

The Bread of Life

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[0 : 00] Let us consider your age to begin with. How old are you? I'm seven and a half exactly.

You needn't say exactly, the Queen remarked. I can believe it without that. Now I'll give you something to believe. I'm just 101 five months and a day.

I can't believe that, said Alice. Can't you, the Queen said in a pitying tone. Try again. Draw a long breath. Shut your eyes.

Alice laughed. There's no use trying, she said. One can't believe impossible things. I dare say you haven't had much practice, said the Queen.

When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast. Lewis Carroll, in his book, *Through the Looking Glass*, is commenting here on the mystery of faith.

[1 : 20] Why is it that some people manage to believe things which other people find utterly impossible? To the White Queen, it seemed that faith was all a matter of effort.

Hold your breath. Shut your eyes. You can believe anything if only you made an effort, if only you try hard enough.

But holding your breath and shutting your eyes is not belief. It's make-believe. Anything that you have to make yourself believe cannot be real.

Because reality requires no effort to believe. Reality requires no effort to believe. It's no use trying, says Alice.

One cannot believe impossible things. And yet people do. Take Christians, for instance.

[2 : 34] What we believe is really quite extraordinary. God became man in Jesus Christ. He walked upon the earth.

He died on the cross for us to pay for our sins. He was raised from the dead. And through the Holy Spirit is present in and with us.

Now and for all eternity. And Alice could be excused for calling that impossible. Yet we Christians do not feel that we are forcing ourselves to believe the impossible.

We are not playing some game of let's pretend. There's no self-hypnosis involved. We believe because we know.

We believe because we know this is the truth. And how do Christians do that? Because there is a mystery here.

[3 : 51] The mystery of faith. And in John chapter 6. Belief and unbelief is intention.

Belief and unbelief is intention. Jesus tells his followers. 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.

This started an angry argument among the followers. How can this man give us his flesh to eat? They asked. And Jesus said to them. Very truly I tell you. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man.

[4 : 57] And drink his blood. You have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh. And drink my blood. Have eternal life. And I will rise them up on the last day. For my flesh is true food.

And my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh. And drink my blood. Abide in me. And I in them.

Just as the living Father sent me. And I live because of the Father. So whoever eats me. And I live because of me.

This is the bread that comes down from heaven. Not like that which your ancestors ate and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.

[5 : 59] Many of his followers heard this and said. This teaching is too hard.

This teaching is too difficult. Who can accept it? In chapter 6 of John's Gospel.

The scene is first set on the other side of the Lake of Galilee. The time is the Passover. It is a year before the Last Supper.

A year before Jesus was crucified. And the hills were the scene of the great miracle. A miracle so spectacular.

Concerning so many people. With such effect. That unlike any other. It was recorded in all four Gospels. The only miracle recorded in all four Gospels.

[7 : 03] The feeding of the 5,000. From those small rations from a small boy's lunchbox. And the crowd was so impressed by what Jesus could do for them.

That they wanted to make him king that day. And so Jesus slipped away. Slipped away to a secret hiding place. And the people scattered for the night.

They came looking for him the next morning. Hoping for a repeat performance. They knew the disciples had gone. They had gone across the sea. They knew that.

And they knew that they had left Jesus behind. But where was he now? They didn't know. That during the night.

He had walked on water. Had got into the boat. With the disciples. And had gone across to the other side. And he was now.

[8 : 08] In a synagogue at Capernaum. Those two stories. The feeding of the multitude. And the walking on water.

They belong together. They are joined. Just as those two stories of Moses are joined. The feeding of the people in the wilderness. And the crossing of the Red Sea.

John in his gospel here. Is making a clear association. Between Jesus and Moses. John presents to us. The achievements of Jesus.

As the new exodus. The new exodus for God's people. Here he is the complete. And the final rescue.

Of God's children. In the Old Testament. Through Moses manna was given in the wilderness. In the New Testament. Jesus himself. Jesus himself. Jesus himself.

[9 : 06] Is the bread. But the crowds. Soon found Jesus. And they gathered at the synagogue at Capernaum.

Demanding more miracles. Show us a sign. Of your divinity. They cried out. Jesus the day before. Had fed thousands of hungry people. From a few loaves and fishes. But they wanted to see another sign. Moses fed our fathers for 40 years.

In the wilderness. But you have fed people only one time. We'll go for Moses. Moses is our man. But the provision of bread.

For the 5,000. Was intended to be a sign. It's intended to be a sign. Pointing beyond the bread.

[10 : 12] Pointing to Jesus. Pointing to the bread in capital letters. And Jesus answered their criticism.

