24:09] Okay? And Jesus says, this is the will of the Father, this is the task I've been entrusted with, do you think Jesus is competent to do this?

Yeah, do you believe him? Yeah. Okay, let's think about these, so these given ones will be raised on the last day, and not lost. Let's look at these given ones.

Verse 37, all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I will never drive away. How many of the given ones will come to Jesus?

All of them. Is that what it says? Okay. So these ones come to Jesus. And how many non-given ones come to Jesus?

Jesus? Now that's a more difficult question, isn't it? I think you might look at verse 44, and also verse 44, I think.

[25:48] I thought it said it somewhere else. 43, 53.

Yeah? Yeah? Okay. Okay. If anybody spots another verse. So how many of the given ones come to the Son?

And how many of those who are not given come to the Son? None. Because these are drawn to the Son, by whom?

Who draws them to the Son? The Father. And if they are not drawn by the Father, can they come?

What does it say? Quote me a text?

Quote it. There's no one who comes to me unless the Father who sends me draws them and I will wait for me.

[26:54] Yeah. So let's just see what we've got. Two descriptions of God's will. And in the end they must both come to the same thing. But the two descriptions as we look at it seem to be one above the water line, it's very clear, and the one below the water line, which we find rather mysterious, the one above the water line says, anybody who believes can come.

No, it doesn't say it. It says, anybody who believes and comes will have eternal life. And then the one under the water line says, actually, unless the Father draws you, you can't come.

If the Father draws you, you will not fail to come. you will come and you will receive eternal life. And both those things are true, rather mysteriously, and Ray used another word, it doesn't use this word here, but it's the word that we looked at this morning, that rather than saying a given group of people, given to the Son by the Father.

This morning, Paul said, a chosen group of people, chosen by the Father. And we need both those, you know, it's like a coin with two sides, if you like, or something above the water line, something below the water line, we need both of those things.

We need the bit on the top, which says, you can promise, on the basis of God's word, that everyone who looks and believes will receive eternal life.

[28:43] And Jesus actually says, in verse 37, whoever comes to me, I will never drive away. Whoever comes to me, I will never drive away.

If somebody comes, Jesus won't say, oh, I didn't have you in mind. Anybody who comes, Jesus say, you're welcome. at the same time, we have underneath the waterline, and this is more useful for looking back on how I became a Christian, and to explain that, to say, how was it that I became a Christian?

Well, I came to the Lord, but I came kicking and screaming. somebody drew me to Jesus.

The Father drew me. And somebody opened my eyes to learn about Jesus. Verse 45, I was taught by God.

Actually, that's a quote from one of the servant songs. And what has he promised me? That all the given ones, which apparently I am because I've come to Christ, will not be lost, but be raised again on the last day.

[30:02] And I think that's a cause for great thankfulness and great praise and a quiet and reverent confidence that even though we're rubbish Christians, yet he says, I've got you.

I'm going to keep you. And Jesus has actually been given the job of making sure we don't slip out of his fingers. I won't lose you, but I'll raise you up at the last day.

Amen. Let's sing a song and then we'll hand over to Roger.