

## **The Gospel of John (40); The Fourth Discourse: Jesus, the Bread of Life (2)**

### **Introduction:**

Last Lord's Day we began to consider this lengthy fourth discourse of Jesus recorded in this Fourth Gospel. We read how Jesus initially rebuked the crowds who had sought Him, for they were doing so from wrong motives. They were not seeking Jesus because they saw the meaning and implications of "the signs" that had testified to Him, that they should place their faith in Him. He was the Son of God incarnate, and therefore they should desire Him, and seek Him, and believe upon as their Lord and Savior. But rather than doing so, they had sought Him for selfish reasons. They saw Him as one that would provide their daily needs, those things that would sustain their physical lives. And so we read our Lord's words in **verses 26 and 27**:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. <sup>27</sup>Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

Now it is true that quite often the Lord will use our temporal concerns and needs in order to bring us initially unto Him. But soon, very soon, we came to see Him for who He is in truth. We came to the time and place that we sought Him and trusted Him for who He is, not just for the things that we might get from Him. He is the Son of God whom the Father has made to be the Savior and Master of sinners. We believe on Him because we came to believe God's witness of His identity and His position as Lord.

These people wanted to be fed by Jesus, just as they had been fed by Him the day before. And Jesus did indeed have food available for them, but food that would not merely sustain their temporal, earthly lives. He had food for them which "endures to everlasting life." Jesus could give them eternal life, for the Father had sealed Him, that is, the Father had authenticated through the signs (miracles) that Jesus had the authority to grant eternal life to them who believed on Him.

When these people heard Jesus speak of their need to "labor" for this bread, they asked Him the question, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" (6:28). These Jews, just as all people everywhere, thought that eternal life was rewarded by God as the result of laboring, of doing, of meriting God's favor. This is the manner in which all the religions of the world operate, as well as many, many, who claim to be Christian. They ask, "What works must I do in order to inherit eternal life?"

But Jesus answered them in John 6:29, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." Our Lord's response, "the work of God", could be understood in two different ways.<sup>1</sup> First, that Jesus was telling them of the one "work" that God requires of people, which is to believe on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This is the means by which God bestows salvation freely on sinners. Or it could be understood a second way, in that Jesus was speaking of the work of God that God Himself performs, enabling the sinner by His grace to believe on Him savingly unto eternal life. And of course later in this passage this is exactly what our Lord asserted: God is the One who is at work in order to bring sinners to salvation, for salvation is by God's grace, not by man's work.

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<sup>1</sup> For you grammar crazies, as I am: Technically, this genitive phrase, "of God", would then be a "plenary genitive", that is, it is both a subjective and objective genitive. Here is the key for identifying this kind of genitive: "Simply apply the 'keys' used for the subjective and objective genitives. If *both* ideas seem to fit in a given passage, *and do not contradict but rather complement one another*, then there is a good possibility that the genitive in question is a plenary (or full) genitive" [Daniel Wallace, **Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics; An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament** (Zondervan, 1996), p. 120.]

**William Shedd** (1820-1894) wrote on this responsibility and opportunity for every sinner to come to Jesus Christ in faith.

In asking their question, the Jews intended to inquire of Christ what *particular* things they must do, before all others, in order to please God. The “works of God,” as they denominate them, were not any and every duty, but those more special and important acts, by which the creature might secure the Divine approval and favor. Our Lord understood their question in this sense, and in His reply tells them, that the great and only work for them to do was to exercise faith in Him. They had employed the plural number in their question; but in His answer He employs the singular. They had asked, “What shall we do that we might work the *works* of God”,—as if there were several of them. His reply is, “This is the *work* of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” He narrows down the terms of salvation to a single one; and makes the destiny of the soul to depend upon the performance of a particular individual act. In this, as in many other incidental ways, our Lord teaches His own divinity. If He were a mere creature; if He were only an inspired teacher like David or Paul; how would He dare, when asked to give in a single word the condition and means of human salvation, to say that they consist in resting the soul upon Him? Would David have dared to say: “This is the work of God,—this is the saving act, —that ye believe in me?” Would Paul have presumed to say to the anxious inquirer: “Your soul is safe, if you trust in me?” But Christ makes this declaration, without any qualification. Yet He was meek and lowly of heart, and never assumed an honor or a prerogative that did not belong to Him. It is only upon the supposition that He was “very God of very God,” the Divine Redeemer of the children of men, that we can justify such an answer to such a question.<sup>2</sup>

