

“Eternal Food” (Jn. 6:26-51)

1. Heavenly Work (26-29)

- a. V. 26. After the following crowd witnessed two signs and inquired of the second, Jesus tells them they have the wrong motives. See 4:32, 34.
- b. V. 27. Lovingly, He then tells them to change their motive i.e. labor for spiritual nourishment more than physical nourishment. The physical food and even results perish but the spiritual food produces eternal life. See 4:14, 36.
- c. V. 27. I will give this food to you. Credentials = Father’s seal.
- d. V. 28. They inquire of their required work which was fine seeing that He told them to work however they missed the gift aspect. “They might have asked, “Who is this Son of man?” (see 12:34), but they do not. Bypassing christology altogether, they ignore both “Son of man” and Jesus’ accompanying reference to “the Father.” They seem to have heard only his command to “work,” and the mention of “God” at the very end of his pronouncement”¹
- e. V. 29. Believe in Him, the Son of Man. Christianity is about a Person who worked out our salvation for us so that we can work from it. “Jesus’ words here speak directly to the crowd’s question, except that he substitutes “the work of God” for their plural expression, “the works of God.” The only “work of God” that counts is God’s work in them so that they might “believe” in Jesus, whom God has sent (see footnote 27). Just as he said that a person’s “works” are revealed in the single act of “coming to the Light” (3:21), so a person does the “work of God” by “coming” to Jesus (see vv. 35, 37) in the sense of believing in him. Faith, as we have seen, is the touchstone by which works are judged, not the other way around. For the first time, Jesus explicitly invites the crowd to “believe”—specifically “in him whom that One sent,” or the “Son of man ... whom God the Father sealed” (v. 27).”²

2. Heavenly Signs (30)

- a. More proof demanded after He just fed 5,000 and miraculously arrived on the other side of the lake. “What are you going to perform?” represents a common OT expression of incredulity (cf. Job 9:12; Eccles. 8:4; Isa. 45:9; see Derrett 1993).³
- b. Jesus provided signs which pointed to a new leader of a new Exodus but they couldn’t see the forest for looking too closely at the trees – even though the trees displayed the anticipated forest. After the completion of the OT, there were expectations of exactly what Jesus performed in this passage (see **Expected Signs** below in notes).
- c. The signs were miraculous provisions and they merely wanted more rather than look to the person who was producing such. It’s not about what He can do for you but who He is and what you truly need.
- d. It’s OK to demand evidence but not what kind of evidence. They mention the Exodus events and the signs which accompanied them and ironically missed their experience of being miraculously fed not unlike Israel’s wilderness provisions from God. In fact and as stated in previous sermons, The Exodus motif is rich in these verses and Jesus providentially takes up their uncanny ironic oversight and uses such to point to His person and work! →

3. Heavenly Exodus (31-43)

- a. Greater than Moses (cf. 14)

¹ Michaels, J. R. (2010). *The Gospel of John* (p. 366). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

² Michaels, J. R. (2010). *The Gospel of John* (p. 367). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

³ Köstenberger, A. J. (2007). *John*. In *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament* (p. 445). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos.

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- i. “My Father” (32)
 - ii. “from heaven” (33)
 - iii. “gives life” (33)
 - iv. “I am” (35)
 - v. Full satisfaction (35 cf. 4:13-14)
 - vi. Apportioned by Father to believe in Him (37)
 - vii. Does only the Father’s will (38) which is:
 1. Safety and preservation for those who come to Him (39)
 2. Resurrection (39-40)
 3. Faith in Jesus (40)
 4. Everlasting life (40)
- b. Miracles of God and Other Actions at the Exodus
- i. Feeding 5,000
 - ii. Walking on the water
 - iii. John mentioned it was time of Passover
 - iv. Their demand for more signs after being delivered. It’s not that they didn’t see the physical signs but that they merely desired more physical provisions.
 - v. They murmur due to their erroneous expectations (41-43)
 - vi. The Bread from heaven is rejected →
4. Heavenly Bread (44-51)
- a. “When Jesus quotes ‘they shall all be taught by God’ from Isaiah 54:13, he is calling to mind one of the Old Testament’s greatest prophecies of the renewal that will come about through the great outpouring of God’s love, bringing his people back from **exile**. The passage goes on, soon afterwards (Isaiah 55:1), to invite everyone who is thirsty to come to the waters and drink freely—picking up what Jesus has just said in verse 35 (‘the one who believes in me shall never be thirsty’). Jesus seems to have the whole passage in mind. ¶ Part of the point of the Isaiah passage is the complete helplessness of Israel at the time. That’s why God must take the initiative, as here. That is why, too, the exclusive claim is made that only ‘the one sent from God’ has actually seen God (verse 46). Only when people are humble enough to recognize God’s unique revelation in and to Jesus can they then taste the bread from **heaven**. But God’s initiative is always balanced, in the Bible, with an open and free appeal: anyone at all who is thirsty is invited to come to the water that is on offer; anyone at all who comes to Jesus will not be rejected.”⁴
 - b. V. 45. Jesus is the Word of God from heaven thus He quotes Isa. 54:13 to speak of himself. He is the One who is teaching them and giving them the bread from heaven which is eternal life!
 - c. V. 49. The wilderness manna was physical bread which could not produce spiritual fruit but Jesus is the spiritual Bread who feeds the life-giving Word of God – He offers them Himself!
 - d. All who believe in Him have eternal life. Tragically, many would rather seek the bread which fills the stomach over the Bread which gives life and liberation (Ex. 16:3).

