

John – An In-Depth Study

[Part 9]

John 6:1-3 [NIV] *“Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples.”*

As a human being Jesus needed time away from the continual strain of facing crowds of people wanting to be healed.

Jesus also needed time alone with His disciples to lead them into a deeper understanding of His purpose as the Son of God and Son of Man.

Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee by boat to get away from the crowd for a short period.

The crowd must have seen where Jesus was heading and hurried around the lake by land, some nine miles.

John 6:4-14 [NIV] *“The Jewish Passover Feast was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?’ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, ‘Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!’ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, ‘Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?’ Jesus said, ‘Make the people sit down.’ There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, ‘Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.’ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.’”*

When Jesus saw this crowd, which may have been enlarged by those going up to Jerusalem for the Passover, He had pity on them.

In Philip’s calculation it would take more than six months’ wages of a working man to just give this crowd a mouthful of food each.

Andrew, as usual, was bringing people to Jesus, all this young boy had was some pickled sardines and a dry roll of barley bread.

After blessing the food the disciples distributed it to all who were in the crowd, they all ate and were filled. [The Greek word translated “enough” is “*ēmplēthō*” meaning full to satisfaction – or abundance.]

Again we see how Jesus worked through people, the young boy and the disciples.

Why were fragments left?

At Jewish feasts it was the regular practice and custom to leave something for the servants.

The baskets were what every travelling Jew carried in which he would have his own food, where only unclean food was available to them. [12 disciples, hence 12 baskets]

If you find this miracle hard to believe, as some do, John states it was just that, a miracle or sign.

John 6:15 [NIV] *“Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.”*

Here we have the reaction of the crowd.

The Jews were waiting for a prophet whom they believed Moses had promised [**Deuteronomy 18:15**] and were willing to accept Jesus, He had given them what they wanted, a powerful leader.

Soon another crowd would be clamouring to have Jesus crucified.

People will willingly follow a leader that gives them what they want, especially when they are under the pressure of a hard government, as the Jews were at that time, under the harsh rule of Rome.

But when a leader asks for a crowd to give up their own plans and desires for Him to lead them into a better yet unseen future, the crowd’s reaction will be to kill him, and look for another to lead them.

We all would like Christ’s gifts without taking up Christ’s cross.

We all would like to use Christ instead of allowing Him to use us.

John 6:16-21 [NIV] *“When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. But he said to them, ‘It is I; don’t be afraid.’ Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.”*

After feeding the 5,000 and their attempt to make Him king, Jesus slipped away into the hills to be alone, undoubtedly in prayer to His Father.

Mark tells us that Jesus had told the disciples to go ahead of Him, while He dismissed the crowd. [**Mark 6:45-46**]

Jesus doubtless intended to walk round the head of the lake to join them later.

So the disciples set sail for Capernaum.

The wind sprang up as it can in a narrow, landlocked lake and the waters were whipped to foam.

It was Passover time with a full moon, [**John 6:4**]

As Jesus set out the full moon made the scene almost like daylight, He could see that the disciples were in difficulty.

Immediately seeing His friends in trouble Jesus set aside His own problems, the moment for prayer was past, the time for action had come.

Jesus forgot Himself and went to help His friends, this is the very essence of Jesus our Saviour.

The cry of human need to Jesus surpassed all other claims on His life.

Between three a.m. and six a.m. [see Mark’s account] Jesus came to them walking on the water. [**Job 9:8; Proverbs 30:4** This was done by the Son of Man in the flesh.]

“And immediately the boat reached the land.” This additional miracle is only recorded by John.

What was indicated was that the storm suddenly calmed and the boat was propelled by the secret power of the Creator God, now sailing in it, through calmed waters to the safety of the shore.

This while the disciples were still wrapped in wonder at what they had personally seen happen.

The message is clear, fear is banished by the realisation of the presence of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Faith is a mindset that expects God to act on our behalf.

When we act on this expectation, we can overcome our fears.

2 Timothy 1:7 [King James] *“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”*

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit gives us freedom of fear.

1 John 4:17-18 [NIV] *“In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”*

The love that God has for us and the reflective love we have for Him casts out any fear.

Hebrews 2:14-15 [NIV] *“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”*

The faith we have in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will free us from the fear of death.

John 6:22-27 [NIV] *“The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realised that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. Once the crowd realised that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, ‘Rabbi, when did you get here?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.’”*

Note [v25-26] Jesus did **not** reply to this question but went directly into teaching this crowd about real issues of life. Jesus is criticising the people for following Him only for physical and temporal benefits and **not** seeking to satisfy their spiritual hunger. [Isaiah 55:1-2]

Many people only use religion to gain prestige, comfort or even political votes.

Jesus made what must have been a very strange statement to the Jews, who looked on merit in God’s eyes as the result of the work they do.

