

## Why Is Jesus Called the Bread of Life?

**John 6:35:** *Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will not hunger, and he who believes in me will never thirst.*



When Jesus taught, he made many profound and life changing statements. Here we are, thousands of years later, appreciating how what he said can daily lift us up and inspire us. As beautiful as this is, it only scratches the surface. Our theme scripture is a classic example of this. It is awe inspiring to know Jesus IS the bread of life that vanquishes hunger for all who truly follow him. Now let's think more deeply. Let's ask why. Why did Jesus say this? What was the deeper meaning that not only inspires but transforms our lives? Let's check the context. The scriptures that precede this tell us Passover was coming. In Jewish culture, this time of year brought anticipation for

remembering the greatest deliverance in Israel's history. Jesus would capitalize on this and show them something even greater.

Jesus had just miraculously fed the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish. That night his disciples departed to cross the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus himself went up to the mountain. A life-threatening storm came over the sea and the disciples' boat was battered by wind and waves. Jesus miraculously walked on water, caught up with them and delivered them safely to the other side.



### Food For Thought & Bread For Life:

The Jewish people of that day had three major pilgrimage festivals: **Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Booths in the fall**. Passover commemorated the "passing over" of the firstborn from the tenth plague of death while the Jewish nation was enslaved by Egypt.

As Passover time was approaching, many of the 5,000 people Jesus had just miraculously fed were likely traveling to Jerusalem. They were gathered in a place where there was no food. **As he preached, Jesus undoubtedly saw their physical need in light of the connection with Israel's original Passover deliverance.**

The next morning, when some of the people who had been fed saw that Jesus was not there, they boarded several small boats and went across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum in search of him. They had seen his disciples get in a boat and cross the sea.

**Upon arriving, they found Jesus and asked him how he got there. Jesus' answer set up this enormous lesson:**

**John 6:26:** *Jesus answered them and said, Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.*



In other words, is your coming here an expression of your faith in my ability to do miracles? Or did you come here just because you got free bread yesterday when you were with me? He was the Messiah, not a vending machine!

They were waiting to see if Jesus would feed the crowd again. But Jesus wanted to lift their thinking from the immediacy of earthly concerns to lives to being able to see things in a bigger and eternal way.

**He would embark on a conversation that would change the way they could look at their lives:**

**John 6:27:** *Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on him the Father, God, has set His seal.*

In one sentence, Jesus told them that their focus was too self-centered. It would be to their eternal advantage to set their sights much higher. He also proclaimed he was THE source for this higher thinking and living, as God had “sealed” him to that end.

*Seal* means something regarded as a confirmation or guarantee.

**The seal is God’s spirit:**

**Mark 1:9-12:** *9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Immediately coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opening, and the spirit like a dove descending upon him; 11 and a voice came out of the heavens: You are My beloved son, in you I am well-pleased. 12 Immediately the spirit impelled him to go out into the wilderness.*



This was undeniable confirmation from God that Jesus was His son. The *seal* was God’s spirit like a dove descending upon him. This seal of God’s spirit immediately directed Jesus to the wilderness to fast and pray.

**He wasn’t alone very long before Satan would come visiting:**

**Matthew 4:1-4:** *1 Then Jesus was led up by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he then became hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, If you are the son of God, command that these stones become bread. 4 But he answered and said, It is written (he then quotes Deuteronomy 8:3), MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.*

It’s curious that the first temptation has to do with bread.

Jesus hadn’t eaten in 40 days, so he would naturally have been very hungry. He had the ability to perform miracles. He could have turned the stones into bread, but he would then be doing the will of the devil and not the will of his Father.

Jesus didn’t try to reason with him or debate him or weigh the pros and cons before he answered. He simply quoted scripture to impress upon Satan that the accomplishment of his Father’s will was his ONLY objective.



When we look at the context of **Deuteronomy 8:3**, it is not surprising Jesus used this verse to respond to Satan’s temptation. It is oriented toward Passover and deliverance. Jesus went to the book of Deuteronomy to answer the temptation. Let’s look at the context. At this point, the people have been liberated from their slavery of Egypt. They have wandered the wilderness for 40 years, and the next generation stands ready to finally enter the Promised Land. Moses has been strongly reminding them to be careful to obey the commandments and to remember how God has led them so far.

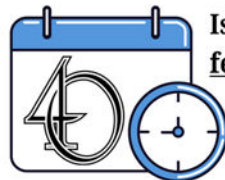
**Deuteronomy 8:1-2:** *1 All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers. 2 You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.*

**Here is the verse Jesus quoted in answer to the temptation:**

**Deuteronomy 8:3:** *He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with **manna** which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by **bread** alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.*

This verse directly connects “bread” with “manna.” We will explore this further.

At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, we have the reference to deliverance, heavenly bread and to Jesus as the *bread of life*.



Israel wandered for 40 years while being fed by manna.

Jesus fasted 40 days and became the **lifesaving bread of life for humanity.**

By quoting from Deuteronomy, Jesus brought a spiritual connection to this conversation built upon God’s physical feeding of previous generations of Israelites during their wilderness wanderings.

