

INTRODUCTION

1. Please turn in your Bibles to John chapter 6.
2. We are continuing where we left off last time.
3. According to verse 22 it is the “next day” after the feeding of the 5000.
4. And now the crowds are looking for Jesus.
5. The previous evening Jesus had sent His disciples to Capernaum before a storm came upon while in the boat.
6. Jesus comes to them walking on the sea and demonstrates to them His power over nature, time, and space.
7. Now it is the next day and the crowds are looking for Jesus.
8. Listen to what John writes beginning at verse 22.
9. Read John 6:22-34.
10. As we have been seeing so far in our study of the gospel of John, everyone does not seek after Jesus for the right reasons.
11. That is certainly true in our present passage.

12. The crowds had been fed by Jesus supernaturally and now it's the next day and they want more food.
13. You could say it was breakfast time and they wanted Jesus to do for them again what He did the afternoon before.
14. Jesus said in Matthew 12:39, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and *yet* no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet."
15. Signs were meant to point to something but sometimes people are only interested in the sign itself and not what it is pointing to.
16. What is the sign that God has given concerning His Son?
17. The cross and the resurrection from the dead.
18. This was the sign of Jonah the prophet—Jesus three day and three nights in the heart of the earth.
19. This section in John's gospel begins with *the seeking crowd* in verse 22.
20. Verse 22 says, "The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but *that* His disciples had gone away alone."

I. The Seeking Crowd (vv.22-25)

There were a couple of things the crowds knew with certainty. They knew that Jesus was not there and...

A. They Knew Jesus Didn't Leave with His Disciples (vv.22-25)

It is now the day after the one in which the five thousand were fed.

The multitudes of people are still in the area northeast of the Sea of Galilee.

They had watched the disciples get into the small boat the previous evening, and they knew that Jesus had not gone with them.

Only one boat had been available at that time, and the disciples had taken it.

The following day, boats had come from Tiberias, near the place where the Lord Jesus had fed the multitude.

But the Lord could not have departed in one of these because they had just arrived.

But perhaps it was in these small boats that the multitude crossed over to Capernaum, as recorded in the following verses.

The people had watched Jesus very carefully.

They knew that He had gone up into the mountain to pray.

They knew that He had not gone in the boat with the disciples across the lake.

Yet on the following day He was nowhere to be found. They decided to cross the sea to Capernaum, where the disciples were most likely to be.

They could not understand how Jesus could be there, but they decided to go and seek Him anyway.

Arriving at Capernaum, they found Him there.¹

John 6:59 tells that the ensuing discourse occurs in the synagogue in Capernaum.

A.W. Pink says, “The multitude, whose hearts were set on making the Miracle-worker their ‘king,’ apparently collected early in the morning to carry their purpose into effect.”²

B. They Find Jesus in Capernaum (v.25)

And said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You get here?”

¹William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995). Jn 6:22.

² A.W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1945, 1975), 311.

The one thing we must understand about the crowd is their motive for finding Jesus was not so they may receive salvation. They were not interested in worshiping or obeying Him as did His disciples. They followed Him for what they could get.

Remember verse 2 said they followed Him “because they saw the signs which He was performing on the sick.”

The previous evening was no different only that this time they experienced His miraculous power and provision.

But instead of responding with humble worship (like the Twelve), they wanted more from Him.

They had no other interest in Jesus. They wanted Him to serve them.³

Jesus doesn't answer their question. He addresses their true motives in seeking Him and reveals to them that He is...

II. The Bread of Life (vv.26-40)

First...

A. Jesus Confronts the Crowds (v.26)

³John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary : John 1-11* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006). 236.

He “answered them and said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.’”

Here Jesus lays bare their selfish, materialistic hearts. Leon Morris says “They were moved not by full hearts, but by full bellies.”⁴

If they had understood the spiritual significance of those signs, they would have “prostrated themselves before Him in worship” (Pink).

But as we see in verse 26, Jesus knew their true motives.

There are no secrets hidden from Him. As A.W. Pink says, “He knows why different ones put on religious garments when it suits their purpose—why, at times, some are so loud in their religious pretensions—why they profess to be Christians. Hypocrisy is very sinful, but its folly and uselessness are equally great.”⁵

After revealing their true motives...

B. Jesus Instructs the Crowds (vv.27-34)

⁴ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 358.

⁵ A.W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1945, 1975), 312.

He begins in verse 27 to teach them what they should really be seeking after.

He says...

1. “Do not work for the food which perishes” (v.27a)

Jesus is rebuking their purely materialistic notions of the kingdom (*cf.* v. 15).

