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THE FOOD WHICH ENDURES TO EVERLASTING LIFE

"Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because the Father has set His seal on Him" John 6:27.

The significance of the feeding of the five thousand

John chapter six begins with the story of the feeding of the five thousand. It is interesting that this miracle of multiplying food is the only miracle other than the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, that appears in all four Gospels. There is something important about this particular miracle and the message that the disciples were meant to understand, and it is the same for us today.

It is to do with Passover

John notes *"Now the Passover, the Feast of the Jews, was near" (Jn.6:4)*. So the feeding of the five thousand was in the context of the Passover, and Jesus later on dies at the time of another Passover. Somehow the feeding of the five thousand is linked to Jesus being the Lamb of God, who gave His life for the world, and through Him by faith, we receive everlasting life! We receive *"the bread from heaven" (v.41)*.

The day of Firstfruits

The day after the seven days of unleavened bread, was called the day of Firstfruits (**Leviticus 23:9-14**), and on that day a sheaf of the first fruits of the harvest was to be waved before YHWH (**Lev.23:11**). Passover was the beginning of the cereal harvest and the barley ripened before the wheat. Therefore it would have been a sheaf of barley that was waved before YHWH, on that day, and the boy in **John 6** had barley loaves (**Jn.6:9**). This is all very interesting!

The miracle of discipleship

In feeding the five thousand, Jesus told the disciples *"Make the people sit down"* and there was about five thousand (**Jn.6:10**). Jesus was completely in control and He required some order in the situation. He then gave thanks and distributed the food *"to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down"* (v.11). Notice that the multiplication of the food firstly took place as Jesus gave to the disciples, and then continued to take place as the disciples distributed to the brethren. There is a lesson concerning discipleship here: the committed disciples receive the word from Jesus and then share that word with *"others"* (**2Timothy 2:2**). This feeding of the five thousand does not refer to evangelism - the scattering of the seed, but it refers to discipleship - the passing on of the word that the disciples have been taught. *"And there was plenty left over" (Jn.6:12-13)*.

They did not understand the message

According to Mark, after the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus *"immediately made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side ... He departed to the mountain to pray"* (Mark 6:45-46). There was something crucially important that Jesus had wanted the disciples to understand through the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, but they did not come to that understanding. *"For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened"* Mk.6:52. Jesus then went to pray, having sent the disciples in the boat. It appears that Jesus came up with another plan to give His disciples another opportunity to recognise who He was. They were meant to get this revelation through the miracle feeding, but it required Jesus to come walking on the water and identifying Himself as the Eternal I AM.

Walking on the water

"When the sea arose and a great wind was blowing" (John 6:18), they saw Jesus walking on the sea (v.19). Matthew said that it was in the fourth watch of the night (Matt.14:25), and the disciples were afraid, *"saying, It is a ghost! But immediately Jesus spoke to them saying 'Take courage, I AM'"* (v.27). Jesus identified Himself as the I AM (Exodus 3:14).

[This is the literal translation of what Jesus said. This is annotated in the margin of the New Spirit Filled Life Bible NKJV, page 1317; and also found in reliable Greek Interlinears. The same words are used in **Mark 6:50** and in **John 6:20**].

The revelation of who Jesus is

This revelation which reveals that Jesus is *"God manifested in the flesh"* (1Timothy 3:16), is passed over by the translators and therefore the main point of the feeding of the five thousand, which was to reveal Jesus as the Bread of Life, the One who came down from heaven, is lost. Because the disciples did not get the revelation of who Jesus is, by the miracle feeding, they then had another opportunity to come to know who Jesus is by His walking on the water. Matthew says that after Jesus had rescued a sinking Peter, and they got back into the boat, those in the boat, that is, the other disciples *"came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God'"* (Matt.14:33). Only God is to be worshiped, and Jesus was worshiped as the Son of God. In other words the disciples realised in that moment that Jesus was God!

We need the real food

In **John 6:22-26**, the crowds who had been part of the miracle feeding came seeking for Jesus again, but He recognised that they had not understood *"the signs"* and were seeking Him because of what they had eaten (v.26). It is from this point in John's gospel that Jesus begins to teach on the bread from heaven, *"the food which endures to everlasting life"* (v.27).

The work of God

Jesus alone is God's authenticated representative - *"God the Father has set His seal on Him"* (Jn.6:27). Jesus alone can give to mankind what we need. This process begins when we come to believe in Jesus Christ *"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent"* (v.29). Jesus was the sent one, the Apostle. The word *sent* is the Greek *apostello*, and

this is the base of the word for 'apostle'. We need to receive Jesus Christ - **John 1:12**, by believing in Him. This is the work of God.

The real bread is a person

The people were still unbelieving and despite the great miracle feeding, were still asking for a sign (v.30). They claimed that their fathers had received the bread from heaven (v.31), but Jesus told them, "*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*" **Jn.6:32-33**. The real bread is a person! Miracles, signs and wonders, no matter how great, will never satisfy the depth of the human soul and can never provide salvation - only faith in Jesus Christ can do that.