**This same seal of God’s spirit is what drives all the true followers of Jesus—even up to today:**

**Ephesians 1:13-14:** (KJV) *13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise, 14 which is the earnest of our inheritance...*



When something is the *earnest of our inheritance*, it means it is a promise. Consider an engagement ring. The ring is a promise of a future wedding, a future union. The giving of God’s spirit is a seal or promise of what is to come. Jesus was “sealed” with that spirit when he was baptized.

Back in **John 6:27**, Jesus said, *Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on him the Father, God, has set His seal. In other words, has given His promise.* Jesus is not saying this to be poetic; he is saying something spiritually powerful while speaking to the physical nation of Israel.



### **Food For Thought & Bread For Life:**

The miraculous feeding of many by providing food in a desolate place provoked some to seek Jesus out. Knowing he had their attention, Jesus sought to elevate their thinking to a level that God's called-out ones would be required to have. His method of teaching them would cause serious discomfort for some but would solidify others.

What Jesus will soon say will be a problem for some. For others, it will captivate and bring them along. He is about to do a dividing work, even as he does the unifying work of paying the price for all of mankind. How is that possible?

The capacity Jesus had to respond to any and every question with God's purposes in mind is truly amazing to observe!

**Jesus had just presented a wonderful invitation to receive “food” for eternal life. How would this mixed crowd respond?**

As with other examples of Jewish thinking in Jesus' day, their response would be calculated. They would show a desire to comply with the teachings Jesus was putting before them, but their capacity to move forward would be measured by their own perspective. Even though Jesus had already proven himself to be from God, they would still demand a sign.

**Before demanding a sign, the crowd asks him:**

**John 6:28-29:** *28 Therefore they said to him, What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God? 29 Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom He has sent.*

Jesus' answer was, *Believe in him whom He has sent*, meaning believe in him (Jesus).

This Jewish audience asked their question from the perspective of physical Jews in a physical nation. In other words, *Just tell us what we can do to please God.* Up to this point, it was complying with the Mosaic Law.



In **Luke 10:25-28**, a lawyer trying to test Jesus asked him what action was needed for the lawyer needed to gain eternal life, Jesus had him recite specific parts from the Law—that is, to love God completely and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus said to him, *You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.*

**Luke 10:25-28:** *25 And a lawyer stood up and put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26 And he said to him, What is written in the Law? How does it read to you? 27 And he answered, YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. 28 And he said to him, You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.*

Back in **John 6:29** when this crowd asked what they should be doing, Jesus answered, *believe in him who He has sent.*



**It was the same question but a different answer based on who was asking. Why?**



Jesus gave an unexpected answer. The lawyer (who knew the Law well) was seeking to test Jesus to see if Jesus knew the answer. Jesus gave him the standard Jewish answer.

Apparently, the crowd genuinely wanted to know the answer.

**It was the same with the rich young man who asked:**

**Mark 10:17-23:** *17 ...Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 18 And Jesus said to him... 19 You know the commandments... 20 And he said to him, Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up. 21 Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me. 22 But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. 23 And Jesus, looking around, said to his disciples, How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!*

We can see the difference between the two conversations. With the lawyer, Jesus recited the Law. He answered him, *Yes, because Leviticus tells us, if we abide by the Law, we shall live.* But the Law could not bring Israel life, because like all of mankind, they were imperfect. They could not fulfill a Law that required more than they could give.

Jesus, on the other hand, **COULD** bring eternal life. When the rich young ruler comes to him in sincerity and asks what he has to do for eternal life, Jesus repeats the Law. He reassures the young man that he has done well in keeping the statutes. But when Jesus explains the necessity of a life of sacrifice, it is too much for the young man.

The difference in these two answers shows how Jesus taught. He will use some difficult sayings, including how he describes himself as the *bread of life*.

**The crowd asks for a sign:**

**John 6:30-31:** *30 So they said to him, What then do you do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.*

In Jewish eyes, the sign that manna came from heaven was an indicator to them that Moses was a genuine leader from God. Here the people were asking for a sign to prove Jesus was a genuine leader from God as well. They are not only asking for a sign, but specifically the supernatural one that fed millions of people for decades!

Apparently, miraculously feeding 5,000 of them (which they observed) and all of the other miracles Jesus had done up to that point were not “sign” enough! They wanted a massive “miracle on demand!”

Let’s look at more about this *manna in the wilderness*.

**This demanding of a sign was prefaced with a direct reference to Israel’s Passover deliverance from Egypt as they quoted from the book of Exodus:**

**Exodus 16:4:** *Then the LORD said to Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.*

Jesus will soon compare the physical sign of manna to connect himself as the spiritual manna. What was the meaning of the literal manna?



- Manna was God’s daily heavenly provision to miraculously sustain and deliver His people. It was a huge miracle to lead—as some estimates say—over 2 million people out of slavery in Egypt, but yet another to actually keep them sustained in a wilderness desert for 40 years.

**Exodus 16:14-15:** *14 When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground. 15 When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, What is it? For they did not know what it was...Moses said to them, It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.*

**Verse 15 in the King James Version:** *...when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna...*

The origin of the word is complicated, but the easiest explanation is that it comes from the Hebrew words for the question, *what is it, mān hu*. **Exodus 16:31** tells us it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. **Numbers 11:8** tells us the people ground or beat it to make baked cakes, and it tasted like fresh oil.



They called this miracle food, *What is it?* Nobody knew, because nobody had seen anything like it before. It was completely different. Moses had to tell them it was bread from heaven that God sent so they would not starve.

