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Jesus the bread of life part 1. see also Ex 16:11-36

lembas-waybread

In Tolkien's mythical world of Lord of the Rings, the Elves have created Lembas, a bread which with only one bite can sustain a traveller over many leagues. This bread as always in Tolkien's world alludes to something far deeper found in the biblical account.

John, in writing to the many who look to him for guidance as the last remaining Apostle, is seeking to guide his audience to understand who Jesus really is, and continues his account of Jesus self revelation to those around the are where Jesus grew and worked.

John (and now his readers) know that Jesus has met the disciples in the middle of the lake, in an overt statement of who he is, Jesus uses the words "I Am" to declare his divinity (while walking on water to prove the point). The crowd in this story are unaware of this occurrence, many are still arriving to see what is going on, and now the crowd find themselves bereft of Jesus and the disciples, and set out to find him. They return to Capernaum, Jesus home town, where his family now live and he had moved to for his business from Nazareth.

The question Jesus, and by default John, asks of their audience, and now Dear Reader we must answer, is, "are we coming to Jesus with the right attitude?" "How teachable are you?"

In Today's society, everything is focussed about us. We enter a shop and are asked, "how can we help", adverts tell us we are "worth it". WE are conditioned to seek things which benefit our choice, and our lives in our manner. This is not the way of the cross.

In Jesus time, the time of Rome, the same pressures came upon the crowd, to conform to the Roman value system, it was managed via "Bread and Circuses"

Rome gave free bread to all it's citizens. This might not seem much, but we need to consider the importance of bread in most cultures.

Bread is defined in economics as a “Giffen good”- In economics and consumer theory, a **Giffen good** is a product that people consume more of as the price rises and vice versa—violating the basic law of demand in microeconomics.

What this means is that bread is so important that people will pay more for it as it’s price goes up. It is so needed as a basic for life.

To be able to supply this basic need to all it’s citizens, spoke to the inhabitants of Rome about it’s power and sovereignty. It also gave a goal for all other outlying provinces to aim for.

The circuses referred to the entertainment provided by the empire for those that conformed, the Netflix of the day.

Jesus in this early discussion challenges the crowd questioning the teachability of the crowd, do they truly want to know Jesus or are they just interested in "Bread and Circuses.”

Jesus confronts this issue head on, stating that there asking of him is not out of desire for truth, but because they want there physical needs met, they have failed to realise what the signposts found in the Torah truly mean.

"They address him as *Rabbi* (*cf.* notes on 1:38), betraying their own confusion and uncertainty: they acknowledge him as teacher though they are about to dispute his teaching, they clamour for him as king (v. 15) though they understand little of the nature of his reign. The question they ask means both *when did you get here?* (niv) and ‘How long have you been here?’ D. A. Carson

And He said, “I know that you came to me to have your physical needs met. But I didn’t come here to fulfill your physical desires. I came here to take care of your spiritual needs.”

But if the Gospel of John is teaching us anything, it’s teaching us that seeing is not always believing, is it? Because it takes absolutely no faith to see a miracle. What takes faith is believing in the One who can perform miracles if He so chooses. And what takes even more faith is believing in the One who might choose not to perform a miracle.

Jesus understands this, which is why he chooses not to answer their question about how he arrived, but to direct the crowd towards the truth, “seek what the Son of Man can give you”

"Had he told them the nature of his crossing, doubtless they would have been impressed; but what follows shows that mere miracles can be corrosive of genuine faith." D. A. Carson

"Jesus prefers not to use a term such as ‘Messiah’ in the context of such heated messianic/political expectations; he opts for *Son of Man*, a more ambiguous term which nevertheless is increasingly laden, in John, with associations of revelation brought from heaven to earth” -D. A. Carson

Jesus is asking them, "how teachable are you?"

"They were looking for the answers they already had in their heads. The problem was, the answers they already had in their heads were wrong.”-

“You think you’re special—if you were really special, you’d do what Moses did.” Once again, that points out their horrible unbelief. But Jesus had already exposed that. Now it was time to expose their false religion. And Jesus told them that it was not about what Moses gave them. He told them it was about the life that God has offered them in His Son. And when Jesus did that, He stuck right at the heart of their religion. They thought that they could achieve their own righteousness through the law of Moses. But the law of Moses is just like the manna of Moses. It quickly perishes. In 2 Corinthians 3:6, Paul writes that the letter of the law kills, but the Spirit gives life. In other words, the only thing that the Law can do is show us how far we fall short of God’s perfect righteousness. Galatians 3:24 says, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” The Law is our schoolmaster to show us how far we fall short of God’s perfect righteousness. And when we look into that mirror and see our sin, the only thing it can point us to is our need for a Saviour.”

