

John 6:22 – 77 Bread of Life, Predestination, and Free-Will

I Am the Bread of Life

Joh 6:22-24 On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone—however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks— when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

It is now the day after the one in which the five thousand were fed. The multitude 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 was 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. - Believers Bible Commentary

Joh 6:25 -26 And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?" Jesus answered them and said, "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.

Jesus doesn't really answer their question directly. He penetrated beneath the surface to their motive for seeking Him. Actually, the word He used was not literally "loaves" but a word that means fodder. You ate the fodder and were filled. Your only interest was that your tummies were full. - McGee

Joh 6:27 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."

Let me put this into our language of today (this is not a translation but only an attempt to bring out the meaning): stop working for food that perishes, but work for food that endures for everlasting life, which food the Son of Man will give you, for on Him, God the Father has set His seal.

You will recall that this is the same approach which our Lord made to the woman at the well. For her it was water that she wanted; for these folk it is bread. These are two essential things. Bread and water are very important to maintain life. Jesus is both Bread and Water. Notice that He uses these commonplace symbols. He is the Word, and the Word became flesh. How can we explain that? Jesus, the Word, is reaching down and communicating where we can understand it. He said that He is Water and that He gives Living Water. He said that He is Bread. We know what water is and we know what bread is. – McGee

So, Jesus first advised them not to labor for the food which perishes. The Lord did not mean that they should not work for their daily living, but He did mean that this should not be the supreme aim in their lives. Satisfying one's physical appetite is not the most important thing in life. Man consists not only of body, but of spirit and soul as well. We should labor for the food which endures to everlasting life. Man should not live as if his body were all. He should not devote all his strength and talents to the feeding of his body, which in a few short years will be eaten by worms. Rather, he should make sure that his soul is fed day by day with the Word of God. "Man shall

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not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” We should work tirelessly to acquire a better knowledge of the Word of God.

When the Lord Jesus said that God the Father had set His seal on Him, He meant that God had sent Him and approved Him. When we set our seal to something, it means that we promise that it is true. God sealed the Son of Man in the sense that He endorsed Him as One who spoke the truth. – Believers Bible Commentary

Joh 6:28-29 Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

The people now asked the Lord what they must do in order to work the works of God. Man is always trying to earn his way to heaven. He likes to feel that there is something he can do to merit salvation. If he can somehow contribute to the saving of his soul, then he can find a ground for boasting; and this is very pleasing to him.

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 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.

Joh 6:30 Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?"

May I say that this reveals the hardness of the human heart. Here are the men who had been fed miraculously by our Lord when He fed the five thousand and they say, “Show us a sign. What dost Thou work?” In other words, they did not want to believe at all. And they take their conversation right back to the dinner table. - McGee

Joh 6:31-33 Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD FROM HEAVEN TO EAT.'" 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. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

They are still thinking of physical food, and say, “Moses gave our people manna.” Actually, it wasn't Moses who gave the manna; God did that. And it wasn't a one-time deal. God fed them every day for forty years. They want to be fed, and that is what they are after. Manna gave life in that day, and it was a gift from God. The manna gave physical life to them out there in the wilderness, but the Lord Jesus gives spiritual life. “My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.” - McGee

Joh 6:34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always."

They are just like the woman at the well who asked for water but was thinking of physical water so she wouldn't need to come and draw water at the well anymore. It took our Lord quite a while to lift her thinking out of that well to the spiritual Water. And it takes Him a long time to get these folk away from the dinner table and get them to see the spiritual Bread that gives spiritual life. - McGee

Joh 6:35 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."

He joins the two together. Christ is the manna. He is the One who came down from heaven and gave His life for the world that we might have life. That is salvation. We will also see that He is the Bread that we are to feed upon constantly so that we might grow spiritually. After all, manna was miracle food, and it was thrilling. When

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the children of Israel got into the Promised Land, they were given the “old corn of the land” which symbolizes the Word of God. Believe me, lots of people don't like the “old corn.” - McGee

Joh 6:36-37 But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.