What else do we know about literal manna? What did it mean to Israel and how did it change their lives and sustain them?



- Manna was a form of sustenance that had never been seen before.
- This form of sustenance had to be clearly defined for them.

*What is it?* They had to ask. Moses answers, *It is your food from God. It is bread from heaven.*

It was something they had never seen, but it would be vital to their survival. *What are we supposed to do with this? Would you eat it? Really?* There is a sense here of God blessing them with something new.

**Exodus 16:16-18:** *16 This is what the LORD has commanded, Gather of it every man as much as he should eat; you shall take an omer apiece according to the number of persons each of you has in his tent. 17 The sons of Israel did so, and some gathered much and some little. 18 When they measured it with an omer, he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack; every man gathered as much as he should eat.*

They had to gather this mysterious “*what is it*” and treat it in a specific way.



- Portions of manna for each individual were equal and they provided complete sustenance. Everyone weighed out exactly what they needed for that specific day.
- Some gathered much, some gathered little, but it was all equally apportioned.

Everyone got an omer’s worth, which was one-tenth of an ephah, of course (**Exodus 16:36**)! These were traditional Jewish standards of measuring dry goods. Different sources say it is the equivalent to the volume of 43.2 chicken eggs and thought to weigh anywhere from over 2.5 to 5 pounds. Regardless, it was enough to feel satiated for one day.

**But there were two specific instructions to follow:**

**Exodus 16:19-21:** *19 Moses said to them, Let no man leave any of it until morning. 20 But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul; and Moses was angry with them. 21 They gathered it morning by morning, every man as much as he should eat; but when the sun grew hot, it would melt.*

They receive enough of the miraculous “*what is it*” to sustain them with good health. God told them how to gather and handle it. Of course, not all listened to God’s instructions, resulting in consequences.



- All manna that was gathered each day was to be consumed that day or it would spoil. They couldn’t hoard it.
- The gathering of manna was to be done at the beginning of each day or it would perish. Gather your bread from heaven first, and you’ll have everything you need to sustain you until the next day.

You couldn't be lazy and not get at it first thing in the morning because it would melt in the hot sun! Not having any reserves, the Israelites had to have full faith in God that He would provide their needs each day. The lesson for us is obvious.

*There is always enough for today; tomorrow is in God's hands.*

**Exodus 16:22-24:** *22 Now on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one... 23 (Moses explained)...This is what the LORD meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning. 24 So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm in it.*

Another miraculous provision! They hadn't received the formal Mosaic Law yet, but already the Sabbath was put into place, as God had instituted it at creation.

The manna would spoil if the Jews tried to keep it overnight during the week. But the day before Sabbath, somehow the manna gathered in excess (double) would last over the Sabbath because God made it so.

What else does that tell us about the physical manna?



- This manna was provided in accordance with the Law that God would give to Israel.
- Additional sustaining providence kept the unused manna fresh throughout the Sabbath.

This was heavenly food provided to be used in a very specific way according to God's guidelines. They would never go hungry and could even rest on the Sabbath, remaining nourished and strong and having "food certainty."

So, when the people asked Jesus to give them a sign like the Israelite's bread from heaven, they were requesting a massive sign!

### **How did Jesus respond to their demand for a sign?**

**John 6:32-34:** *32 Jesus then said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world. 34 Then they said to him, Lord, always give us this bread.*

*We asked you for a sign like manna, but there is something even BETTER than the original? WHOA! Give us THAT awesome bread!*

They are thinking they hit the jackpot because Jesus could be a supplier of their sustenance. Jesus' audience is still thinking in the same physically-oriented way they were used to.



They heard Jesus' answer to the "manna as a sign" challenge, and it seems as though they imagined Jesus was proclaiming the same sort of physical answer. They were going along with Jesus, but not for the right reasons because they did not yet understand.



### Food For Thought & Bread For Life:

The bread from heaven in the wilderness was a life saver for Israel. The fact that it was unexpected and yet complete sustenance that came in a miraculous way and always provided just what everyone needed proves its source was God Himself.

In some ways this manna provided a firm foundation of faith for Israel over many centuries.

The literal manna required a daily faith, feeding them every single day for 40 years. It was an unquestionable sign from heaven.

We're starting to realize just how unusual and significant the manna, the bread from heaven, was in Jewish history and Jewish faith.

**Jesus' audience has presented him with their high standard of a sign.  
How would they respond to Jesus' answer?**

Because we know the end results of Jesus' earthly ministry, we can guess what the answer would be. Most of these people would ultimately not follow, but why? Why would anyone NOT want what Jesus was offering? As always, the answer has to do with being able to see things differently and having to alter one's life as a result. This is always what Jesus requires.

Let us consider the contrast between the physical, ancient Jewish nation and the call of the true followers of Jesus who will make up his church. Natural Israel was all about the physical. True Christians—"spiritual" Israel—are asked to give up concerns about their physical life in exchange for a heavenly one.

Let's compare the details of the giving of physical manna to the **John 6** texts to see the parallels. Jesus would build the giving of the natural gift into the giving of a higher, spiritual gift.



- Portions of manna for each individual were equal—an omer each day for each person—providing complete sustenance.