I would make one correction to Shedd’s comments. He wrote that the one thing necessary that Jesus requires “makes the destiny of the soul to depend upon the performance of *a particular individual act.*” But our Lord was not telling these people to exercise *a single act of faith*, but rather He was exhorting them to a *life-time of believing*, a life governed by faith in Jesus Christ as God incarnate. In our notes last week, we emphasized that our Lord was very precise in the verb that He used when He said, “This is the work of God, *that you believe in Him whom He sent.*” Jesus was not saying that the work of God would be to produce a single act of faith on the part of those whom God will save from their sin. The verb, “believe”, is in the present tense (and subjunctive mood), which emphasizes continuous believing. This is the work of God’s grace in the soul of the one He has purposed to save, that God by His grace enables a sinner to become a believer, a continual, persevering believer in His Son. It is much more than a single, one-time act of faith.

Now by way of reminder we are using the following outline to consider our passage.

- I. Doing the work of God (6:26-29)
- II. God the Father sent Jesus to give eternal life to His elect. (6:30-40)
- III. The Father gives eternal life to the one who believes on His Son. (6:41-51)
- IV. No one has eternal life except through “feeding” upon Jesus Christ (6:52-59)
- V. Only those enabled by God’s sovereign grace will believe on Jesus Christ unto eternal life (6:60-71)

Last week we addressed verses 26 through 29, which was the first section or division of our passage, “Doing the work of God.” Today we will begin to address verses 30 through 40, which set forth this idea:

## **II. God the Father sent Jesus to give eternal life to His elect. (6:30-40)**

Let us read these verses collectively and then we will consider them individually.

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<sup>2</sup> William Shedd, **Sermons to the Natural Man: Lessons on the Will and Love of God, the Spiritual Slavery of Sin, and the Goodness of a Christian Life** (Forgotten Books, 2019).

<sup>30</sup>Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? <sup>31</sup>Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

<sup>32</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup>Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”

<sup>35</sup>And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. <sup>36</sup>But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup>All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. <sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup>This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. <sup>40</sup>And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

We first see that...

#### A. The crowd challenged Jesus (6:30-31)

<sup>30</sup>Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? <sup>31</sup>Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

These people did not believe that the sign Jesus had given them the day before was sufficient to convince them to believe on Him. He had fed well over 5,000 of them with bread and fish sufficient to satisfy them all. But this was a new day. They desired that He would do a repeat. They wanted Him to do as Moses had long before had done, to give them more bread, perhaps daily bread. As one wrote,

Let Him give further evidence of being the second Moses. If Moses had given their forefathers manna in the wilderness, let the second Moses vindicate His authority in a similar way – not by a once-for-all feeding but on a more lasting basis...<sup>3</sup>

These people in challenging Jesus quoted Scripture. They said to Him in verse 31, “Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” The verse they were referring to was **Psalm 78:24**. Here is the larger context of that Psalm, in which rebellion and unbelief of Israel is set forth:

<sup>17</sup>But they sinned even more against Him  
By rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness.

<sup>18</sup>And they tested God in their heart  
By asking for the food of their fancy.

<sup>19</sup>Yes, they spoke against God:  
They said, “Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?”

<sup>20</sup>Behold, He struck the rock,  
So that the waters gushed out,  
And the streams overflowed.  
Can He give bread also?  
Can He provide meat for His people?”

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<sup>3</sup> F. F. Bruce, **The Gospel of John** (William B. Eerdmans, 1983), p. 151. Interestingly, Bruce notes that later on the Jewish rabbis taught that the new age would be characterized by the restoration of the gift of manna from God.

<sup>21</sup>Therefore the LORD heard this and was furious;  
So a fire was kindled against Jacob,  
And anger also came up against Israel,  
<sup>22</sup>Because they did not believe in God,  
And did not trust in His salvation.  
<sup>23</sup>Yet He had commanded the clouds above,  
And opened the doors of heaven,  
<sup>24</sup>Had rained down manna on them to eat,  
**And given them of the bread of heaven.**  
<sup>25</sup>Men ate angels' food;  
He sent them food to the full. (Psa. 78:17-25)

It was in the presence of rebellion on the part of Israel that God gave them manna through Moses. And now these people in their unbelief toward Jesus were demanding of Him that He prove to them His identity by repeating this miracle. And is it not amazing how often those in rebellion to God can justify their unbelief and sinful behavior by quoting Scripture? **John Calvin** (1509-1564) expressed it this way:

This wickedness abundantly proves how truly it is said elsewhere, “*This wicked generation seeketh a sign*” (Matthew 12:39). They had been at first drawn to Christ by the admiration of His miracles or *signs*, and afterwards, through amazement at a new *sign*, they acknowledged Christ to be the Messiah, and, with that conviction, *wished to make Him a king*; but now they demand *a sign* from Him, as if He were a man unknown to them. Whence came such sudden forgetfulness, but because they are ungrateful to God, and, through their own malice, are blind to His power, which is before their eyes? Nor can it be doubted that they treat disdainfully all the miracles which they had already beheld, because Christ does not comply with their wishes, and because they do not find Him to be what they imagined Him to be. If He had given them expectation of earthly happiness, He would have been highly applauded by them; they would undoubtedly have hailed Him as a Prophet, and the Messiah, and the Son of God; but now, because He blames them for being too much addicted to the flesh, they think that they ought not to listen to Him any more. And in the present day, how many are there who resemble them! At first, because they promise to themselves that Christ will flatter their vices, they eagerly embrace the gospel, and call for no proof of it; but when they are called to deny the flesh and to bear the cross, then do they begin to renounce Christ and ask whence the gospel came. In short, as soon as Christ does not grant their prayers, He is no longer their Master.<sup>4</sup>

After the crowd challenged Jesus,...

### **B. Jesus corrected the crowd (6:32-33)**

<sup>32</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

Jesus told them, “Moses did not give you the bread from heaven.” I could well imagine the objections that immediately stirred their hearts. “But the Holy Scriptures declare that Moses did so!” But Jesus was speaking of “true bread” to which the literal bread but symbolized and pointed. The bread of Moses that gave and sustained physical life for the Israelites was an Old Testament type of Jesus Christ the true giver of life, who was the antitype of the New Testament. That the bread of Moses came from heaven was a type of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the antitype, who Himself came down from heaven when He became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth.

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<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, **Calvin's Commentaries**, Vol. XVII (Baker Book House, 1993), p. 245f.

I think that it is important that we step back and point out a very important principle of Bible interpretation (hermeneutics) that many seem not to understand. Our Lord Jesus Himself illustrated and demonstrated for us this principle in these words, “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven’” (John 6:30). The Lord Jesus gave us an example of how we are to read and interpret the Old Testament Scriptures.

How was this? Whereas the Jews saw the record of the Old Testament in literalistic terms, the Lord Jesus showed that the Old Testament pointed beyond itself to the spiritual reality in Jesus Christ. If we were to state the principle of interpretation (hermeneutics), it could be stated in this way: *the divine order is first the natural and then afterwards the spiritual.*

The Old Testament is a historical record of God’s dealings with a physical people, Israel, who were physical descendants of Abraham. God delivered the physical nation of Israel from literal bondage in Egypt, bringing them through the wilderness wanderings, and then leading them into the Promised Land as its inheritance. Later God established a literal throne of David over a literal, political, national kingdom of David. But all of these persons and events were *types* which foreshadowed the realization of their *antitypes* in the New Testament. The Old Testament contains historical, physical realities that pointed to their spiritual realities in the New Testament. The natural order gives way to the spiritual order. And when we read the Old Testament record, we should consider what the persons and events pointed to in the New Testament record. Jesus told these people that Moses had given them bread, but not the true bread. Moses only foreshadowed and foretold what God would do later. In the events of Moses feeding Israel manna in the wilderness, God displayed that He would send His Son into the world to be the spiritual source of eternal life to all who believed on Him.

This might seem to be very straightforward. Who would not accept this principle of interpretation? However, there are many who refute the idea that we are to understand the Old Testament spiritually, but they advocate that we are only to understand the Bible literally, including the Old Testament. In doing so, they fail to apply this principle to their understanding of Scripture. They say that the natural will give way only to that which is natural and literal. They would argue, for example, God favored the physical descendants of Abraham in the Old Testament, therefore He will yet favor the physical descendants of Abraham. The New Testament reveals however, that whereas in the Old Testament God favored Abraham’s physical descendants, in this New Testament age God favors Abraham’s spiritual descendants, those who have the same faith as Abraham. In the Old Testament, God favored those who were physically circumcised, but under the New Testament (new covenant) God’s favor is upon those whom He spiritually circumcised, a “circumcision made without hands” (Col. 2:11). Paul expressed it this way:

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup>all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup>all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup>and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup>But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.