Like the woman at the well who was eager to be supplied with an endless supply of natural water, a supply that would eliminate the need to make frequent trips to the well (4:15), so these people hanker after a miracle-worker who will fill their stomachs with bread (6:26).⁶

So Jesus in essence says, “Stop laboring for that which is temporal and seek after that which is eternal.”

- a) “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Mat.6:33).
- b) “The Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things” (v.32).

⁶D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991). 284.

- c) When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan, Satan tempted Him with food because He had been fasting for forty days and nights but Jesus said to him in Matthew 4:4, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’”
- d) You need to have the same perspective that Job had in Job 23:12, when he said, “I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.”

Don’t live for your belly, live for your soul. Invest in the things that will feed your soul.

Thomas Manton said, “A man’s greatest care should be for that place where he lives longest; therefore eternity should be his scope.”⁷

So, stop working “for the food which perishes.”

- 2. Work “for the food which endures to eternal life” (v.27b)

Men and women should pour their energy into pursuing (*i.e.* they should ‘work for’) *food that endures to eternal life*.⁸

⁷I.D.E. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations*, electronic ed. (Simpsonville SC: Christian Classics Foundation, 1996).

Jesus' point was that all that these Jews were interested in was physical satisfaction.

They had received an unexpectedly free and lavish meal; and they wanted more. But there are other hungers which can be satisfied only by him.

There is the hunger for truth—in him alone is the truth of God. There is the hunger for life—in him alone is life more abundant.

There is the hunger for love—in him alone is the love that outlasts sin and death.

Christ alone can satisfy the hunger of the human heart and soul.⁹

When Jesus calls for them to “work” “for the food which endures to eternal life,” He does not mean that they are to “work” for their salvation.

Salvation is not acquired by works.

⁸D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991). 284.

⁹*The Gospel of John : Volume 1*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975). 212.

- a) Ephesians 2:9 says, “Not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
- b) Titus 3:5 says, “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus uses the term “work” to refer to what they were seeking. Instead of seeking food that perishes, they should be seeking for the food “which endures to eternal life.”

What was that “food?” Jesus.

He was pointing the crowds to Himself.

- c) Just as He told the Samaritan women in John 4:14, “But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life”, so He says to the crowds who had followed Him to Capernaum to work for the “food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.”

- d) He tells them later in this discourse to eat His flesh and drink His blood

Verses 54-56 says, “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵” For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.”

In other words, Jesus is not only interested in fulfilling your physical hunger but also your spiritual.

- e) He said in Matthew 5:6, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

3. The crowd responds to Jesus’ offer (v.28)

They ask Him, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?”

As He had just exhorted them to concern themselves chiefly for another kind of food, they take Him up at His word, and ask what they are to do to comply with this that He proposes.¹⁰

¹⁰David Thomas, *The Genius of the Fourth Gospel : A Homiletical Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Kregel Bible

Before we commend their question we must understand when Jesus spoke about the works of God, the Jews immediately thought in terms of “good” works.

It was their conviction that a man by living a good life could earn the favor of God.

They held that men could be divided into three classes—those who were good, those who were bad and those who were in between, who, by doing one more good work, could be transferred to the category of the good.

So when the Jews asked Jesus about the work of God they expected him to lay down lists of things to do. But that is not what Jesus says at all.¹¹

John Calvin said, “The multitude understood well enough that Christ had exhorted them to aim at something higher than the conveniences of the present life, and that they ought not to confine their attention to the earth, since God calls them to more valuable blessings. But, in putting this

study classics (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997). 156.

¹¹*The Gospel of John : Volume 1*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975). 213.

question, they are partly mistaken by not understanding the kind of *labor*; for they do not consider that God bestows upon us, by the hand of the Son, all that is necessary for spiritual life.”¹²

4. Jesus tells them what “the work of God” is (v.29)

He says, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

The “work of God” or literally “What God requires” is “not the works of the law, nor the bringing of an offering to His temple altar; but faith in Christ.”¹³

William MacDonald says, “Jesus saw through their hypocrisy. They pretended that they wanted to work for God, and yet they did not want to have anything to do with the Son of God. **Jesus** told them that the first thing they must do is accept the One whom God had **sent**. So it is today. Many are seeking to earn their way to heaven by good works. But before they can do good works for

¹²John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: John*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998). Jn 6:28.

¹³ A.W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1945, 1975), 320.

God, they must first **believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ. Good works do not precede salvation; they follow it. The only good **work** a sinner can do is to confess his sins and receive Christ as Lord and Savior.”¹⁴

The only work God desired was faith or trust in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God (cf. Mal. 3:1). The “work” that God requires is to believe in His Son (cf. 5:24).¹⁵

- a) God said in Deuteronomy 18:18-19 says, “I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. ¹⁹ It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require *it* of him.”