**John 6:35-37:** *35 Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will not hunger, and he who believes in me will never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen me, and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out.*

Jesus is now calling himself the *bread of life*. Manna, the bread from heaven, fed Israel for 40 years. Jesus would now be their source of spiritual food. *The one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out*—he is giving a beautiful, open invitation.



**Jesus as the Bread of Life:** Just as the manna was provided equally for all, Jesus fully and equally sustains all who accept him and follow him. It doesn't matter your background, profession, gender or race.

**To the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus said:**

**John 4:13-15:** *13 ...Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life. 15 The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.*

We just read in **John 6:35** *he who comes to me will not hunger, and he who believes in me will never thirst.* This makes us think of **Matthew 5:6:** (KJV) *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.* In these examples, Jesus was teaching revolutionary concepts. It was difficult for the people to change their thinking from physical meanings (literal water or bread) to spiritual ones (heavenly truths).

Samaritans and the Jews were enemies, and yet, Jesus treated her in the same way as he would have treated a Jewish person. Jesus didn't leave anyone out. Each sincere individual he spoke with was provided equal and complete sustenance. This is an important point in the big picture of Jesus as the *bread of life*.

Back to the physical manna:



- Manna was God's daily, heavenly provision to miraculously sustain and deliver His people.

**John 6:38-40:** *38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me. 39 This is the will of Him who sent me, that of all that He has given me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who beholds the son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I myself will raise him up on the last day.*

...I came down from heaven (just like manna)

...which was the will of God (just like manna)

...to nourish and protect the people (just like manna)

**manna**  
**JUST LIKE**

Jesus adds a few pieces. He talks about bringing people to him and raising up everyone who believed in him. The Israelites had to believe the manna was going to be there every morning. They had to take care of it first thing in the morning. There are many parallels. Just as the manna was God's daily provision for Israel in the wilderness, Jesus is God's daily heavenly provision for those who follow him.



**Jesus as the Bread of Life:**

Jesus came from God to call out and deliver God's chosen.

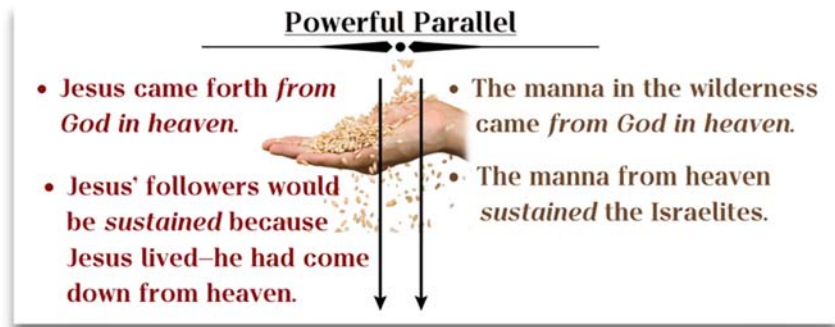
**We see clear evidence of what that meant:**

**John 17:6-8:** *6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have come to know that everything You have given me is from You; 8 for the words which You gave me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent me.*

The true followers of Jesus truly understood he came forth from God, just like the manna in the wilderness came from God.

*I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me (John 6:38).* Those who he was drawing to himself would be sustained because Jesus lived on earth —having come down from heaven like manna.

Still thinking on a physical level, they did not quite understand. They are thinking, *When do we eat? We know you can multiply the bread, so when's the next meal?*



- The gathering of manna was to be done at the beginning of each day or it would perish. If you didn't get your manna that day, you didn't eat!

A practical lesson for us is to seek God and Jesus first. How many of us have busy lives? How many times has our head hit the pillow after a long and stressful day, and we realize not only did we forget to pray throughout the day—let alone study or even stop to be thankful—but now we are just too tired? We are supposed to have God and Jesus at our center and then fit all the cares of life into that center. It's the opposite of being overrun by life and trying to shoehorn spiritual thoughts into the day. Fit your life into Jesus; don't try to fit Jesus into your life. This all has to do with putting first things first. At the beginning of the day, our first job is to put ourselves into a position of dedication to God's will for us.

**John 6:41-44:** *41 Therefore the Jews were grumbling about him, because he said, I am the bread that came down out of heaven. 42 They were saying, is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, I have come down out of heaven? 43 Jesus answered and said to them, Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*

Now Jesus has people grumbling about him and what he is saying. They are obviously thinking in a physical way.

He tells them, *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.*

It is interesting that Jesus is talking to a varied audience. There were people who had come to town for the Passover. There were his disciples who followed him, including the apostles. These words were spoken in and around the synagogue, so there were probably some doctors of the Law hanging around. It was a very mixed audience. He is telling ALL of them plainly that if the Father draws them and they come to Jesus, he will raise them up.

There is a caveat, though. To get this privilege, they had to want to work with and follow him.



**Jesus as the Bread of Life:** As the manna was nourishment for those who were delivered, Jesus would be nourishment for those drawn by God, each in their own time, to follow in his footsteps throughout the whole age of the gospel message.

Jesus has a specific mission to be “nourishment” to those God would draw. In the wilderness, those delivered by God were nourished physically. Now that Jesus was here, those drawn by God would be nourished on a spiritual level.