“You want bread? Well, I am the Bread of Life. But you have seen Me, and you do not believe. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

This thirty–seventh verse is a very important verse. There is a theological argument that rages today on election or free will. There are some people who put all their eggs in the basket of election. There are others who put all their eggs in the basket of free will. I'm not proposing to reconcile the two because I have discovered that I cannot. If you had met me the year that I entered seminary, or the year I graduated, I could have reconciled them for you. I never have been as smart as I was my first year and my last year in seminary. I knew it all then. I could reconcile election and free will, and it was a marvelous explanation. Now I've even forgotten what it was. It was pretty silly, if you want to know the truth.

Election and free will are both in this verse. “All that the father giveth me shall come to me” states a truth, and that is election. But wait a minute! “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” is also true, and “him that cometh to me” is free will. I don't know how to reconcile them, but they are both true. The Father gives men to Christ, but men have to come. And the ones that come are the ones, apparently, whom the Father gives to Him. You and I are down here, and we don't see into the machinery of heaven. I don't know how God runs that computer of election, but I know that He has given to you and to me a free will and we have to exercise it.

Because Spurgeon preached a “whosoever will” gospel, someone said to him, “If I believed like you do about election, I wouldn't preach like you do.” Spurgeon's answer was something like this, “If the Lord had put a yellow stripe down the backs of the elect, I'd go up and down the street lifting up shirttails, finding out who had the yellow stripe, and then I'd give them the gospel. But God didn't do it that way. He told me to preach the gospel to every creature that ‘whosoever will may come.’” Jesus says, “... and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” So, my friend, you can argue about election all you want to, but you can come. And if you come, He'll not cast you out.

Someone may ask, “You mean that if I'm not the elect I can still come?” My friend, if you come, you will be the elect. How tremendous this is! - McGee

Joh 6:38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

How wonderful it is that the will of God is for you to come to Him. Jesus came down from heaven because “the Son of man must be lifted up.” He came to do the Father's will in that, and it is the Father's will that you be born again. But you will have to come to Him, friend; that is the only way. You must come to the Lord Jesus by faith.

Joh 6:39-40 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. 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.”

The term *predestination* applies only to the saved. It means exactly what He is saying here. When a person accepts Christ, he is justified; and just as surely as he is justified, he is going to be glorified. When Jesus starts out with one hundred sheep, He's going to come through with one hundred sheep. He will not lose one. That is what this means. Everyone who believes and receives Christ has everlasting life and will be raised up again at the last day. - McGee

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Joh 6:41-43 The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." 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'?" Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves.

The people were quite unprepared to accept the Lord Jesus, and they showed this by murmuring against Him. He had claimed to be the bread which came down from heaven. They realized that this was a claim of great importance. To come down from heaven, one could not be a mere man or even a great prophet. And so, they complained about Him because they were not willing to believe His words.

They assumed that Jesus was the son of Joseph. Here, of course, they were wrong. Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary. Joseph was not His father. Rather, our Lord was conceived of the Holy Spirit. Their failure to believe in the virgin birth led to their darkness and unbelief. So, it is today. Those who refuse to accept the Lord Jesus as the Son of God who came into the world through the womb of the virgin find themselves compelled to deny all the great truths concerning the Person and work of Christ.

Although they had not been speaking directly to Him, yet He knew what they were saying, and here Jesus told them not to murmur among themselves. The following verses explain why their murmuring was useless and profitless. The more the Jews rejected the testimony of the Lord Jesus, the more difficult His teachings became. "Light rejected is light denied." The more they spurned the gospel, the harder it became for them to accept the gospel. If the Lord told them simple things and they would not believe, then He would expound to them more difficult things and they would be thoroughly ignorant of what He was saying. – Believers Bible Commentary

Joh 6:44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

Actually, the word translated "draw" is drag. That is divine election. You ask me to explain it? I can't explain it at all, friend; I just know that you have a free will, and you can exercise it. God holds you responsible for it, and you know you are responsible. You know right now you can come or not come. It's up to you. - McGee

Joh 6:45 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.