- b) When Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John in Matthew 17, verse 5 says, “While he [Peter] was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My

¹⁴William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995). Jn 6:29.

¹⁵John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997). Jn 6:29.

beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased;
listen to Him!”

God’s command has always been to listen to His Son but the Jews were “unwilling to come to [Him] so that [they] may have life” (John 6:40).

- c) 1 John 3:23 says, “This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.”

5. The crowd asks for a sign (vv.30-31)

“So they said to Him, ‘What then do You do for a sign, so 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 out of heaven to eat.’”

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. They wanted to “see and believe.”¹⁶

¹⁶Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989). Jn 6:22.

Their question in verse 30 again reveals their true motives. All they were after was what they could get from Jesus.

If He was to offer them “the food which endures to eternal life” (v.27), then He needed to authenticate it with a sign.

Jesus already stated in verse 27 that the “Father, God, has set His seal” on Him.

As Nicodemus has already noted in John, no one could do the signs Jesus had done without God’s approval (3:2).

The “sealing” is both God’s stamp of approval and his mark of identification to serve as credentials for Jesus.²² He is the certified, authorized, “franchise” distributor of the bread of life.¹⁷

John MacArthur says, “They were brazenly demanding Jesus’ credentials, in response to His claim in verse 29 to be the One sent from God.

²² See *BAGD*, p. 796. *BAGD* claims that in this verse σφραγίζω takes on a sense of “endue with power from heaven,” but surely this is an interpretive gloss that goes far beyond the meaning of the word. Similarly the *NLT* renders this phrase as “God the Father has sent me for that very purpose.” This unnecessarily weakens the force of this verb.

¹⁷ Beauford H. Bryant and Mark S. Krause, *John*, The College Press NIV commentary (Joplin, Mo.: College Press Pub. Co., 1998). Jn 6:26.

The people's foolish demand demonstrated their thickheaded and self-centered curiosity, graphically illustrating the spiritual blindness that engulfs the unredeemed. John Calvin observed, "This wicked question clearly shows the truth of what is said elsewhere: 'A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign' (Matthew 12:39)" (Alister McGrath and J. I. Packer, eds., *John*, The Crossway Classic Commentaries [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1994], 156). Jesus' miraculous feeding of the huge crowd just the day before was ample proof of His deity.

Unbelief, however, is never satisfied, no matter how much evidence is given."¹⁸

Jesus had exhorted the crowd to believe (6:29), but instead they demanded another sign (cf. 2:18; Matt. 12:38; 16:1; Luke 11:16; 1 Cor. 1:22).

Specifically, they wanted a repeat performance of the miraculous feeding they had just experienced, as is indicated by their statement, "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written (cf. Ex. 16:4, 15; Neh. 9:15; Pss. 78:24; 105:40), 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat' " (cf. v. 26).

¹⁸John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* : *John 1-11* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006). 243.

Rather than worshiping Jesus as Messiah and Savior, they wanted Him to continually give them bread out of heaven to eat with their mouths, not their hearts, like Moses had done by providing manna in the wilderness for the entire nation for forty years.¹⁹

6. Jesus has no intention of gratifying the crowd's materialistic whims (vv.32-34)

He begins with the same phrase that He used in verse 26, (amen, amen) to underscore the significance of what He was about to say.

He says in verses 32-33, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.”³³ “For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.”

Jesus corrects their history. It was not Moses who have “you the bread out of heaven, but it is My father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.”

In Exodus 16:4, “the Lord said to Moses, ‘Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion

¹⁹John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* : *John 1-11* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006). 243.

every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.”

But the “true bread” that Jesus was referring to in verse 32 was Himself not what God gave the children of Israel in the wilderness.

He says in verse 33, “For the bread of God is that which (or better “He who comes) comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.”

It’s very clear in verse 33 that He is speaking of Himself, especially the end of the verse.

Again, verse 34 reveals their selfishness by what they say next: “Then they said to Him, ‘Lord, always give us this bread.’”

They were only interested in a Messiah who could fill their stomachs and one who could politically overthrow the Romans.

They were not interested in a Messiah who was a Savior of their sin.

CONCLUSION

1. The same is true today.
2. There are people who attach themselves to Christ for various reasons.
3. They see Jesus as a miracle-worker and not as a Savior.

The Bread of Life

John 6:22-34 (Preached 7/20/08) © 2008

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4. Jesus said His purpose in coming was to “seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk.19:10).
5. What about you?
6. What are you seeking?
7. Are you like the crowds or are you truly seeking the One who alone can forgive you of all your sin?
8. Jesus is the bread of life who came down out of heaven.
9. He who comes to Him will not hunger or thirst but have eternal life.
10. Let's pray.