⁴ Wright, T. (2004). *John for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-10* (p. 83). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

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See footnote ²⁷

See footnote ²⁸

Expected Signs:

God’s Provision of Manna in Judaism. The divine provision of manna for wilderness Israel is celebrated in later OT passages. Besides Ps. 78:24, other important references include Ps. 105:40 (“gave them bread from heaven in abundance”) and Neh. 9:15 (“You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger”). Beyond this, Second Temple literature looked forward to a time when God would again provide manna for his people (Wis. 16:20; cf. Philo, *Alleg. Interp.* 3.169–176; *Worse* 118; *Heir* 79, 191; *Names* 259–260; see Menken 1988).

Sibylline Oracles states that “those who honor the true eternal God inherit life ... feasting on sweet bread from starry heaven” (Frg. 3:46–49 [second century BC?]). Another work expresses the expectation of an end-time recurrence of God’s provision of manna: “And it will happen at that time that the treasury of manna will come down again from on high, and they will eat of it in those years because these are they who will have arrived at the consummation of time” (2 *Bar.* 29:8 [ca. AD 100]; cf. Rev. 2:17).

The same expectation is found in later rabbinic tradition. Thus Rabbi Berechiah (ca. AD 340) said in the name of Rabbi Isaac (ca. AD 300), “As the first Redeemer was, so shall the latter Redeemer be.... As the former Redeemer [i.e., Moses] caused manna to descend [citing Exod. 16:4], so will the latter Redeemer cause manna to descend” (*Eccles. Rab.* 1:9). Similarly, “R. Eleazar Hisma [ca. AD 120] says: You will not find it [the manna] in this world but you will find it in the world to come” (*Mek. Exod.* 16:25) (see Köstenberger 2002b: 68–69).⁵

²⁷ Jesus’ language vaguely recalls his comment to “the Jews” in Jerusalem that “you do not have his word dwelling in you, because he whom that One sent, him you do not believe” (5:38). The differences are (a) that the earlier instance was a declaration of judgment, while this is an appeal, and (b) that there it was a matter of believing Jesus and here of believing *in* him (compare also 5:24, where it was a matter of “hearing my word” and “believing the One who sent me”).

²⁸ The best ancient manuscripts have the present subjunctive πιστεύητε, “trust” or “continue to believe,” while the majority of later manuscripts (as well as the earlier D, K, W, and some others) have the aorist πιστεύσητε, “come to believe,” or “be converted.” The present, which is more likely original, presupposes that the crowd consists of (at least) potential disciples (see verse 2, which tells us that they were already “following” Jesus).

OT Old Testament

Alleg. Interp. Allegorical Interpretation

Worse That the Worse Attacks the Better

Heir Who Is the Heir?

Names On the Change of Names

Frg fragment(s)

2 *Bar.* 2 *Baruch* (*Syriac Apocalypse*)

ca. circa

ca. circa

ca. circa

Rab. (biblical book +) *Rabbah*

ca. circa

Mek. Exod. Mekilta Exodus

⁵ Köstenberger, A. J. (2007). [John](#). In *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament* (p. 446). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos.

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The Jews had an erroneous focus on a worldly king, national redemption, political Messiah, and earthly prosperity. They had the Prophets and Writings of God, the Temple and priesthood, but they looked to national liberation and prosperity foretold in their scriptures. What was also foretold in those scriptures was that God was more interested in obedience than animal sacrifices and intended to rule the world not merely Palestine. Their wrong focus led to their failure of belief in Jesus who is the fulfillment of all the scriptures. The same is true today. If you “seek God” in order to enhance your success, esteem, wealth, influence, or overall prosperity, you may end up missing out on God altogether. God loves us too much to give us our carnal desires which misdirect us from embracing truth, kneeling in repentance, and offering sacrifices. He’d rather have us see and cling to the transforming truth which demands loyalty but rewards with glory. He wants us to enjoy the greatest exultation – partaking of Him!