



**Sunday School Lesson for January 21, 2007
Released on January 17, 2007**

"Jesus is the Bread of Life and Living Water"

Printed Text: John 6:34-40; 7:37-39

Background Scripture: John 6:25-59; 7:37-39

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21

John 6:34-40

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; at believeth on me shall never thirst.

36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 7:37-39

37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

38 He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Lesson Background

In the Gospel of John, we notice Jesus making frequent statements about himself that involve God's sacred name, I Am. For the sake of convenience, we can call these "the 'I am' sayings."

These sayings form an important distinctive in John among the four Gospels. For those interested in statistics, Greek "I am" is used 5 times in Matthew, 3 times in Mark, 4 times in Luke, but 30 times in John. If we take off the "am" part and just consider how often Jesus refers to himself as "I" in an authoritative way, then the occurrences are 29 times in Matthew, 17 times in Mark, 23 times in Luke, but 134 times in John!

These sayings take two forms. We will explore both forms in our lessons over the next several weeks. The first form occurs when Jesus simply applies God's divine name, I Am, directly to himself. He does this to stress His complete union with the Father (John 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19). For those interested in technical things, this is known as the *absolute use of I am*.

The second form occurs in instances where Jesus uses this phrase to start a sentence in which He compares himself to something else. Some examples are "I am the vine" and "I am the good shepherd." Technically speaking these *I am* statements are said to have *explicit predicates*.

Jesus' *I am* remarks in our passage today follow John's account of the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:1-13). Impressed with His power, the people sought to make Jesus king. Perhaps they hoped that He would lead them in a revolution against the Romans. To avoid this Jesus first withdrew to a mountain (v. 15), then to Capernaum (vv. 16-25).

But the crowds found Him anyway. When they did Jesus advised them not to focus on the bread that they had eaten but rather on food that is eternal (vv. 26, 27).

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to teach that Jesus is the Bread of life, and He gives us living water.

Principle: to teach that Jesus fulfills our deepest needs.

Application: to offer Jesus as the supplier of the most fundamental needs of the soul.

1. How did Jesus answer the Jews when they asked what they needed to do in order to do God's work (v29)? (extra credit, not in lesson text).

As we reflect back on the earlier passages in this chapter, we know that the only reason why some of the Jews were following behind Jesus was because of the miracles and healings He had performed. In vv. 10-14, Jesus told his disciples to have the people sit down in which he fed 5,000 of them with 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread. The people were no doubt astonished and began following Jesus because of their desire to be fed physical food/have their physical needs met. They had no knowledge of what they really needed which was "spiritual food". In v26, Jesus told them that the only reason they were following him was because their stomachs were full. Because Jesus saw how determined they were to follow him because of the miraculous feeding, He told them in v27 they should not labor this hard for physical food that will perish but should labor for the food (spiritual food) which leads to everlasting life. In vs. 28, It is evident the Jews didn't fully understand what type of laboring Jesus was talking about because they asked "what shall they do"...They thought Jesus was telling them they could earn eternal life through some type of works which they thought they could do. In v29, Jesus simply answered them and said - "This is the work of God that you believe on Him whom He sent". With this answer, Jesus was trying to relay to them that the only work His Father required was that they have faith by believing in His Son, Jesus.

2. What was revealed when the Jews asked Jesus to give them the bread He was talking about? (v34)

In vv. 30-33, the Jews continued to ask Jesus for signs. They even brought up the manna their forefathers ate and said it was given to them from Moses. However, Jesus corrected them and said that "manna" came from heaven through his Father and not Moses. Jesus then went on to talk about the bread of God that comes down from heaven to give life to the world by which He (Jesus) is that bread of life. As we look at v34, the Jews still didn't get it. They were spiritually blind and not able to comprehend the true spiritual meaning of Jesus' words. They still were hung up on the physical bread in hopes of having their physical needs met.

3. How were Jesus' thoughts about bread different from theirs? (v35)

In v35, Jesus plainly told them, He, himself is the bread of life. Furthermore, he added whoever came and believed in Him would never hunger or thirst again. Since He was referring to Himself as the Bread, He obviously was not talking about physical food but spiritual food that leads to eternal life.

4. How does the concept of bread giving physical satisfaction convey the needs of a human life? (v35)

In v35, we see that Jesus says that he who comes to Him shall never hunger, and he who believes in Him shall never thirst. Here, Jesus is conveying that bread only satisfies the ailment of hunger temporarily and then the hunger pains set in again once the physical bread/food wears off and we are in search of more food to fill our appetite. The point Jesus was making was not

that of physical food but being "spiritually satisfied". There is in the heart of every unsaved person an emptiness that keeps him from feeling completely satisfied. It is an emptiness that will not go away as long as the person keeps God out of his life. People try to fill this void in many ways and still find no peace. That peace comes only when a person comes into a right relationship with God by receiving Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. The spiritual hunger and thirst are then satisfied, and the presence of God in his life ensures His desire to meet every need. This is a fact!

5. What had the Jews experienced that should have caused them to believe but did not? (v36)

In v36, Jesus told the Jews that although they have seen Him, they still do not believe that He is the Son of God. As stated earlier, the Jews were impressed with Jesus because of the miraculous feeding He had performed early on; however, their faith was still inadequate. It is not enough simply to believe that Jesus is a prophet or a great teacher; rather, one must accept that His miracles are signs that He is God's unique Son. Those standing before Jesus believed He could feed them with miraculous bread. But they still did not understand His true identity as the one sent from Heaven. They did not grasp that Jesus is so much greater than Moses (compare Hebrews 3:3).