<sup>6</sup>*Now these things became our examples*, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. <sup>7</sup>And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” <sup>8</sup>Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; <sup>9</sup>nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; <sup>10</sup>nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup>*Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.* (1 Cor. 10:1-11)

The Apostle Peter expressed it this way:

Of *this salvation* the (OT) prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace **that would come to you**, <sup>11</sup>searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. <sup>12</sup>*To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things*

which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things which angels desire to look into. (1 Pet. 1:10 NKJ)

We are to read and interpret the Old Testament as written for Christian instruction. This means that we are to look beyond what is literal and understand the spiritual meaning and application of the Old Testament record.

There was a man of several generations ago, **John Wilmot**, who wrote a book entitled, *Inspired Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*. In arguing for this principle of interpretation, he wrote these words:

We may understand, therefore, that literal existences created and ordered in the divine activity are themselves intended to serve spiritual ends, and that there is a purposed sequence as when it was written, "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. 15:46). It has been well said that error is truth pressed too far, which would indeed apply to some forms of what is called spiritualizing, or fancifulness. On the other hand, is there not a danger of pressing too far when literalizers extend the succession beyond the stated spiritual terminal of fulfillment? For this interpretation would appear to require a revision or addition, thus: First that which is natural; afterward that which is spiritual, but again, after that which is spiritual has come, a reintroduction of that which is natural or literal. Does not the "afterward" denote the arrival of finality and permanency in the spiritual? Thus it is with earthly and heavenly things which our Lord spoke; and with the natural and spiritual birth (John 3).

The argument that persons, places, events, within the divine plan, which have appeared in the first instance in natural or literal form, being again spoken of futuristically, must have a repeated natural subsistence, is no sound premise in the light of the order of succession quoted above. In this eschatological chapter the statement appears to explain the principle of divine design. Throughout the apostle's argument there is no suggestion that a reversion to the natural state of things following the spiritual is to be expected. We notice, for instance, the first Adam and the last Adam; the first man and the second Man; Christ the resurrection firstfruits and they that are His; the natural body and the spiritual body; the earthly and the heavenly; corruption and incorruption; mortality and immortality; this life and the life to come; death and victory; with no reappearance of the former either in a millennial age or the eternal state (1 Cor. 15). Very generally in Scripture we come upon this balancing or placement of opposites, such as the First and the Last; the Beginning and the End; this world and the world to come; the time past and the last days; the old covenant and the new covenant; take away the first and establish the second; glory done away and glory that excelleth; the law of works and the law of faith; the curse incurred and the curse removed; the law of Moses and grace and truth by Jesus Christ; Israel after the flesh and the Israel of God; born of the flesh and born of the Spirit; the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life; the ministry of condemnation and the ministry of righteousness; the reign of sin and death and the reign of grace through righteousness unto eternal life; the heavens and earth which are now and the new heavens and the new earth.<sup>5</sup>

When we read the Scriptures, we should understand that the Old Testament events foreshadowed the New Testament realizations in and through Jesus Christ. The New Testament explains how we are to understand rightly the Old Testament. The Old Testament meant what it said; but the New Testament tells us what it means. One cannot understand the Old Testament rightly, until it is interpreted through the lens of the New Testament, that is, its realization and fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote of the Jews that had refused to believe on Jesus Christ that a "veil" covered their hearts, rendering them incapable of understanding the Old Testament Scriptures rightly. But when they turn to Christ, and see Christ in the Old Testament, then the ignorance and inability to understand the Old Testament is removed from them. The light of Jesus Christ sheds light of understanding on all of Scripture. Paul wrote,

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<sup>5</sup> John Wilmot, *Inspired Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*. (Reiner Publications, 1965), pp. 25f. Forward by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

<sup>14</sup>But their minds (of unbelieving Jews) were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. <sup>15</sup>But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. <sup>16</sup>Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. (2 Cor. 3:14-16)

Let us return to our text. Again, Jesus declared, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give<sup>6</sup> you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world*” (vs. 32-33).