**The following scriptures give us an explanation of this:**

**Matthew 28:19-20:** *19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the son and the holy spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

Jesus was talking about what his disciples would do after his ascension. *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.* Jesus would nourish the ones they found whom the Father was drawing with the same seal, the holy spirit, given to him. Jesus as the bread from heaven is much bigger than the bread from heaven (manna) in the time of the Exodus!



- Additional sustaining providence kept the unused manna fresh through the Sabbath.

**John 6:45-46:** *45 It is written in the prophets, AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to me. 46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father.*

Jesus continues with his explanation. The crowd quoted the scripture about a sign. Now Jesus quotes scripture saying, *They shall all be taught of God.* What is Jesus telling them? He is explaining how he is the conduit through which they will find spiritual nourishment because *None of you have seen the Father, but I have.*

Talk about a remarkable statement! These are truths they were not expecting.



**Jesus as the Bread of Life:** Throughout this whole age of the gospel message, Jesus keeps all of his followers firmly faithful and attached to their Father, no matter what their conditions or when they lived.

The “manna” would be fresh for each and every individual as they were drawn by the Father. A good example of this is in the Parable of the Vineyard.

**Workers who worked in the last hour of the day received the same reward as others who started earlier:**

**Matthew 20:8-10:** *8 When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first. 9 When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius. 10 When those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius.*

A denarius was a day’s wages for a laborer. It is thought the silver content today would be worth around three dollars. Everyone received the same reward. Even those who started work at the very end of the day received exactly the same reward.



The point is they went to work in the vineyard alongside Jesus and they were paid. They were nourished exactly in the same way as everyone else. It did not matter if they waited until the very end; they were still nourished.



- This form of sustenance had to be clearly defined for them—*what is it*, they asked.

**John 6:47-51:** *47 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.*

This scripture is often misunderstood. Jesus isn’t saying just believe who he is and you get a free ticket to heaven. Even Satan knows who he is!

*48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.*

Jesus is again talking about those who are drawn by God. *Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died...I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever (have eternal life) because it will bring you to a spiritual level. This message was different than anything anyone had ever seen or heard of before.*





**Jesus as the Bread of Life:** Jesus comprehensively defined himself as the sole path to the Father which ultimately leads to eternal life.

There is no other way. He did not say, *I am one of the loaves of the bread of life*; he said, *I AM the bread of life*.

**John 14:5-6:** 5 *Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going, how do we know the way?* 6 *Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me.*

Just as manna had to be clearly defined, here Jesus defined himself as the only way to the Father. This applies now to his faithful followers, but it will also apply to the whole world in God's future kingdom. He is ultimately to be the *bread of life* to the world because he bought the world with the sacrifice of his own life.

That is an important point. Our key point, though, is that at this time of the gospel message going out, Jesus is the *bread of life* for those whom the Father draws. Jesus' ransom price from Adam's sin eventually pays for every single human being whether drawn at this time by the Father or not.



### Food For Thought & Bread For Life:

Jesus was clearly showing his audience the undeniable truth that the manna from heaven in the days of Israel's deliverance pictured him as a sustainer of spiritual life. **Their privilege was to be living at the time when this bread of life first appeared.**

Remember, the manna first appeared for 40 years to the generation who first received it. It appeared to the next generation as well. All those born in the wilderness received the same sustenance from God.

Seeing the connection between the manna in the wilderness and Jesus as spiritual manna for his followers gives us a profound respect for God's arrangements!

**Obviously, Jesus is stirring up the crowd with his teaching.  
How would all of this end? What would the people think and do?**

Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. He was teaching a profound lesson in a very hard-to-hear way in order to sift through those listening and find those who would truly seek to follow him. For many, Jesus' next statements would be deal-breakers, as the depth of his lesson would require his listeners to adopt a new paradigm.



- Manna was a form of sustenance that had never been seen before. They were thinking and saying—*what is it?*

**Jesus is about to walk into that “what-is-it” category with what he says next:**

**John 6:52-58:** *52 Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? 53 So Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me, he also will live because of me. 58 This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.*

This seems way over the line! What is he talking about? Flesh is food? Drink is blood? Yuck! And he keeps repeating it!

He is making a point, knowing exactly what he is doing. The point is they needed to see their lives differently. The Jews at that time thought their Messiah would come with an army from God and deliver them from Rome’s crushing rule over them. Instead, Jesus as their Messiah says he will deliver them by dying himself, and by calling out a select few to become members of the “body of Christ.” These few will help mankind be reconciled to God—this is how they would be saved.

This was completely different than what they thought!

In the process, Jesus showed them and told them things they just couldn’t bear. *He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him* was not something they understood. Their misunderstanding of these statements repelled them.



**Jesus as the Bread of Life:** Jesus demonstrated the depth of who he was as a man by dramatically giving all of his true followers a clear picture of what his sacrifice accomplished.

He said it in **John 6** in many, many different ways—then he lived it and gave it to his disciples as a dramatic, solemn and reverent symbol.



The following scriptures take place after eating the Passover meal with his disciples, just before they went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray and be taken captive.

