

John 6:22-71. After feeding 5,000 families, the Galileans wanted more food from Jesus... free food without end. The Lord responds, upsets the crowds, and nearly everyone left Him thereafter. They wanted bread, but not the kind Jesus was offering—Himself.

This section is a reminder that Jesus never promised to be a divine benefactor. He offers Himself as Lord and Savior, promising to save and satisfy the soul of man forever.

A military and political genius, Julius Caesar transformed the old Roman Republic into the Roman Empire. He ascended politically through various offices and alliances, soon becoming feared as a powerful general.

Caesar's success unnerved the Senate, so this body challenged him, and each came to regret it. He stunned the Republic by eliminating his enemies and then crowned himself ruler. Were we to sum up the life of Julius Caesar, perhaps his own words would be most fitting: *Veni, Vidi, Vici*—"I came, I saw, I conquered."

Often the legacy of a man's life can be remembered with a few words. For Winston Churchill, the words "blood, toil, tears and sweat" come to mind or his impassioned charge to "never give in." For Jesus, "My kingdom is not of this world," or, "the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost" both tower over His ministry (John 18:36; Luke 19:10). Though His life has touched billions in the most remarkable ways, His central purpose was clear. John shows us this in the sixth chapter of his Gospel.

The Lord previously identified Himself as the Moses-like prophet by feeding a massive crowd (Deut 18:18; John 6:1-15). They were eager to crown Him as king, but Jesus dismissed everyone to be alone in prayer. No one understood until the following day.

"I am the bread of life" (John 6:48). And what must one do to eat of this bread? Believe (John 6:29). The miraculous meal was a physical symbol of this spiritual reality. As a loaf satisfies hunger for a time, Jesus satisfies the soul of man for an eternity.

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD! (JOHN 6:22-27)

After being dismissed, the crowd saw Jesus hike the mountain to be alone while His disciples departed by boat to Capernaum. By the time the sun had risen again, word had spread of the miraculous meal. People came from other regions for their share (John 6:22-24).

Moses miraculously provided food to millions for 40 years—this was the baseline. If the Prophet was greater than Moses, and Jesus was that Prophet, then feeding 5,000 families for dinner wasn't much. Why did the people come back the next morning? For more food and more miracles. Bare minimum, they wanted breakfast.

Imagine that—an endless supply of free food. The people believed they were on the threshold of a divine welfare state until Jesus sets the record straight. *Quit thinking about free food!* There is far more to life than just taking care of the body; what about the soul? *Work for food that will last forever* (John 6:27).

SOUL FOOD? (JOHN 6:28-40)

Food that will last forever? The vast crowds weren't upset at this point, but further intrigued. They wonder if Jesus is about to give them some kind of "super bread". They wanted it, and they were willing to work for it. *So, what must we do?* (John 6:28).

John 6:29—This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.

Jesus explains this different kind of bread is received with a different kind of work. You can't labor for it—this bread and all it entails is a work of God. It's a gift, and God has done all the work to prepare it for His people. *Believe, and it's yours* (Rom 10:9; Eph 2:8-9). The crowd wasn't interested.

The prior day Jesus refused to reign or overthrow Rome, and here He is refusing to provide more free food. *What kind of Prophet is this?* The Galileans believed in Jesus' power, but they started to despise Him for doing so little with it. We read how they tried to manipulate, citing Scripture to coerce Jesus. *Well, Moses fed the people. Aren't you supposed to be greater? Prove it!* (John 6:30-31, 34).

Jesus offered spiritual bread. The physical bread He miraculously provided set the stage for this teaching. In other words, what the Lord created the day before was meant to illustrate something. That meal wouldn't be the first of many; it was meant to be a picture. As food sustains the body, Christ sustains the soul. Moses could do nothing of the sort.

John 6:35—I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Bread of Life

If you stop for a second: Everything Jesus gives, He already is. For instance, Christ offered bread saying, “I am the bread.” He offered life saying, “I am the life.” He offered truth saying, “I am the truth.” He offered love saying, “I am love” (John 14:6; 1 John 4:8). What feeds the soul of man isn’t a thing but a person—Christ. To have Him residing within is to have all that is truly good and fulfilling working within.

The human heart is an endless factory of desire, and the will is ever bent on finding fulfillment. In a world littered with broken cisterns and castles of sand, God offers pure fulfillment both now and forevermore. Is it any wonder the psalmist so passionately urged the people to “taste and see that the Lord is good”? (Psa 34:8).

DIVINE MYSTERIES

(JOHN 6:41-59)

They came eager for food and left hungry in more ways than one. They were confused. They loved Jesus for His miracles; they hated Him for His words. They grumbled, and their questions mocked the words of Christ (John 6:41-42, 52, 60-61). Jesus wouldn’t give in to their demands, so they refused to believe Him. He didn’t produce bread, so they didn’t care about the bread He offered.

Unbelief is a spiritual problem often disguised as an intellectual one. The crowd attacked Jesus’ rationale with their questions, His words offended them (John 6:42, 52, 60). Contempt came to the surface, and they interpreted Jesus in such a crassly literal way that made Him seem a lunatic.

The crowd didn’t need another miracle or more evidence. Had Jesus created more bread, they would’ve asked for more the next day and thereafter. What would’ve overcome their unbelief? God reaching down, breaking the hardness of their hearts, and drawing each to Himself (John 6:37, 44, 65).

It’s not that God kept anyone from believing that day. All who sincerely or humbly look for Him will find Him (Jer 29:13). The problem is no one naturally seeks truth or humbly searches for God (Rom 1:18). The heart is naturally biased and hardened against belief (Rom 3:10-18). This is what Jesus saw with the Galileans, and it’s at the root of unbelief to this day.

The words of Christ were tough, but they separated the wheat from the chaff that day. And so, what did Jesus mean? Throughout this discourse He equated believing His words with eating His flesh (John 6:35, 47-50). It was a metaphor based on the previous day’s meal. As bread sustained the crowd physically, so He could sustain them spiritually. By feeding on Him, believing in Him, sinners can be saved and live forever (John 6:47, 58).

SCANDALOUS WORDS

(JOHN 6:60-71)

Jesus dashed the hopes of the crowd when he didn’t provide food. Like a bait and switch, the crowd felt betrayed. *You’re the bread?! That’s not what we came for!!* And with that realization, they left (John 6:60). The Lord asked if His words “offend” which in the Greek is the word *skandalon*. His message was a scandal, and in their estimation Jesus wasn’t the Prophet but a fraud (John 6:61).

The crowd was willing to follow Christ as long as He made all their dreams come true. When He refused, His following of so many Galileans vanished. The Lord had healed their diseases, fed them, taught them, and offered Himself to them, but everything ended as it began... with no one. Few things in life are more painful than to pour out your heart and soul into someone only to be rejected. As a man, Jesus came to know that pain like none other (Heb 2:17-18).

As He watched the crowd leave, Jesus turned to the only twelve still there—His disciples. The original text conveys the emotion of a broken-hearted messiah: “You won’t go away also, will you?” (John 6:67).

Though knowing the end from the beginning, it still grieves the heart of God that any should reject Him and perish. And so, Christ asked His disciples what they would do. Peter replied, “To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed” (John 6:68-69). Seeking Christ’s face, what was in His hand no longer mattered. With the Lord they realized they needed no more in life. He was the real bread.