Jesus Christ declared, “*My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.*” Christ is bread to the soul as literal bread is to the human body. Physical bread sustains physical life. Spiritual bread, being Jesus Christ Himself, gives and sustains spiritual life. What do we mean by life? It is a life lived out before God, in fellowship with God, in accordance to God’s will, being the recipient of God’s blessing, of His provision and protection. This all comes through Jesus Christ alone. As **Matthew Henry** (1662-1714) commented on these verses:

That He is the *bread of God* (v. 33), divine bread; it is He that is *of God* (v. 46), bread which my Father gives (v. 32), which He has made to be the food of our souls; the bread of God’s family, His *children’s bread*. The Levitical sacrifices are called the *bread of God* (Lev. 21:21, 22), and Christ is the great sacrifice; Christ, in His word and ordinances, the *feast* upon the sacrifice. That He is the *bread of life* (v. 35, and again in v. 48), *that* bread of life, alluding to the tree of life in the midst of the garden of Eden, which was to Adam the seal of that part of the covenant, *Do this and live*, of which He might *eat and live*. Christ is the bread of life, for He is the fruit of the *tree of life*. *First*, He is the *living bread* (so He explains Himself (v. 51): *I am the living bread*. Bread is itself a dead thing, and nourishes not but by the help of the faculties of a living body; but Christ is Himself *living bread*, and nourishes by His own power. Manna was a dead thing; if kept but one night, it putrefied and bred worms; but Christ is ever living, everlasting bread, that never moulds, nor waxes old. The doctrine of Christ crucified is now as strengthening and comforting to a believer as ever it was, and His mediation still of as much value and efficacy as ever.<sup>7</sup>

It is said that Jesus Christ incarnate who “*gives life to the world.*” **Matthew Henry** went on to write of the life-giving properties of the Son of God:

That He is *that bread* of which the *manna* was a type and figure (v. 58), *that* bread, the true bread (v. 32). As the rock that they drank of was Christ, so was the manna they ate of *spiritual bread* (1 Cor. 10:3, 4). *Manna* was given to Israel; so Christ to the spiritual Israel. There was *manna* enough for them all; so in Christ a fulness of grace for all believers; he that *gathers much* of this *manna* will have none to spare when he comes to use it; and he that gathers little, when his grace comes to be perfected in glory, shall find that *he has no lack*. *Manna* was to be gathered in the morning; and those that would find Christ must *seek Him early*. *Manna* was sweet..., was agreeable to every palate; and to those that believe Christ is *precious*. Israel lived upon *manna* till they came to Canaan; and Christ is our life.

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<sup>6</sup> The Greek verb translated “Moses *did* not *give* you”, could better be rendered, “Moses *has* not *given* you.” This verb was classified by Daniel Wallace as an “allegorical perfect (tense)”. In other words, Moses had given those people, whom Jesus was addressing, an object lesson in giving manna. It pointed to Jesus, the true Bread from heaven. [See Daniel Wallace, **Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics** (Zondervan, 1996), pp. 581-582.] This underscores what we addressed earlier of reading the Old Testament, looking for types that actually pointed to their realization in their antitypes in the New Testament.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Henry, **Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible**, vol. 5 (Fleming H. Revell Company, n. d., originally 1721), p. 948.

There was a memorial of the *manna* preserved in the ark; so of Christ in the Lord's Supper, as the food of souls.<sup>8</sup>

Jesus declared to them, "***For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven.***" Jesus was, of course, referring to His incarnation. He, the eternally begotten Son of God, who is God Himself, came "down from heaven" when He assumed the human nature wrought in Mary's womb. To His divine nature was added our human nature, and He became both God and Man in one person. The Son of God is this this life-giving Bread, sent from the Father, in order to give life to the world.

And it is so, that Jesus Christ "***gives life to the world.***" The whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). All are spiritually dead in the world, unless and until Jesus Christ gives them life. We were born into this world separated from God; we were in a state of spiritual death. God had told Adam and Eve that on the day they broke His law, eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would then die (Cf. Gen. 2:17). They ate of that tree and they died that day spiritually. They were separated from God due to their sin, separated from God who is the giver and sustainer of life. They died spiritually that day and they began to die physically that day. But when a man or woman comes to believe on Jesus Christ, thereby returning to God in repentance from sin and faith in Christ, it is as though he that was lost was found, he that was dead has come to life. This is what the father said of his prodigal son who had returned to him humbly and looking for his father's mercy. The father said to the prodigal's brother who resented his brother, "It was right that we should make merry and be glad, ***for your brother was dead and is alive again***, and was lost and is found" (Luke 15:32).