**Jesus gives them symbols:**

**Luke 22:19-20:** *19 And when he had taken some bread and given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me. 20 And in the same way he took the cup after they had eaten, saying, This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.*

The memorial supper is a **SYMBOLIC** picture of Jesus’ sacrifice, done in a quiet, reverential way to say, *I am giving my body and I am shedding my blood for you. Through doing this for you, I do it for the whole world.*

Jesus is NOT AT ALL referring to eating his physical body and drinking his physical blood. The bread doesn't literally turn into Jesus' flesh, and the wine is not Jesus' literal blood. This beautiful symbolic picture shows us in solemn ceremony of the price Jesus paid as a ransom for all.

This manna—Jesus—was (like the ancient manna in the wilderness) a form of sustenance that had never been seen before. The partaking of him (symbolically eating his flesh and drinking his blood) refers to becoming a follower and participating in his life experiences. This was something that had never been offered before, but was necessary for those who would follow him.



- This manna was provided in accordance with the Law that God would give to Israel.

**John 6:59-63:** *59 These things he said in the synagogue as he taught in Capernaum. 60 Therefore many of his disciples, when they heard this said, This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it? 61 But Jesus, conscious that his disciples grumbled at this, said to them, Does this cause you to stumble? 62 What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63 It is the spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.*

Instead of apologizing for scaring them with this seemingly crazy talk about eating and drinking his body and blood, he doubles down with talk about his future ascension into heaven.

Now even the disciples were grumbling! Jesus not only had to deal with the doctors of the Law and visitors to town looking on asking, *What is he talking about?* Now, his own disciples were saying, *Wait a minute, this doesn't make sense to us!*

Jesus says, *the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.* Remember, the Law could not bring life to anyone except a perfect man, Jesus. But Jesus could bring life to everyone.



**Jesus as the Bread of Life:** Jesus became the bread of life and proclaimed a new law for his followers regarding the heavenly call.

The manna was provided in accordance with the old Law. It was supplied and kept fresh miraculously, providing Israel sustenance over the day of the Sabbath. Jesus expanded that picture by building on that base of the literal manna miraculously supplied for the sustenance of Israel. It would illustrate his own mission and how he would miraculously supply and sustain his apostles and followers.

He elevated the old Law by demonstrating the “spirit” of the Law for his followers, not just keeping the “letter” of the Law.

**John 13:34-36:** *34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. 36 Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered, Where I go, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow later.*

This new commandment was to set them apart. The purpose of being drawn by God through Jesus is to set us apart. Those who come to Jesus are set apart and will be nourished in a very special way, in very special circumstances. It is in accordance with God's highest law of justice because Jesus paid the price for Adam.



- Some gathered much, some gathered little, but it was all equally apportioned.

**John 6:64-65:** *64 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 it was that would betray him. 65 And he was saying, For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to me unless it has been granted him from the Father.*

Jesus knew some of them did not believe—he could read hearts. He even knew *who it was that would betray him*.

*No one can come to me unless it has been granted him from the Father*—in other words, it is okay if those in the crowd do not currently believe, as they will still have a place in the future resurrection. He knew he came to save them as well. He would be the *bread of life* for everyone eventually, but at his first advent he was the *bread of life* for those few who actually followed him.



**Jesus as the Bread of Life:** Jesus turned the thinking of his day upside down by feeding and leading any whom God had drawn, regardless of their status, education or talents.

In other words, it doesn't matter what part of society you come from. Are you drawn by the Father and willing to be nourished? *If so, I will take care of you. Eating and drinking of me means symbolically partaking of the nourishment I give you and reverently appreciating what I have done for you individually and ultimately for the whole world.*

Why was Jesus deliberately saying hard things that were repulsive to some? Because he was looking for those who were drawn by God, who saw something higher. When we look at the world in general from Jesus' time until now, we see only a relatively few here and there who truly grab hold of and give their lives in sacrifice following Jesus' example of giving up his life to do his Father's will to save mankind. This is something that does not require status, or stature, or reputation—it requires heart.

**This helps us to understand what God is looking for:**

**1 Corinthians 1:26-29:** *26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God.*

This would not be a resume of a person most of us would be interested in hiring! This is a resume that reads the heart where God metaphorically says, *You have a heart I can use, so I am going to draw you. It does not matter where you come from. I want those who are humble because they have a lot of brokenness and will not boast in themselves. All of their goodness comes from Me, the Father.*

This is a beautiful picture of who Jesus was drawing and why he was willing to push people away. He knew they were not ready to accept his teachings. They were on two different levels.



- All manna that was gathered each day was to be consumed that day or it would spoil.

**John 6:66-71:** *66 As a result (meaning, you either partake of this “bread” or not) of this many of his disciples withdrew and were not walking with him anymore. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, You do not want to go away also, do you? 68 Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 We have believed and have come to know that you are the holy one of God. 70 Jesus answered them, Did I myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil? 71 Now he meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.*

Jesus successfully stirred up the crowd. His words accomplished their work. People were walking away saying, *Forget it, this is ridiculous. I can't have anything to do with this.* Then Jesus says to the twelve, his most loyal and important disciples, *You do not want to go away also, do you?*

Peter's answer is wonderful and a great lesson for us. *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. In other words, You are the one who can nourish us. No one else can.* For those who are drawn by God and following Christ, there is no place else to go. This is what Jesus as the *bread of life* looks like!