Now, by asking for a continual supply, they were asking for the kind of bread they ate the day before or for the manna that they were just talking about. They weren’t asking for the everlasting bread that Jesus was talking about. All they were looking for was a perpetual source of bread that they could physically eat.

This crowd, like the woman at the well, were thinking in earthy terms only, how can their life be easier, how can they be satisfied, how can we

tap into a Jewish version of what the Romans were promising through their leader, the "God Emperor."

Do our lives reflect the seeking after God on his terms?

The Fathers Seal

This interchange is recorded so swiftly, that we may miss a key statement by Jesus about himself, that of bearing the "seal of God the Father's approval"

A seal was and still is a statement of authenticity about the item so marked. Jesus claim in a sentence is that he has the truth from the Father, and because of this has not only the ability, but also the right to set their theology straight.

In the minds of his listeners is the background of Psalm 78:24- "He rained down manna for them to eat; he gave them bread from heaven." and the event of Moses declaring God's word about the manna in the desert.

The people are looking for this same way of being "taken care of", and challenge Jesus to show them his power again, "At a superficial level, the signs attest that Jesus has remarkable powers; but the signs must never be assessed as nothing more than attesting portents. This particular miracle had filled the bellies of the people, and the crowd loved it (*you ate the loaves and had your fill*) and were willing on that basis to sign up immediately. Mark insists that even the Twelve 'had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened' (Mk. 6:52; cf. 8:14-21). How much less had the crowds understood that the sign bore parabolic significance. It was a symbol-laden miracle, a 'sign' that pointed to the gospel itself, to Jesus himself. John sets himself the task of expounding that hidden meaning, by reporting Jesus' bread of life discourse in the following verses."- D. A. Carson,

Are we satisfied with daily bread?, do we want weekly cake or yearly beef? How much do we desire God to prove himself to us, are we coming with a heart of openness, to be teachable to discover who Jesus truly is, or are we coming with a desire to see our own needs taken care of?

We as believers do remembrance with the Lord's supper, of what Jesus has done for us with his death and resurrection, but we need to understand that

'John 6 is not about the Lord's Supper; rather, the Lord's Supper is about what is described in John 6.' -D. A. Carson

Because Jesus is the Bread of Life, We Must Not Labor For Other Bread (John 6.22-27)

"Eating the flesh of the Son of Man is a striking, metaphorical way of saying that the gift of God's real 'bread of life' (v. 35) is appropriated by faith (v. 47). We must appropriate him into our inmost being. Indeed, we are more familiar with this kind of 'eating' metaphor than we may realize: we devour books, drink in lectures, swallow stories, ruminate on ideas, chew over a matter, and eat our own words. Doting grandparents declare they could eat up their grandchildren. On the very face of it, 'The theme of John 6 is Christology.'" -D. A. Carson

"Men and women should pour their energy into pursuing (*i.e.* they should 'work for') *food that endures to eternal life* (*cf.* 'a spring of water welling up into eternal life', 4:14). The continuing discourse shows that the 'food' is Jesus himself, but the idea is not so much that Jesus endures forever as that, because this food endures, the life it sustains goes on into eternity." - D. A. Carson,

Working our way to Heaven

Yet the people despite their claim of "wanting to perform God's works" are trapped in their mindset of "working their way to heaven"

Ill- How much will it cost to purchase your honour?, the very question in itself is offensive, as if honour can be bought, the same question is posed, tell us what we can do to earn our way to heaven, is offensive as it assumes that heaven can be earned, and not that it is a free gift given to the unworthy by a grace filled God.

People who want to earn something haven't grasped the concept of sin

Sin is Evil, God is good. We misunderstand the depth of what Sin is, and how evil it is. Correspondingly, we misunderstand the nature of God and what Good means once defined by his character.