We read in the last chapter of John these words of Jesus:

<sup>25</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, ***when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.*** <sup>26</sup>For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, <sup>27</sup>and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. (John 5:25-27)

Here "the dead" are spiritually dead people everywhere. We are spiritually dead in our sins, unless and until the Lord Jesus issues His command for us to become spiritually alive. He can do this because the Father has given His Son to have life in Himself. When we believe on Jesus, His life feeds and sustains us in faith unto our final salvation. He calls them from death unto life.

Do you hear Jesus the Lord calling you back from the dead, calling you to true life as He intended for His people, a life of, peace, joy, freedom and liberty of conscience, free and full forgiveness of sins, deliverance from all condemnation of every sin, and the resource in Him to be delivered from the power of sin that currently reigns in your soul? Do you hear the Lord calling you to lay aside your sins and come unto Him? Do you think to yourself, "This is not just a man standing in a church calling me, but I hear the Lord calling me to come unto Him!" If so, do not hesitate! Do not procrastinate! Own Him as your own! Confess Him before others! Come and eat of this Bread that the Father has sent down from heaven! Feed in faith upon Jesus, that is, believe on Him wholly and fully, and not just as *the* Lord, but as *your* Lord and *your* Savior, as you surrender your soul wholly unto Him. Let us take to heart the Lord's words through His prophet:

"As I live," says the Lord GOD, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 33:11)

We next read that...

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp. 948f.



### C. The crowd requested a continual supply of this “bread” (6:34)

Verse 34 reads, “*Then they said to Him, ‘Lord, give us this bread always.’*” They wanted this “bread” from heaven that would enable them to live forever. However, it had not yet registered in their thinking that this “Bread” was Jesus Himself. “There is a vague sense of something great and good being close at hand, and a vague wish expressed to have it.”<sup>9</sup> They seemed to express desire and willingness, but they did not see all that was involved nor did they understand fully what it would all mean to them.<sup>10</sup>

Like the Samaritan woman, who said, “Sir, give me this water” (John 4:15) when she heard Jesus speak of the living water which He could give, the congregation responds to His words about the true bread with an eager request that they may receive this bread for evermore. But they still understand His words in a material sense; He therefore uses a new form of words to make His meaning plainer.<sup>11</sup>

There are those who may come along with us for a while, for they had “come to Christ” on their own terms, not God’s. And even our Lord had some, even many at times, who would have claimed to be His followers. But again, they only followed Him because they thought all the temporal and physical benefits would come their way by doing so.

So captivating is this description of the bread of God (v. 34) that it draws even from these unspiritual people the request that Jesus give them this bread... They do really want this bread; they are impressed by its great desirability. But the emphatic adverb “evermore” (“always”) betrays the fact that they still think only of bodily bread that will obviate their baking and their buying from time to time, that they can eat constantly without effort whenever they grow hungry.<sup>12</sup>

They were not seeking Him for who He was, but for what they could get from Him. That will only string them along as far as they feel rewarded for their efforts. But that is not why or how we are to believe on Him.

### D. Jesus declared Himself to be the true bread from heaven (6:35-40)

<sup>35</sup>And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. <sup>36</sup>But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup>All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. <sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup>This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. <sup>40</sup>And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

This is a rich paragraph containing many important and assuring words of our Lord. We first read our Lord’s profound statement in **verse 35a**: “*And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life.’*” This is one of a number instances in John’s Gospel when Jesus identifies Himself as the God that had appeared to Moses in the Burning Bush (Cf. Exo. 3:1-14).

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<sup>9</sup> J. C. Ryle, **Expository Thoughts on John**, vol. 1 (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, orig. 1869), p. 369.

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, Calvin thought that the crowd was being ironically sarcastic to Jesus at this point. “‘*Give us always this bread.*’ There is no doubt that they speak ironically, to accuse Christ of vain boasting, when He said that He was able to give *the bread of life*. Thus wretched men, while they reject the promises of God, are not satisfied with this evil alone, but put Christ in their room, as if He were chargeable with their unbelief” [John Calvin, **Calvin’s Commentaries**, Vol. XVII (Baker Book House, 1993), p. 249.]

<sup>11</sup> Bruce, p. 152.

<sup>12</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, **The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel** (Augsburg Publishing, 1946), p. 460.