There is Scripture after Scripture in the Old Testament that refers to this. For instance, Isa_54:13 : "And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children." Isa_60:2-3 : "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." There are these statements that they will come to Him, and you can come to Him. These things are made so wonderfully clear. There are many references to it. Mal_4:2 is another: "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." Every man that listens to the Father and learns of Him will come to Me is what He is saying. You see, if you listen to the Word of God, then you'll come to Christ. That is where the great emphasis is being placed here. - McGee

Joh 6:46-47 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.

The One who has seen the Father is the Lord Jesus Christ. "He who believes on Me has everlasting life." It can't be said any more clearly. - McGee

Joh 6:48-49 I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

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Now the Lord Jesus states that He is the bread of life of which He had been speaking. The bread of life means, of course, the bread which gives life to those who eat it. The Jews had previously brought up the subject of the manna in the wilderness and challenged the Lord Jesus to produce some food as wonderful as that. Here the Lord reminded them that their fathers had eaten the manna in the wilderness and were dead. In other words, manna was for this life only. It did not have any power to give eternal life to those who ate it. By the expression, "Your fathers," the Lord dissociated Himself from fallen humanity and implied His unique deity. – Believers Bible Commentary

Joh 6:50-51 This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. 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."

He came down to this earth: "the Word was made flesh" (Joh_1:14). He is going to the Cross to lay that human life down there as a sacrifice to pay for your sins and my sins. Friend, when you partake of that, that is, when you accept that, you are saved. Someone may say, "Oh, that's so vivid and so strong." That's what they said in that day, too. - McGee

Joh 6:52-53 The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you."

They were thinking of His literal flesh, of course. That means to partake of Him spiritually, which is more real than a physical partaking. - McGee

Joh 6:54-58 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever."

Friend, this is an amazing statement. Our Lord is preparing these men for that Last Supper and the institution of the Lord's Supper. This, obviously, is something that is not to be taken literally because He was right there before them. He is not saying for them to begin to eat Him and to drink His blood! What He is saying is that He is going to give His life. In that Upper Room He made it very clear that the blood is the symbol of life. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood ... (Lev_17:11). God had taught the Israelites that truth from the very beginning when He called them out of the land of Egypt. There at Mount Sinai Moses gives them this great axiom, "the life of the flesh is in the blood," which is also medically true, by the way. The life of the flesh is in the blood. And Jesus is giving His life. He will shed His blood upon the Cross and give His life. Salvation is by accepting and receiving Him in a most intimate way.

This is the basis for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Friend, there has been just as much disagreement among believers in the churches down through the ages over the interpretation of the Lord's Supper as there has been over baptism. I don't think they have fought over it quite as much, but the disagreement is there.

Hoc est meus corpus—"This is my body." When He gave them the bread at the supper in the Upper Room, He said, "... This is my body ..." (Luk_22:19). Now there have been different emphases put on that.

The Roman Catholic Church puts the emphasis upon this. This is My body. They say that transubstantiation takes place, that the bread becomes the flesh of Christ. Well, I don't think our Lord taught cannibalism in any form, shape, or fashion. I think, of course, that it is a wrong emphasis. Then there are those who have taken the

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position of the Lutheran church, which is consubstantiation. This means that by, with, in, through, and under the bread you get the body of Christ. Again, may I say, I think that falls short of what our Lord really means. Then there are those who take Zwingli's position. He was the Swiss Reformation leader who gave it a spiritual interpretation. He felt it was just a symbol, just a religious ritual, and that is all. I think that is probably the interpretation that most of Protestantism gives to it today. Frankly, I feel that falls as far short of the interpretation of the Lord's Supper as the other two do. Calvin put the emphasis on it—“This is my body.” The Reformed faith has always put the emphasis there, and the early church put the emphasis there. The bread is bread, and it always will be bread. It cannot be changed. The wine is always just what it is, and there is no miracle that takes place there. You don't get the body of Christ by going through the ritual. And yet, it is more than a ritual. I had a seminary professor who taught us that in the Lord's Supper it is bread in your mouth, but it is Christ in your heart. Friend, I believe that there is a spiritual blessing that comes in observing the Lord's Supper. I think that He ministers to you spiritually through your obedience in observing the Lord's Supper. There is no such thing as a hocus-pocus there. Nor is it just an idle ritual that we go through. It is meaningful, and it has a spiritual blessing for the heart.