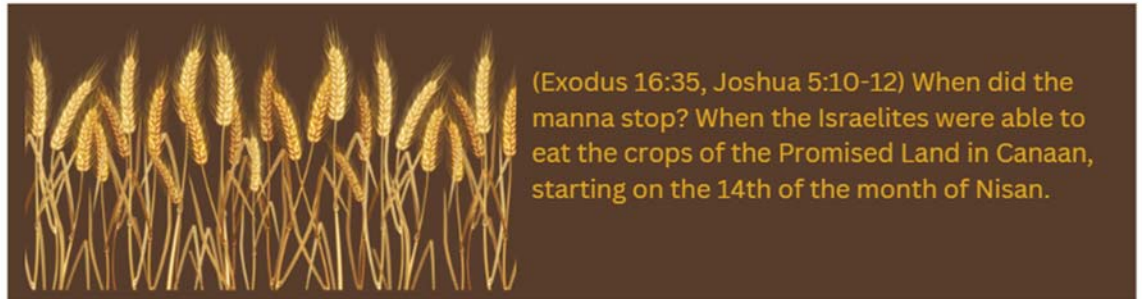
**Jesus as the Bread of Life:** Jesus declared to his followers that to be called of God to discipleship was a life-changing, mind-altering decision that needed clear focus and daily determination.





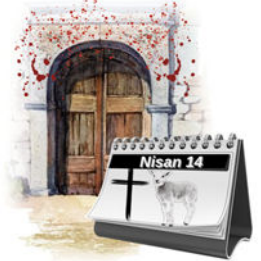
This is a great lesson to set our intention right when we wake up. First things first, how will I be a dedicated Christian today? Let's add one more comparison between the physical manna and Jesus. The Israelites didn't earn the manna. They didn't have to pay for it. It was a free gift from God. They just had to bend down, pick it up and eat it. We all have that same opportunity.

**Luke 9:23-24:** *23 And he was saying to them all, If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, he is the one who will save it.*



Nisan 14 is the exact date of the passing over of the firstborn in Egypt and the date the Passover lamb was eaten in commemoration. We know from other scriptures, Jesus is symbolically pictured as that Passover lamb slain on the 14<sup>th</sup>. It is all about Jesus, right down to the tiniest detail!

The 14th of Nisan



God delivered them by providing the miracle of manna until they were able to eat from the Promised Land. The number 40 in the Bible is a symbol of a time of testing. They were provided nourishment each and every day for those 40 years. The bread from heaven was there, but they had to prioritize the work of gathering it and consuming it daily until God led them to the Promised Land.

There would not be a day in between that they were not nourished. This is also the point of Jesus as the bread of life. He is our complete nourishment in this world of sin and sickness and death—we are cared for right up until our ultimate deliverance.



### Food For Thought & Bread For Life:

Jesus is THE bread of life for those who follow him. Just like the manna in the wilderness fed Israel, he nourishes God's called out ones through their earthly journey towards faithfulness.

Let us find strength in him as we daily seek to honor God through our Lord Jesus in everything we say and do!

Honor God in all things and Jesus will nourish you. *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).*

**Matthew 11:28-30:** 28 *Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.* 29 *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.* 30 *For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

Being yoked to Jesus is easy in that the yoke fits well. We can manage the burden because he is with us in all of this.

Be fed by the bread of life. If you are called by God to follow Jesus, be assured that Jesus will nourish you every day like the Israelites were nourished daily by the manna. Our priority is to first seek his nourishment and then live our lives as representatives of Christ.

**So, why is Jesus called the bread of life?  
For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...  
...Think about it!**

*All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.*

### Bonus Material and Study Questions



@christianquestionsministries



cqbiblepodcast

Text CQREWIND to 22828

to receive our Weekly Newsletter, Show Notes and Study Questions

#### Recommended additional study:

**Ep.1303: How Can I Doubt My Doubts? (Part II)**

*Learning to cope with differing kinds of doubt in our Christian walk*

<https://christianquestions.com/character/doubts-part-ii/>

For more on the Samaritan woman:

**Ep.1336: How Do We Cope With Feeling Shame?**

*Understanding the role shame should and should not play in our lives*

<https://christianquestions.com/character/how-do-we-cope-with-feeling-shame/>



Parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with these short, animated videos for kids at [ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube](https://christianquestions.com/YouTube):

- **Why was Jesus baptized?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/why-was-jesus-baptized-3/>
- **Did Jesus ever do anything wrong? (Three Temptations from Satan)**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/video-cq-kids-did-jesus-ever-do-anything-wrong/>
- **What was the purpose of the Law?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/what-was-the-purpose-of-the-law/>
- **What is the Gospel?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/video-cq-kids-what-is-the-gospel/>
- **How do Christians receive the holy spirit?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/how-to-receive-the-holy-spirit/>
- **Why did Jesus come to earth?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/why-did-jesus-come-to-earth/>
- **What was the Ark of the Covenant?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/what-is-the-ark-of-the-covenant/>



(Exodus 16:17-35) The Lord commanded Moses to keep an *omer* of manna for future generations as a remembrance of what He had done for them. Moses instructed Aaron who put a pot of manna into the Ark of the Covenant, where it miraculously did not spoil. The Ark also contained the two tables of the Law that God gave Moses and Aaron's rod that budded.

# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep.1348: Why is Jesus Called the Bread of Life?