The bread of which He speaks is not something like the manna, which they can pick up and eat. It is nothing less than Himself (cf. vs. 48, 51). His “I Am” is a solemnly emphatic statement, and in this context has overtones of divinity. This is the first of seven such emphatic statements in this Gospel.<sup>13</sup>

Jesus said, “I AM the bread of life.” We saw this back in verse 20 of this same chapter, although that place is debated by some commentators. The phrase, *Ἐγώ εἰμι*, (*ego eimi*) is commonly found in John’s Gospel, and it is commonly translated as “I AM”, which Jesus used repeatedly of Himself. Through this expression, Jesus was identifying Himself as God.

Here is one of the great *I AM* statements of Jesus, shining like the noonday sun. Jesus is this bread. Who now can any longer think of mere bodily bread? He it is who came from God out of heaven and gives life eternal –He, sent of God on this mission for the world. To Him men must come, in Him they must trust, and thus men eat and drink Him with the result that they shall never again hunger or thirst. Mo reply, in words so few, could be more to the point once for all to set these people right.<sup>14</sup>

After declaring Himself to be the Bread of life, He makes this very profound statement in **verse 35b**: **“He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”** There is in coming to know Christ a great settling of the soul. There is available to the true child of God, if he is thinking and acting rightly, a peaceful satisfaction in his soul that no one can take away. Here it is likened unto having just had a full meal and satiated with fine drink, and the sensation of that fullness never goes away.

Our Lord could not have been stronger in His affirmation of this spiritual reality. I want to provide us the words of a Greek grammarian about the Greek construction of this verse. (I hope that it is not over the top of us.) Many of these words will make no sense to many of us, but I hope that we are able to glean the major point he makes.

Emphatic negation is indicated by οὐ μὴ plus the *aorist subjunctive*<sup>15</sup> or, less frequently, οὐ μὴ plus the future indicative (e.g. Matt, 26:35; Mark 13:31; John 4:14; 6:35). This is the strongest way to negative something in Greek.

One might think that the negative with the subjunctive could not be as strong as the negative with the indicative. However, while οὐ plus the indicative denies a *certainty*, οὐ μὴ + the subjunctive denies a *potentiality*. The negative is not weaker; rather, the affirmation that is being negated is less firm with the subjunctive. “οὐ μὴ” rules out even the idea as being a possibility: “οὐ μὴ is the most decisive way of negating something in the future.”

Emphatic negation is found primarily in the reported sayings of Jesus (both in the Gospels and in the Apocalypse); secondarily, in quotations from the LXX (Septuagint). Outside of these two sources it occurs only rarely. As well, a soteriological (having to do with salvation) theme is frequently found in such statements, especially in John: ***what is negated is the possibility of the loss of salvation.***<sup>16</sup>

In other words, from the lips of Jesus recorded in John 6:35, we have His promise of the impossibility of a person who truly comes to faith in Him, to ever lose his salvation. It cannot happen. Jesus went on record here to declare the eternal security of the true believer. To teach that a true Christian can lose his salvation after having come to Christ in true faith, would be to repudiate what Jesus taught. It would require Jesus to have said something like this: “He who comes to Me ***may perhaps*** never hunger, and he who believes in Me ***may perhaps*** never thirst.” No, in the strongest terms possible in the Greek language, John recorded His Words, **“He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”**

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<sup>13</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (William B. Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 365.

<sup>14</sup> Lenski, p. 460.

<sup>15</sup> This is the tense and mood of the verb.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Zondervan, 1996), p. 468.

Then our Lord declared these words to this gathering:

**<sup>36</sup>But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup>All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.**

Jesus declared that they did not believe Him even though they had seen Him. This would suggest that they had seen Him and the many miracles or signs that He had performed before them, yet they did not believe. What was true of them is true of all people everywhere. Sin has rendered us not only unwilling, but also unable to truly “see Him” for who He is so as to believe on Him to the salvation of our souls. Fallen man is incapable of coming to Jesus for salvation. God must work His grace in the soul of the sinner, or the sinner will remain in sinful, damnable, unbelief.