I think that is what our Lord is saying to them here. An intimate, real relationship with Him is the important thing. When they ate manna in the wilderness, it was only a temporary thing. Jesus has something that is eternal—life which is eternal. We are told that at the beginning of this Gospel, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (Joh_1:4).

Joh 6:59 These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

The Words of Eternal Life

Joh 6:60-63 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

There was definite reaction to what Jesus had said and differences of opinion. Jesus tells them that they are not going to eat Him literally because He is going back to heaven. It is the Spirit that makes alive; the flesh profits nothing. So obviously, friend, He is not talking about His literal body. We are to appropriate the Lord's Supper by faith. The juice in the cup is sweet, and I always taste the sweetness, remembering that He bore the bitter cup for me on the Cross so that I might have this sweet cup. That sweet cup is to remind me that He shed His blood for me, and there is a spiritual blessing there.

“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” During my ministry, I have always read to the congregation from the Word of God during the Lord's Supper. I find that the Word of God ministers to the hearts of the people. Why? Because the words of the Lord Jesus are spirit, and they are life. - McGee

Joh 6:64-65 But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

Even as He said these things, the Lord realized that some of His listeners did not understand Him because they would not believe. The difficulty lay not so much in their inability as in their unwillingness. Jesus knew from the beginning that some of His professed followers would not believe on Him and that one of His disciples would betray Him. Of course, Jesus knew all this from eternity, but here it probably means that He was aware of it from the very start of His ministry on earth.

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Now He explained that it was because of their unbelief that He had previously told them that no one could come to Him unless it were granted to him by His Father. Such words are an attack on the pride of man, who thinks that he can earn or merit salvation. The Lord Jesus told men that even the power to come to Him can only be received from God the Father. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Joh 6:66 From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

These sayings of the Lord Jesus proved so distasteful to many who had followed Him that they now left Him and were no longer willing to associate with Him. These disciples were never true believers. They followed the Lord for various reasons, but not out of genuine love for Him or appreciation of who He was.

Does it surprise you that the verse describing followers falling away from Jesus is numbered 666?

Joh 6:67-69 Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

At this point Jesus turned to the twelve disciples and challenged them with the question as to whether they, too, would leave Him.

Peter's answer is worthy of note. He said in effect, "Lord, how could we leave You? You teach the doctrines which lead to eternal life. If we leave You, there is no one else to whom we could go. To leave You would be to seal our doom."

Speaking for the twelve, Peter further said that they had come to believe and know that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Notice again the order of the words "believe and know." First of all, they had put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then they came to know that He was indeed all that He professed to be. – Believers Bible Commentary

Joh 6:70-71 Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.

In verses 68 and 69, Peter had used the word "we" to mean all twelve of the disciples. Here in verse 70, the Lord Jesus corrected him. He should not say so confidently that all twelve were true believers. It is true that the Lord had chosen the twelve disciples, but one of them was a devil. There was one in the company who did not share Peter's views concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus knew that Judas Iscariot was going to betray Him. He knew that Judas never really accepted Him as Lord and Savior. Here again we have the all-knowledge of the Lord. Also, we have evidence of the fact that Peter was not infallible when speaking for the disciples!

In the bread of life discourse, our Lord began with fairly simple teaching. But as He progressed, it was apparent that the Jews were rejecting His words. The more they closed their hearts and minds to the truth, the more difficult His teaching became. Finally, He talked about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. That was too much! They said, "This is a hard saying, who can understand it" and they quit following Him. Rejection of the truth results in judicial blindness. Because they would not see, they came to a place where they could not see. – Believers Bible Commentary