"And Jesus said to them, 'I AM the Bread of Life'" (**Jn.6:35a**). This is the first of the seven **I AM** sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John. As well as the seven **I AM** sayings there are a number of other times when Jesus identified Himself simply as the **I AM**. This is most clear in **John 8:58**.

In the Greek manuscript when Jesus is actually saying He is the **I AM**, two Greek words are used. They are *ego* which means *I*; and *eime* which means *I am*. When these two Greek words are used together, it is for express emphasis, and is literally *I, I am*. This amazing reality is not acknowledged in most English translations.

[The other **I AM** sayings are: **John 9:5; 10:9; 10:14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1**]

The result of coming to Jesus

Jesus said "*He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and He who believes in Me shall never thirst*" (**Jn.6:35**). And those who come to Jesus are given to Jesus by God and Jesus said "*I will by no means cast out*" (v.37). Jesus came to do the Father's will (v.38), and Jesus explains that the Father's will is that Jesus should lose nothing that the Father gave Him. Rather those that have been given to Jesus will be raised up at the last day (v.39). "*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*" v.40.

**We are to see the Son! We are to believe in Him
that we might have everlasting life and be raised up at the last day.**

Jesus is the Bread

Again Jesus said "*I AM the Bread which came down from heaven*" v.41, but the people could not believe. They wanted to naturalise what Jesus said. And again Jesus makes it clear, "*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me, draws him*" v.44. Our salvation is the work of the Father and the Son: the Father draws us to Christ! The Son makes the Father known to us!

Jesus then quotes from the Old Testament "*And they shall all be taught by God*" (v.45). If anyone is searching for God in any serious way, God will draw that person to Jesus. That person will come to know Jesus.

The Father can only be known through the Son

"Not that anyone has seen the Father except He who is from God; He has seen the Father" v.46. Earlier in **John 1:18** the Scripture says, *"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."* The Father can only be known through the Son. Remember the doctrine of Christ in **2 John v9**.

Eternal Life

Eternal life comes by believing in Jesus, that He is the Bread of Life; that He is *"The bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die" v.50.* Jesus is the living bread from heaven. We are to eat of this bread and live forever! Jesus said, *"The bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" (v.51).* This caused the Jews to quarrel among themselves as they could not understand this saying. Jesus went even further: *"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. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" v53-54.* This is very strong language! Strong teaching and many could not cope with it, even to this day.

The Table of the Lord

There is also a link to the Table of the Lord in these verses, as Jesus said on the night that He was betrayed, *"Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (1Cor.11:24)* and also when He took the cup He said, *"This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do as often as you drink in remembrance of Me" (1Cor.11:25).*

Jesus intended that His very own people would continue in a deep covenantal relationship with Him, and the means He gave us to enable this to happen is to come to the Table of the Lord regularly, eating the bread as His body and drinking the cup as His blood.

The Communion Table is a primary, first work, of the church and should be entered into regularly, even daily and even twice daily as the fulfilment of the Scriptures that speak of the daily offering of the Lamb in **Exodus 29:38-46**.

My Flesh and My Blood

Jesus said, *"For My flesh is food indeed and My blood is drink indeed" Jn.6:55.* Another version of the Scriptures says *true food* and *true drink*! The way to abide in Jesus is to eat and drink of His body and blood (v.56). Jesus said, *"He who feeds on Me will live because of Me" (v.57).*

And again Jesus said, *"This is the bread which came down from heaven" (v.58).* This is the bread that gives eternal life: *"He who eats this bread will live forever" (v.58).*

In the Synagogue

Jesus said all these things *"in the Synagogue as He taught in Capernaum" v.59.* How amazing! Jesus never played the religious game. He spoke the truth, no matter what the risk or the result. Many times He was threatened with death because He spoke the truth. What needs to happen to bring us, His disciples, to that same place of boldness and fearlessness, being willing to speak the truth of Jesus and His word, even in the midst of the religious church that is all around us!

Will you receive the hard sayings of Jesus?

Because of these sayings of Jesus, even many of His disciples said, *"This is a hard saying, who can understand it"* (v.60). Jesus realised that many of the disciples were getting offended because they could not receive His word spiritually. He said, *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and are life"* v.63. Jesus knew that many of those who were following Him had not been given to Him by the Father (v.65) and that even among the twelve there would be one who would betray Him (v.71). Jesus called him *"a devil"* (v.70).

666

"From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more" **Jn 6:66**. Notice this is the only verse in the Bible that is 666! Unfortunately there are many who set out to follow Jesus but at some point they turn back. The big danger that emerges when this happens, is that the people who turn back still outwardly say they are following Jesus and so they become religious, saying religious words and claiming they believe in Jesus but not being prepared to truly follow Him: eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

Lord, to whom shall we go?

Jesus challenged the twelve, *"Do you also want to go away?"* (v.67). Peter answered, *"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 Messiah [Christ], the Son of the Living God"* v.68-69.

Finally the disciples got the revelation! They were convinced that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God and that eternal life is only in Him, eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

Paul Galligan