He reminded them. That God. It was God. It wasn't Moses. Who gave them the bread. It came from God.

God sent the bread. That would sustain. One day at a time. But now. He is sending the true bread. From heaven. Bread. Which is going to satisfy. Forever. Bread. Which gives. Everlasting life. And Jesus was saying.

That we need. More than physical bread. We need something. To sustain us. For eternity. Jesus now says.

[11 : 17] To the crowd. In the synagogue. I. Am the bread. Of life. Whoever. Whoever. Comes to me. Will never. Be hungry.

Whoever. Believes in me. Will never. Be thirsty. Bread.

Bread. Is considered. A necessary. Food. Bread. Is essential. And in the same way. Christ. Is necessary.

Without him. We perish. Without him. There is no. Eternal life. No. Hope. Jesus says.

I. Am the bread. Of life. The food. Of immortality. The living bread. That comes down. From heaven. The bread. Which I give.

[12 : 15] Is my flesh. Which I give. For the life. Of the world. The bread. The bread. But the crowd.

Mock him. They don't. Believe. How can this man. Give us his flesh. Who does he think he is. But Jesus was saying to them. Don't spend. All your time. Trying to get that. Which perishes. Is. But give time. And thought.

To that. Which does not perish. You can give your time. To the things of the world. But they are going to pass away. You'd better think. Of the life.

That never ends. And get ready for it. Don't be more eager. To supply. The desires. Of the body. Than the needs.

[13 : 14] Of the soul. Billions. Here are people. There are more power. Billions and billions of dollars and unbelievable amounts of time are spent looking for material satisfaction.

But little thought is given to the things of eternal life. We create all types of entertainment for ourselves. We pump it to the people over the television, through computer, in the internet. We send it over the radio. We show it on screen and stage. We plan all sorts of sporting events. We go all out to amuse and entertain ourselves.

We feast our bodies, but starve our souls. Jesus is saying that the spiritual should come before the material.

Soul growth is more important than bodily pressure. And Jesus wasn't saying that we should neglect ourselves.

[14 : 25] He was just saying we have to put them in the right order. The spiritual first, then the material.

When Jesus said that he was the bread, when he spoke of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, he did not intend for us to take these expressions literally.

They are metaphors, similar to other expressions, like I am the door and I am the vine. But the eating and the drinking are a very graphic way of explaining what he had in mind.

It wasn't until a year later that Jesus would institute an outward sign which represented the benefits of his death. He chose the sign of eating and drinking.

He chose that sign and made that the sacramental actions which we celebrate at Holy Communion each week.

[15 : 45] But eating and drinking is a very graphic way of saying that we must take Christ into our innermost being.

We must take Christ into our innermost being. And this we do by believing in him. By believing in him, we derive nourishment from him.

By believing in him, we come to live upon him. There's no other words that can express it with such accuracy.

We must absorb him, his teaching, his character, his mind, his way. We must absorb him, live upon him.

And so intimate and vital is this relationship between Christ and the believer that Jesus compares it to that which existed between God and himself.

[16 : 54] And in verse 37, Jesus says that he will never, never refuse anyone who comes to him. In fact, he says three times, he assures us that if we believe on him, he will raise us up on the last day.

One day death will overtake us all. But it will not be able to hold us. It will not be able to hold us. Because Jesus is stronger than death. And he will raise us up on the last day. I am the bread of life. He is life for us. He is life for us for eternity. Jesus fed the 5,000.

And they gladly followed him. But now he tells them that the picnic is over. They need to think of spiritual things.

[18 : 08] And they need to follow him. But the crowd begin to drift away. And after the crowd leaves, we hear the sad words from Jesus.

And almost hear the disappointment in his voice. He turns to his disciples and says, You do not want to leave too, do you?

You do not want to leave too, do you? Are you following or forsaking Jesus?

Are you following or forsaking him? Many of Jesus' disciples turned back that day.

They no longer followed him from this time. Perhaps we can imagine what they were saying. Oh, we really thought, after that miracle of feeding the 5,000, that he intended to bring about some social reform.

[19 : 31] But it seems he was just one of those religious cranks, after all, talking about pie in the sky when we die. And a lot of super spiritual claptrap about coming down from heaven.

And that offensive gibberish about eating his flesh. It's a pity. A person with his gifts could have changed the world.

You do not want to leave too, do you? Jesus asked the twelve. And Simon Peter answered him, Lord, Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.

To whom shall we go? Let us go to Christ. He has the words of eternal life.

[20 : 51] Amen.