What more did they need to understand who He was and what He was saying to them? We find the same thing happening in our world today. There are some people who simply refuse to believe in Jesus, while others want more information before they commit to Him. Let us reflect on the passage of scripture found in Luke, Ch. 11, when Jesus cast a demon out of a man who had been rendered mute. After an obviously miraculous deliverance had occurred, some of those who had observed it claimed Jesus had cast out the demon by the power of Beelzebub (v15). Others wanted another miracle before they would believe.

6. What did Jesus say about His reception of people coming of Him? (v37)

Jesus assured the people that anyone who came to Him would be gladly received. Charles Ryrie wrote about John 6:37, "This verse combines God's sovereignty, man's responsibility to come, and security for those who do" (Ryrie, ed., Ryrie Study Bible, Moody). This statement balances the teachings in the Bible about God's sovereignty and man's privilege of choice. The doctrine of election is clearly taught in Scripture, but so is the fact that people have the privilege of responding to the gospel or rejecting it.

Jesus said that all those His Father had given to Him will come (God's sovereignty) and that those who come (man's choice) will not be rejected (security of knowing that Jesus will gladly accept them into His Father's family). By this means they will receive eternal life.

7a. How does Jesus' desire to do His Father's will impact our lives today? (v 38)

We should take special note of Jesus' determination to always do His Father's will, and we should let this be a challenge to us. We often speak of wanting to learn God's will regarding major decisions. Is it His will for me to choose this college, marry this particular person, prepare for this type of work, or move to that city? It is good to be concerned about such things, but do we have an equal concern for doing God's will on a daily basis in matters that are not necessarily life changing? Are we always honest, for example, since we know that honesty and integrity are important? Is our language always clean? Do we live faithfully for God in front of our friends, neighbors, and coworkers?

7b. What did Jesus mean by "This is the will of the Father who sent Me" (v 39)?

The reason Jesus will not reject anyone who comes to Him is that He came to earth to do His Father's will. He did not work independently from His Father's will; He did everything in accordance with it. So concerned was Jesus about those coming to Him that in His prayer to the Father in John 17, He asked, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (v. 11).

While many people do not accept Christ, this does not reflect on God's *will* for them. John 3:16, 17 stresses that God loved the world and sent His Son to save the world. This is clear evidence of His desire for all people to "have everlasting life" (also see verse 40 in today's lesson).

Regrettably, however, many people reject this gift and refuse to accept Jesus' offer. Jesus thus challenges His audience to see past the miracle of the bread itself and realize what the miracle points to: He is God's only Son.

8. What offer did Jesus make during the feast in Jerusalem? (John 7:37)

Here is a brief background on a ritual of the feast – a priest carried a golden vessel down to the Pool of Siloam, filled it with water, and then returned to the temple. Upon his arrival he was joined by another priest carrying a vessel of wine. Together they went up to the altar and proceeded to pour out the wine and water, symbolizing God's provision for Israel during the years of wilderness wanderings.

Jesus uses this ceremony as a symbol of the new life that is available to those who believe in Him. Jesus begins with an invitation for those who thirst for God to come to Him and be filled. The symbolic provision of water for a thirsty congregation wandering in the wilderness was now fulfilled in the presence of the living Messiah. Just as the Bread of heaven could satisfy the spiritual longings of a person, so could the living Water. Jesus is the source of living water, and believing in Him not only provides satisfaction for the believer but also allows him to become a source of information and satisfaction for others.

9. What does water being essential for humans mean relative to Jesus?

We know that water is essential for any form of life and it also can temporarily quench our physical thirst – However, Jesus quenches our spiritual thirst. Therefore, Jesus is essential for any person to have spiritual life. Using the illustrations of bread and water, Jesus explained the necessity of having Him in our life if we are to know His Father and know peace and contentment in our heart.

10. What did Jesus mean when He said that rivers of living water would flow out of us? (v38)

In v38, Jesus says that ... anyone who believes on Him, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water – Jesus is saying that our spiritual thirst will be satisfied completely with the flow of living water which is spiritual water that will continue to nourish us and sustain us spiritually. We will never thirst again because there will be a constant flow of spiritual nourishment. This water that Jesus will provide is living and active in the life of the believer.

11. What does verse 39 mean by the “Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified?”

Jesus’ glorification refers to His forthcoming death and resurrection. In John 14:15–19 Jesus promises the disciples that *the Spirit* will come to take His place as their Comforter after His death.

The Spirit will act as the ongoing source of power and authority for the church. He will bring to mind Jesus’ promises so that His followers may enjoy peace in the face of trial (John 14:25–27). In this way Jesus continues to provide for our needs long after He leaves this world. We enjoy this comfort until His return!

CONCLUSION

In our passages for today, Jesus uses bread and water figuratively to stress that He provides everything essential for our spiritual lives. When we need to know God’s will, we look to the one who “came down from heaven”; when we seek strength and guidance, His Spirit refreshes us with “living water”. And unlike physical bread and water, we never grow tired of the heavenly food that Jesus gives us. It tastes new and exciting everyday.

Jesus spoke with images that were vital to the people of His day. It is not our prerogative to change that imagery. Our task, rather, is to explain that imagery carefully. This honors God!

PRAYER:

Lord, help us to never forget that You already have met all of our spiritual needs through Christ. Give us strength as we feed on the bread and water that You have provided. We ask for Your forgiveness for those times when we have not been satisfied with what Christ provides. In Jesus' name, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER:

Christ is the source of everything that we should long for.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON:

Study **John 8:12–20; 12:44–46** **"Jesus Is the Light of the World."**

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