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1348-bread-of-life/>

See:



1. What did the crowd who followed Jesus across the Sea of Galilee expect Jesus to do? In what way did Jesus' answer attempt to change their way of thinking? (John 6:26,27)
2. How did God indicate Jesus would be the one to dispense the "food that endures"? How did Jesus answer Satan's temptation about turning stones to bread? How did Jesus build upon the physical feeding of the Israelites to describe his relationship to his followers? (John 6:27, Mark 1:9-12, Matthew 4:1-4, Deuteronomy 8:1-3, Ephesians 1:13-14)
3. What was necessary to "work the works of God"? How did Jesus answer the lawyer? Did the Law bring Israel life? Why?
4. Why did the rich young ruler grieve? (John 6:28-29, Luke 10:25-28, Mark 10:17-23)
5. What "sign" did the crowd ask for from Jesus? What was manna? What does the word mean? What lessons can we draw from God's provision of the manna? How did Jesus respond to their demand for a sign? (John 6:30-34, Exodus 16:4, 14-24)
6. Compare each "manna point" with the corresponding point in "Jesus as the Bread of Life" in John 6:35-71. Discuss thoroughly:
  - a. Manna was provided equally for all; Jesus provides for all equally. (John 6:35-37, 4:13-15, Matthew 5:6)
  - b. Manna was God's daily, heavenly provision to miraculously sustain His people; how do we let Jesus sustain us? (John 6:38-40, 17:6-8)
  - c. Manna was gathered early every day or it melted away; how do we seek to gather Jesus' nourishment every day, quickly working in the way he directs us? (John 6:41-44, Matthew 28:19-20)
  - d. Manna stayed fresh an extra day on the Sabbath; Jesus' nourishment is fresh for each as needed all during the present age of the gospel message (John 6:45-46, Matthew 20:8-10).
  - e. Manna needs to be defined; Jesus is defined as the path to God; "What is it?" (John 6:47-51, 14:5-6)
  - f. Manna was unknown; Jesus brings new thinking and a new way of life; "What is it?" (John 6:52-58, Luke 22:19-20)
  - g. Manna was provided along with God's Law; Jesus brought life with a new Law. (John 6:59-63, 13:34-36)
  - h. Manna's quantity fit each; Jesus gave what was needed to each. (John 6:64-65, 1 Corinthians 1:26-29)
  - i. Manna needed to be eaten immediately; the crowd walked away, but Jesus' disciples knew he was their food, their Messiah. (John 6:66-71, Luke 9:23-24)
7. What lessons do you take from these examples? How are you fed by the Bread of Life? What will you change to make sure you partake of the daily "manna" provided to you as a follower of Christ?

# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep.1348: Why is Jesus Called the Bread of Life?

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1348-bread-of-life/>

See:



1. What did the crowd who followed Jesus across the Sea of Galilee expect Jesus to do? In what way did Jesus' answer attempt to change their way of thinking? (John 6:26,27)
2. How did God indicate Jesus would be the one to dispense the "food that endures"? How did Jesus answer Satan's temptation about turning stones to bread? How did Jesus build upon the physical feeding of the Israelites to describe his relationship to his followers? (John 6:27, Mark 1:9-12, Matthew 4:1-4, Deuteronomy 8:1-3, Ephesians 1:13-14)
3. What was necessary to "work the works of God"? How did Jesus answer the lawyer? Did the Law bring Israel life? Why?
4. Why did the rich young ruler grieve? (John 6:28-29, Luke 10:25-28, Mark 10:17-23)
5. What "sign" did the crowd ask for from Jesus? What was manna? What does the word mean? What lessons can we draw from God's provision of the manna? How did Jesus respond to their demand for a sign? (John 6:30-34, Exodus 16:4, 14-24)
6. Compare each "manna point" with the corresponding point in "Jesus as the Bread of Life" in John 6:35-71. Discuss thoroughly:
  - a. Manna was provided equally for all; Jesus provides for all equally. (John 6:35-37, 4:13-15, Matthew 5:6)
  - b. Manna was God's daily, heavenly provision to miraculously sustain His people; how do we let Jesus sustain us? (John 6:38-40, 17:6-8)
  - c. Manna was gathered early every day or it melted away; how do we seek to gather Jesus' nourishment every day, quickly working in the way he directs us? (John 6:41-44, Matthew 28:19-20)
  - d. Manna stayed fresh an extra day on the Sabbath; Jesus' nourishment is fresh for each as needed all during the present age of the gospel message (John 6:45-46, Matthew 20:8-10).
  - e. Manna needs to be defined; Jesus is defined as the path to God; "What is it?" (John 6:47-51, 14:5-6)
  - f. Manna was unknown; Jesus brings new thinking and a new way of life; "What is it?" (John 6:52-58, Luke 22:19-20)
  - g. Manna was provided along with God's Law; Jesus brought life with a new Law. (John 6:59-63, 13:34-36)
  - h. Manna's quantity fit each; Jesus gave what was needed to each. (John 6:64-65, 1 Corinthians 1:26-29)
  - i. Manna needed to be eaten immediately; the crowd walked away, but Jesus' disciples knew he was their food, their Messiah. (John 6:66-71, Luke 9:23-24)
7. What lessons do you take from these examples? How are you fed by the Bread of Life? What will you change to make sure you partake of the daily "manna" provided to you as a follower of Christ?