Here are the words of one who wrote of this spiritual inability to come to Christ:

We have further proof of human depravity from the aversion of sinners to come to Christ. They are invited to come, persuaded to come and are assured that they shall find pardon, acceptance and salvation. But they cannot be induced to come to Him and why will they not come? Is it because He is not willing to receive them, or because there is anything in Him to prevent them? No. It is because of the deep-rooted depravity in their hearts. The heart is averse to all that is good and therefore rejects the Savior and turns away from Him. Hence He complained when in our world, “How often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not” (Matt. 23:37). “You will not come to Me, that you might have life!” (John 5:40). What more need be added? Man turns away in proud disdain from all the blessings of the Gospel and the glories of Heaven brought before him and rushes on with steady purpose to damnation. “Light is come into the world and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil” (John 3:19). Oh, to how many in this land may it be said, “They hate knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of His counsel, they despised all His reproof” (Prov. 1:30)?<sup>17</sup>

Can no one, therefore, be saved? They most certainly can, but it will be due wholly to the sovereign grace of God. He chose specific individuals out of fallen humanity and gave them as gifts to His Son, Jesus Christ, and then He sent His Son on a mission to save them from their sin. The Father assured that He would by His grace enable them to come to Jesus in repentance and faith. Jesus declared in John 6:37, “**All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.**”

We will need to address this matter more fully next Lord’s day, Lord willing. But in closing, let me draw your attention to consider carefully our Lord’s words, “**the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.**” We spoke about the emphatic negation in the form of the verb in our Lord’s words recorded in verse 35b. We have the same Greek construction here. In the strongest words that could be expressed in the Greek language, John recorded the words of Jesus, “**the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.**” Here is another glorious, soul-calming promise of the Lord Jesus to every believing sinner. Eternal salvation awaits any and all who come to Him sincerely, trusting Him as Lord and Savior. Why would anyone not want to do so? That would be madness--soul suicide--choosing eternal ruin rather than eternal life.

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Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God,  
be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim. 1:17)

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<sup>17</sup> This was a sermon by Evan Probert, who had been invited by Charles Spurgeon to preach in his pulpit on the doctrine of total depravity. See Charles Spurgeon, **The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit**, vol. 7. (Pilgrim Publications, 1969), p. 309.

I came across this reading from one of Spurgeon's sermons on the salvation of infants who die in infancy. I thought that you might find it interesting and affirming—Pastor Lars

## **Charles Spurgeon** **On the Salvation of Infants who Die in Infancy**

Among the gross falsehoods which have been uttered against the Calvinists proper is the wicked calumny that we hold *the damnation of little infants*. A baser lie was never uttered. There may have existed somewhere, in some corner of the earth, a miscreant who would dare to say that there were infants in Hell, but I have never met with him nor have I met with a man who ever saw such a person. We say, with regard to infants, Scripture says but very little and therefore, where Scripture is confessedly scant, it is for no man to determine dogmatically. But I think I speak for the entire body, or certainly with exceedingly few exceptions and those unknown to me, when I say we hold that all infants are elect of God and are therefore saved and we look to this as being the means by which Christ shall see of the travail of His soul to a great degree and we do sometimes hope that thus the multitude of the saved shall be made to exceed the multitude of the *lost*. Whatever views our friends may hold upon the point, they are not necessarily connected with Calvinistic doctrine. I believe that the Lord Jesus, who said, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven," does daily and constantly receive into His loving arms those tender ones who are only shown and then snatched away to Heaven. Our hymns are no ill witness to our faith on this point and one of them runs thus—

"Millions of infant souls compose  
The family above."

Toplady, one of the keenest of Calvinists, was of this number. "In my remarks," says he, "on Dr. Nowell, I testified my firm belief that the souls of *all departed infants* are with God in Glory. That in the decree of predestination to life, God has included all whom He decreed to take away in infancy and that the decree of reprobation has nothing to do with them." No, he proceeds farther and asks with reason, how the anti-Calvinistic system of conditional salvation and election or good works foreseen, will suit with the salvation of infants? It is plain that Arminians and Pelagians must introduce a *new principle* of election and in so far as the salvation of infants is concerned, become Calvinists. Is it not an argument in behalf of Calvinism, that its principle is uniform throughout and that no change is needed on the ground on which man is saved, whether young or old? John Newton, of London, the friend of Cowper, noted for his Calvinism, holds that the children in Heaven exceed its adult inhabitants in all their multitudinous array. Gill, a very champion of Calvinism, held the doctrine that all dying in infancy are saved. An intelligent modern writer, (Dr. Russell, of Dundee), also a Calvinist, maintains the same views. And when it is considered that nearly *one-half* of the human race die in early years, it is easy to see what a vast accession must be daily and hourly making to the blessed population of Heaven.

From Charles Spurgeon, **The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit**, vol. 7. (Pilgrim Publications, 1969), p. 300.

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