"Jesus sets them straight: *The work of God—i.e.* what God requires—is faith. This is not faith in the abstract, an existential trust without a coherent object. Rather, they must *believe in the one [God] has sent*. Such language may reflect a specific Old Testament passage, such as Malachi 3:1"- D. A. Carson

“Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.- Mal 3:1

"Jesus is supremely the one who reveals God to us, precisely because, unlike any other person, he has been in the courts of heaven and has been sent from there so that the world might be saved through him (*e.g.* 3:11–17). Faith, faith with proper Christological object, is what God requires, not ‘works’ in any modern sense of the term. And even the faith that we must exercise is the fruit of God’s activity”- D. A. Carson

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? If this is what the synagogue crowd means, it is a demand that Jesus prove his messianic status by duplicating or surpassing the miracle of the manna. But Jesus could not possibly acquiesce to such a demand. With the crowd’s interest in a primarily political messiah, for Jesus to give in to their demand would have been to acknowledge the rightness of the aspirations they had displayed the day before, aspirations he had then rejected (vv. 14, 15). Worse still, it would have meant the domestication of his revealing and saving work: he would have become captive to the whims of a demanding crowd D. A. Carson

The crowd have not understood, "They thought God’s order is see and believe. But the divine order is believe and see" (cf. John 11:40)- Edwin A. Blum

"They wanted to “see and believe.” But faith that is based on signs alone, and not on the truth of the Word, can lead a person astray; for even Satan is able to perform “lying wonders” (2 Thes. 2:8–10)." -Warren W. Wiersbe

"The quotation in John 6:31 is from Psalm 78:24, a psalm that records the unbelief and rebellion of the nation of Israel." Warren W. Wiersbe

Can we open our eyes, can we come to the saviour with an attitude of teachability, are we willing to learn on Jesus terms?

Jesus is in a direct confrontation as to who he is and to what he has come to bring to the people of Israel, and ultimately to the world, he starts to challenge the perception of the crowds.

"In a solemn revelation (**I tell you the truth**; cf. vv. 26, 47, 53) **Jesus** corrected their ideas in three ways. (1) The Father, **not Moses**, gave the manna. (2) The **Father**, was still giving "manna" then, not merely in the past. (3) **The true Bread from heaven** is Jesus, not the manna. Thus the supposed superiorities of Moses and his sign vanish. Manna was food for the body, and it was useful. But Jesus is God's full provision for people in their whole existence. Jesus repeatedly said He had come down from heaven, Jesus' response to their question was a flat contradiction of their thinking. They could not please God by doing good works. There is only one **work of God**, that **is**, one thing God requires. They need to put their trust **in the One** the Father **has sent**. Because of their sin people cannot please God by doing good works for salvation (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). God demands that people recognize their inability to save themselves and receive His gift (Rom. 6:23)."- Edwin A. Blum

"To come to Jesus means to believe on Him, and to believe on Him means to come to Him. Believing is not merely an intellectual thing, giving mental assent to some doctrine. It means to come to Christ and yield yourself to Him. At the close of His sermon, Jesus illustrated *coming* and *believing* by speaking about *eating* and *drinking*. To come to Christ and believe on Him means to receive Him within, just as you receive food and drink."- Warren W. Wiersbe

How we approach Jesus determines how his life can alter ours. Are we teachable?, Will we respond to this revelation?

Practical, What deranges us a believer in Christ, what are we aiming to be

"Christianity is separating into two versions, one that values personal piety, gentleness, respect for cultural mores, and an emphasis on moral issues like abortion and homosexuality, and another that values social justice, community development, racial reconciliation, and political activism. Guess which one is the most popular."-Mike Frost

Does this divergence need to be, or can we be "Holy People who seek to bring Justice to this world of God through our surrender to the bread of life?

Three point to finish with

(1) it serves as a transition from the thought that Jesus *provides* the true bread from heaven (vv. 27ff.) to the thought that Jesus *is* the true bread from heaven (vv. 35ff.);

(2) it expands the recipients from Jews to the world, *i.e.* to lost men and women without distinction, opening up the way to the proposition that the decisive factor is not whether or not one is a member of the Jewish race, an heir of the Mosaic covenant, but whether or not one is taught by God (v. 45), whether or not one believes in Jesus (v. 35) and has been given by the Father to the Son (vv. 37–40);

(3) it reminds us that *this* bread of God is the revealer, the one who has narrated God to us (1:18), the one who alone can tell us heavenly things (3:11–13), the one whose words, because he is the obedient Son, are nothing less than the words of God (5:19ff.).