Jesus tells them that eternal food is free if they look to Him, Whom God the Father had placed His approval as the Son of Man, as well as the Son of God.

True believers follow Jesus Christ simply because they know who He is and that He has the truth about the reason for our being given human existence.

John 6:28-29 [NIV] *“Then they asked him, ‘What must we do to do the works God requires?’ Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.’”*

The world's religions are human attempts to answer the question, they are all based on works.

Jesus' reply is brief and simple, we must believe in the One Whom God the Father has sent.

Satisfying God's demands does **not** come from the work that we do, but from whom we believe and trust in.

All spiritual development and worship of the Creator God is founded on this affirmation.

“Jesus, you are the Christ, the Son of the eternal God.”

Matthew 16:13-17 [NIV] *“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ ‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.’”*

It is on this belief in Jesus Christ that the Christian Church is founded.

Any religion that does **not** have this foundation, that comes from faith and trust in Jesus Christ, is a false religion.

This new relationship, that Jesus is introducing to His disciples and all humanity, must result in a certain new kind of life.

Looking to Jesus Christ to see God the Father will demand a change of lifestyle to conform to what we are shown in the life and words of Jesus Christ.

This change will be in three major regions of our life.

a) Jesus shows us that God is love –

Therefore our lives must reflect this love in our relationship with God and all other human beings.

b) Jesus shows us that God is holy –

Therefore in our lives must be the purity which corresponds to the holiness of God.

c) Jesus shows us that God is wisdom –

Therefore in our lives there must be a complete and perfect submission to the wisdom of God that we find in His Word, the Christian Bible.

To enter into such a life of faith and trust is the work which God wishes and enables us to perform.

John 6:30-34 [NIV] *“So they asked him, ‘What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”’ Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who 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.’ ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘from now on give us this bread.’”*

As the crowds' thoughts were still on physical feeding, Jesus uses part of their history to redirect their thoughts.

The feeding of their forefathers by God in the wilderness after being brought out of their slavery in Egypt [a type of sin.] [**Psalms 78:22-24; Exodus 16:11-15**]

It was a strong Jewish belief that when the Messiah came He would again give the manna from heaven to feed the people, that would be a real sign.

Jesus' reply was twofold, first He reminded them that it was **not** Moses but God who had given them the manna.

Secondly that the manna was **not** the true bread of God.

The true bread of God was He who comes down from heaven and gives humans, **not** simply satisfaction from physical hunger, but eternal life.

This is what all the crowd wanted, a free hand-out of eternal life.

John 6:35-40 [NIV] *“Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.’”*

What did Jesus Christ mean when He said He was the “*bread of life*”?

It was necessary for Jesus at once to dispel the materialistic idea and turn the conversation towards Himself, throughout **verses 35-40** the first person is stressed.

The term “*bread of life*” means bread that gives life.

Coming to Jesus Christ and believing in Him are seen to be synonymous, as the only way of securing spiritual life.

“*You have seen me and yet do not believe,*” the importance of faith is again stressed, this time by a pointed reference to their refusal to believe.

In the next statement there is a combination of divine sovereignty and human response.

Response is an activity of individuals, just as we eat bread daily to survive physically, so eating of Jesus Christ, His words and actions, as recorded in the Christian Bible must be a daily activity to live spiritually.

Jesus then reminds us of the complete harmony between Himself and God the Father, also that nothing that He receives from the Father can be lost.

Twice in this statement Jesus speaks of the resurrection at the last day, an emphasis which adds strength to the claim that the Father’s Will would be accomplished. [**1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**]

Simply put Jesus Christ is essential for without Him real life can neither begin or go on.

This passage of scripture opens up to us the progressive stages of the Christian life.

- 1) **We see Jesus** – through the record of the Christian Bible.
- 2) **We come to Jesus** – as a personal Saviour and Lord.
- 3) **We believe in Jesus** – that is accept Him as the final authority of God the Father. Essentially a submission and a surrender to Him.

- 4) **This whole process gives us life** – a new and lovely relationship with the Creator God.
- 5) **The possibility of this is free and universal** – available to all humanity.
- 6) **The only way to this new relationship is Jesus** – without Jesus it is impossible, **no** human mind or heart can without Jesus fully find God the Father.
- 7) **At the back of all this is God the Father** – God provides the goal, the human desire and works through His love to take away the rebellion and pride which hinders submission to Him as our Creator and Sustainer of life.

When we follow this path to God the Father through our Saviour Jesus Christ, two things enter our lives.

- a) **A new satisfaction**, the unsatisfied hunger and thirst of our human spirit is satisfied.
- b) **We are safe** even beyond this human existence, through a promised resurrection at the return of Jesus Christ.

John 6:41-50 [NIV] *“At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, ‘I am the bread that came down from heaven.’ They said, ‘Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, “I came down from heaven”?’ ‘Stop grumbling among yourselves,’ Jesus answered. ‘No-one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. No-one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die.”*

When John the apostle says Jews, he is referring to the Jewish leadership **not** Jews in general.

