

John 6: Jesus the Bread of Life

The context

- Jesus as the replacement of the Temple: the presence of God
- Jesus as the replacement of the Torah: the Word of God
- Jesus and Torah
 - Eternal existence, creative power, bread, truth, living water, light, life
- The New has come just as the Old said it would. They failed to realize that the Temple and the Torah pointed to Christ
- Jesus is the starting point in John's view of revelation. Jesus is the reality. The Temple and the Law are types of him.
- You search the Scriptures, that they might give you life. But they speak of me.

6:1-15 The feeding of the 5,000

- The passover, the second of the five feasts
- Jesus performs a sign to show he is the messianic King
- He provides bread in the wilderness, just as Moses had done
 - The people understand (6:14, also he sat down on the mountain)
- They want to make him king
 - They're responding to a stunning display of power, a miracle
- Jesus withdraws

6:16-21: Jesus walks on the water

- A private miracle only for his disciples
- He reassures them that he is indeed the King. Don't be troubled by my refusal to accept the crown

6:22-71: The Bread of Life Discourse

- The people go looking for him, Jesus says they're not impressed by the sign, but they want bread
- They think in terms of physical food, but Jesus is talking of Spiritual food
 - Reminiscent of his conversation with the woman at the well
- Two schools of thought on the discourse

Sacramental:

- Pro: John does not include the institution of the Lord's Supper in his farewell discourse
- Con: It's difficult to interpret the text in this fashion. For example, it would mean that there is no salvation for those who don't partake of the Supper.

An assertion of Spiritual truth

- A sacrament is an outward sign and seal of an inward reality. Jesus is here talking about that inward reality, which is that his people receive spiritual life and nourishment from him in the most intimate way. There is therefore a secondary reference to the sacrament.
- Jesus affirms that his mission is to do his Father's will. And that mission is for him to give life to all who believe in him.
- Thus he is the bread of life
- The Jews expected the Messianic age to be a second Exodus. The feeding of the 5,000 was reminiscent of this; but Jesus points out the limitation of manna. The Israelites ate it, and they died in the wilderness. Jesus offers eternal life. His life-giving flesh is for the whole world, not for a nationalistic minded Israel.

60-71: A hard teaching

- The people are offended and many abandon him. We're not told why, but in the context it seems that Jesus's refusal to be made King and his description of his Messiahship in terms of spiritual realities was the root of the defection.
- Peter understands Jesus's explanation. "You have the words of eternal life"
- "Have I not chosen you?" "Only those the Father draws can come to me."

The Takeaway: The Word of God gives life. The people failed to receive this life because they clung to the external form of it and failed to discern the reality it was pointing to. But the Father draws his people to Jesus, and he gives them eternal life.