

The Bread of Life Discourse, Part 3

John 6:41-51

John 6:41-51 – *“The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, ‘I am the bread which came down from heaven.’⁴² And they said, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”⁴³ Jesus therefore answered and said to them, “Do not murmur among yourselves.⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.⁴⁶ Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father.⁴⁷ Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.⁴⁸ I am the bread of life.⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead.⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”*

Background Notes

The great Bread of Life Discourse was given in association with the great miracle of the feeding of five thousand. Verse 41 says that *“the Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven.”*

The “Jews” mentioned here were the Jewish leaders at Capernaum. They too were listening to the Lord’s discourse, along with the Galilean multitudes that had participated in that great miracle.

In his Gospel, when John used the term “the Jews,” he meant those Jews who were hostile to Jesus, who were part of the opposition party. In verse 42 those Jews said, *“Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he says, I came down from heaven?”* By saying this, they certainly denied the virgin birth, didn’t they? More than that, they denied the deity of Jesus Christ. These Jews recognized that when the Lord said, *“I am the bread that came down from heaven,”* this was a claim to deity.

Throughout the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus claimed to be God. In verse 46 Jesus made yet another claim to deity: *“Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.”* Certainly this is a claim to deity. The Lord Jesus was not claiming to be the Father. He is the Son - but He is God. The great theme of the Gospel of John is “Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

The Jews didn’t believe Jesus, and they tried to make Jesus out to be just a man with an earthly father and mother. This is exactly what many people do today when they say, “Jesus was just a man - oh, a good man, but He was just a man.” They deny His deity.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. God draws a person to Christ on the basis of His sovereignty.

“No man can come to me, except the Father who has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (v44).

How does that verse strike you? It sounds like we have no choice in the matter of our salvation, and you may not like that idea. God chooses, and that’s it? That might be your first reaction to this verse.

However, I have come to love verses like this! Why? Because I have come to know myself, and I realize that if God hadn’t drawn me, I would never have come to God on my own. Would you? I know that God had to make the first move to draw me to Himself, or I’d still be doing my own thing. So don’t let this doctrine scare you!

You can be sure that if you want to choose the Lord, you can come to Him - but at the same time you can’t deny that God is drawing you! God is sovereign, and He draws a person to Jesus Christ on the basis of his sovereignty. Don’t let that doctrine rattle you! Be thankful for it, because we’ve got to face the facts: we would **not** choose God **on our own**.

When the Fall of Man took place in the Garden of Eden, it affected all of us, and it affected every part of us, including our minds. Our minds don’t naturally want to go toward God; rather, we want to go away from God. If God doesn’t make the first move, with the Holy Spirit probing our hearts and drawing us, we would never come to Christ. So, while the sovereignty of God, election, choosing, drawing, and so forth may seem like tough doctrines for our natural minds to appreciate, yet they’re wonderful doctrines! God draws a person to Christ on the basis of His sovereignty.

2. God draws a person to Christ by the means of Scripture.

“It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (v45). This verse is a quote from Isaiah 54, and it indicates that the primary means by which God reaches out, draws a person to Christ, draws a person to Himself, is through His Word. Romans 10:17: *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*

Think back on your conversion to Christ. I’m sure that you’ll agree that it was the Scriptures you were reading, or Scriptures you had memorized, or the Scriptures that your parents or Sunday school teachers taught you, that God used to draw you to Jesus Christ.

In my own life, the Scripture the Lord used was Revelation 3:20: *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him...”* I realized that I had the responsibility to open the door of my heart to Jesus. *“If anyone will open the door, I will come in and have communion with him, dine with him, and he with me.”* As Paul said to Timothy, *“the Holy Scriptures... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:15).* God draws a person to Christ by the means of Scripture.

3. God draws a person to Christ for the purpose of salvation.

In verse 48 the Lord Jesus said, *“I am that bread of life.”* This is the first of the well-known “I AM” statements in the Gospel of John. We mentioned that back in verse 35, when Jesus said to them, *“I am the bread of life.”*

There are seven “I Am” statements in the Gospel of John.

- *“I am the bread of life”* in John 6.
- *“I am the light of the world”* in John 8.
- *“I am the door”* in John 10.
- *“I am the good shepherd”* in John 10.
- *“I am the resurrection and the life”* in John 11.
- *“I am the way, the truth, and the life”* in John 14.
- *“I am the vine”* in John 15.

Isn't the structure of this Gospel interesting? In the structure of the Gospel of John we have seven sign miracles, we have seven “I Am” statements with a predicate, and we have seven “I Am” statements without a predicate. Examples of what we mean by **with** a predicate” are: *“I am the bread”*... *“I am the door,”* and so forth. The seven “I am” statements **without** a predicate are just “I Am” statements. For example, in John 8:58, *“Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”* “I AM” is the title of deity! That claim to deity is made seven times throughout the Gospel of John.

It's very interesting to see this structure in the Gospel of John, with the overall theme being the deity of Christ! The purpose for the Gospel is to show that Jesus is truly and fully God.

In verses 48-51 the Lord Jesus said, *“I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”*

That is why God draws a person to Christ for salvation. The emphasis is that they will not die - that they will live forever. God doesn't draw us to Christ to make us wealthy, or to give us unlimited good health, or to make our lives easy. He draws us to Christ for **salvation!**

Of course God is interested in other aspects of our lives – that’s for sure! He’s interested in our wellbeing and in our health, but we must recognize, as the Lord said in His Bread of Life discourse, that God draws a person to Christ for salvation. He draws us so we will not die, and so we will live forever. Without Christ we are lost! We will die in our sins. We will be eternally separated from God. That is what “to die” means here. It is not talking about physical death – it’s talking about **eternal separation from God**. In order to live forever, we must partake of the Bread of Life. God draws a person to Christ for the purpose of salvation.

Practical Application

Have you partaken of the Bread of Life?

Verse 51: *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”*

What does it mean to “eat or “partake” of the Bread of Life? Is the Lord talking here about partaking of communion or the Lord’s Supper? **No!** (A resounding **no!**) He was **not** talking about communion, because the mere act of taking communion won’t give us eternal life! The Lord was talking about **salvation**. To “eat the Bread of Life” means to receive Christ as Savior.

Up to verse 51 in the Bread of Life discourse, when the Lord spoke of Himself as the **living** Bread that came down from Heaven, He was referring to His incarnation. However, there is a transition in verse 51: He began to speak of His substitutionary death. Look at the last part of the verse: *“...and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”* Note that the Lord used the future tense here: *“The bread that I shall give is my flesh.”* He had already come as the living Bread from Heaven – that was His incarnation. But He still had to give His body in death as our Substitute. In the discourse, He was moving on to teaching about His work of atonement on the cross is in view here.

Note the substitutionary nature of His death in verse 51: *“...which I will give for the life of the world.”* Now that’s a doctrinal point - but the practical application is obvious. Have you partaken of the bread of life? The question is not “Have you taken communion?” The question **is not** “Have you recognized that Jesus is the living Bread from heaven?” And the question **is not** “Do you acknowledge that Jesus is the Bread of Life?” The question **is** “Have you **partaken** of the Bread of Life?” That is, have you received Jesus Christ as the One who gave His life for you?”

The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross as our substitute. He died for your sins and for my sins. **Have you partaken of the Bread of Life?**