The Jewish leaders grumbled because they could **not** accept Jesus’ claim of divinity.

They saw Jesus only as a carpenter from Nazareth and they could **not** tolerate His message.

Many people reject Jesus as the Son of God, in reality it is the demands that Jesus makes for their loyalty and obedience that they cannot accept.

So to protect themselves from the message they reject the messenger.

Jesus does **not** directly answer them but once again refers to the close connection between His claims and the Father’s purpose.

Logically Jesus’ claims seem inconceivable, this is because spiritual discernment is needed [*“unless the Father ... draws him.”*]

Paul understood this need of spiritual discernment –

1 Corinthians 2:9-12 [NIV] *“However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him,’ but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.”*

As yet the Holy Spirit was **not** available except for selective people whom God was using to fulfil certain work for Him.

Jesus is alluding to the Old Testament view of the Messianic Kingdom in which the people are directly taught by God. [**Isaiah 54:13; Jeremiah 31:31, 33-34**]

Only Jesus, who had come from God had actually seen God the Father, so everyone else had to accept His testimony.

The fact was that the Jewish leaders were resisting the drawing of God to Jesus Christ, to offer them eternal life.

The word that is translated “draw” is “*hēikuō*” meaning to drag, indicating a resistance to this call by God. Same word used in **John 21:6, 11** when heavily laden net is dragged to the shore. Also in **Acts 16:19** when Paul and Silas were dragged before magistrates.

God may call human beings, but always humans have the freedom to resist that call.

John 6:51-59 [NIV] *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’ Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, 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. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live for ever.’ He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.”*

Because the Jews put a literalistic interpretation on Jesus’ words they were unable to understand what Jesus was saying.

Jesus Christ offered His flesh and blood for our lives to be healed and saved.

Isaiah 53:5 [King James] *“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”*

The scourging of Jesus Christ is what heals us physically and spiritually, when His flesh was torn from His bones. [**Psalms 22:17; Isaiah 52:14**]

1 Peter 2:24 [King James] *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”*

The word used that is translated “healed” is “*iaōmai*” meaning to make whole is used for physical healing 22 times but also for spiritual healing.

Jesus offered His blood for our spiritual salvation, by purifying us from all sin. [**1 John 1:7; Revelation 5:9; Revelation 1:5; Romans 3:25; Romans 5:9, etc.**]

Paul uses this symbolic eating of flesh and blood of Jesus Christ in the communion service. **1 Corinthians 11:23-26**, which was introduced to His disciples at the last meal before He died as the Passover Lamb. [**Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24**]

The idea of drinking blood, any blood, let alone human blood, was repugnant to the religious leaders because the law forbade it. [**Leviticus 17:10-11**]

Jesus was talking about the sacrifice He was about to make so they would be whole and saved from eternal death.

John 6:60-66 [NIV] *“On hearing it, many of his disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?’ Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, ‘Does this offend*

you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, ‘This is why I told you that no-one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.’ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.”

It is no wonder that the disciples had found this discourse of Jesus hard [Greek word “*sklēros*” exacting to understand] and many followers left Jesus. [v66]

- 1) The people may have realised by now that He was **not** going to be their conquering Messiah-King.
- 2) Jesus refused to give in to their self-centred requests.
- 3) Jesus emphasised faith in Him **not** deeds which they could do under their own strength.
- 4) Jesus’ teaching was hard to understand and His words were often offensive.

“The Holy Spirit gives life” –

John 16:5-8 [NIV] *“Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.”*

It is the work of the Holy Spirit in us to bring us to the position of where we can receive the gift of eternal life.

The three main areas of the work of the Holy Spirit are –

- a) Convict us of our sin – and hence the need of Jesus Christ as our Saviour, that leads to a repentant life.
- b) Show us where we can find real righteousness to replace our unacceptable self-righteousness.
- c) To be a constant reminder that we will all face the judgement of Jesus Christ.

Therefore the work of the Holy Spirit in us is essential for our salvation from eternal death.

“Flesh counts for nothing” – all our physical effort can earn is death. [**Romans 6:23; Isaiah 64:6**]

We have all sinned and come short of being deserved of eternal life. [**Romans 3:23**]

John 6:67-71 [NIV] *“‘You do not want to leave too, do you?’ Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.’ Then Jesus replied, ‘Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!’ (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)”*

The Holy Spirit was already working with Peter for him to accept Jesus for Who He is and what He can show us for us to receive the gift of eternal life.

For most of us the Holy Spirit works with us, opening up our minds to limited understanding, sufficient to give us a challenge that we accept or reject.

Only when we say “yes” to Jesus Christ, accept Him as our Saviour, will the Holy Spirit enter fully into our lives and make His home within us. [**John 14:15-18**]