

## 56. The Gospel of John—6:22-29

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### *“The Bread of Life” Pt.2*

(1/6/19)

In our study of John’s gospel, we have entered into chapter six which contains the first of seven “I AM” statements by Jesus.

John’s gospel is highly organized—he built it around seven miracles, that led to seven discourses, culminating in seven ‘I Am’ statements.

The phrase “I Am” is the name of God as first expressed in the book of Exodus 3:13-14.  
(Explain)

The word is actually a verb meaning “to be” or “to become”—the idea being that God wants *to be* or *to become* to us whatever we need—which is why the word ‘Jehovah’ (I AM) is often coupled with a noun.

“Jehovah-Shalom” (*I Am-Peace*)

“Jehovah-Jireh” (*I Am-Provision*)

“Jehovah-Nissi” (*I Am-Victory*)

“Jehovah-Rohi” (*I Am-Shepherd*)

But the greatest of all is “Jehovah-Shua” (*I Am-Salvation*).

The Greek name “Jesus” comes from Jehovah-Shua—“Yahoshua” or “Y’shua” for short.

God wants to become to us whatever we need—well, our greatest need was for salvation.

So, God the Son, Second Person of the Trinity, came down from heaven, became a Man and died in our place in the Person of Jesus—our Y’shua (“the Lord has become our salvation”).

In John’s gospel Jesus called Himself “I Am” (name of God) coupled with 7 different nouns expressing what He desires to become to people (starting with the desire to be their Savior as expressed in His very name).

*“I Am—the Bread of Life” (John 6:35)*

*“I Am—the Light of the World” (John 8:12)*

*“I Am—the Door” (John 10:9)*

*“I Am—the Good Shepherd” (John 10:11)*

*“I Am—the Resurrection and the Life” (John 11:25)*

*“I Am—the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6)*

*“I Am—the Vine” (John 15:5)*

Each of these statements is a declaration of divinity.

And so, as we study John 6 understand that the whole chapter is built around the feeding of the five-thousand (men plus women and children) miracle and contains a very important discourse—culminating and climaxing with His declaration of divinity, “I AM—the Bread of Life.”

I have divided verses 22 thru 71 of John 6 this way:

- I. The Physical Preoccupation of the Multitudes—v.22-34**
- II. The Divine Declaration of the Savior—v.35-40**
- III. The Carnal Condemnation of the Jewish Leaders—v.41-59**
- IV. The Strategic Separation of the True Disciples from the False—v.60-71**

### **I. The Physical Preoccupation of the Multitudes—v.22-34**

And by saying this I mean that—this great multitude of people (twenty-thousand) were more interested in their physical stomachs than they were in their eternal souls.

We know this because of how the Lord addresses their desire to be near Him—

#### **John 6:26 (NKJV)**

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

He is going to use this ‘interactive’ sermon (question and answer format) to try to elevate their thinking and perception of life from the physical to the spiritual.

#### **John 6:22-24 (NKJV)**

<sup>22</sup> On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone-- <sup>23</sup> however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks-- <sup>24</sup> when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus...

The whole issue that Jesus will be addressing in this chapter is those who seek and even follow Him for the wrong reasons—for selfish reasons.

And realize, He is not talking here to *unbelievers*—in the classic sense.

On the contrary—these are people who were *seeking* Jesus—those of a religious mindset.

They had a desire to follow Him—but their *motives* were all wrong.

In that regard, theirs was a much more subtle and deceptive kind of unbelief—the kind that is not *atheistic* in nature.

These people *did* believe in Jesus and even desired to follow after Him—but purely for what He could give them and what they believed He was going to do for them.

Beware of this kind of unbelief which gives the illusion of faith and wraps itself in a veneer of religion—but in reality, is the most deceptive kind of unbelief.

As we pointed out last time in our study in John's gospel, these people were *carnally* minded which the Bible says leads to death—

**Romans 8:6 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

And so, as He did throughout His ministry, Jesus is attempting to shift the thinking of the multitudes from being carnally minded to being spiritually minded.

**John 6:25 (NKJV)**

<sup>25</sup> And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?"

This question is the first of three that the multitudes asked Jesus that day that served to launch the important discourse He delivered in John six—

- A. “Rabbi, when did You come here?” (v.25)
- B. “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” (v.28)
- C. “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?” (one question not two—v.30)

#### A. “Rabbi, when did You come here?” (v.25)

Let me paraphrase what the people meant by this—which I believe was a mild rebuke:

*“Why did you leave without telling us? When did You get here and why didn’t You take us with You? You fed us with bread yesterday evening, but when we were hungry for breakfast You were no where to be found. That’s no way for You to act seeing as we’ve put our faith in You to be our welfare state!”*

That in essence was their thinking behind this question.

#### **John 6:26 (NKJV)**

**<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.”**

As we have said in previous studies in John’s gospel, whenever Jesus said, “**Most assuredly, I say to you**”—that means, “*what I’m about to say is vitally important, so listen carefully.*”

In fact, four times in this discourse Jesus emphasizes the importance of what He is saying with the words—“**Most assuredly, I say to you.**” (verses 26, 32, 47, 53).

And what was so important, what was the topic of His discourse that four times the Lord had to stop and tell them it was very important so—*‘listen carefully!?’*

The topic of this discourse was ‘**eternal life**’—in fact eight times in this ‘Bread of Life’ discourse He mentions eternal life.

It's interesting that in the Bible, '8' is the number of new beginnings—and receiving eternal life and becoming a 'new creation' is the ultimate new beginning!

But I want you to notice that Jesus doesn't even answer their question—it was irrelevant.

God doesn't answer to us—we answer to Him; He is not our servant—we are His.

So, Jesus doesn't answer their question but instead gets right to the issue that was on their minds.

All they were thinking about was “FREE FOOD”!! *“It's breakfast time—let's go find Jesus and see what He's got for us this morning!”*

The word '**filled**' is actually a Greek word that was used for animals that had been *'foddered up'*.

Jesus likens them to animals that had been stuffed full of hay the day before and were back for another load.

The Bible likens the *natural* or unsaved person to an animal because, like an animal, he or she is only concerned with their bodily needs and appetites (food, clothing, pleasure etc.).

These things are not necessarily evil in and of themselves unless they are elevated to an all-consuming obsession where they become objects of worship—then they become sinful (the 'lusts of the flesh').

Look at how obsessed Americans are with their bodies—whether it's a preoccupation with food or dealing with the consequences of eating too much and having to go on exercise and diet programs (have you noticed how many commercials are geared to dieting and joining gyms now that we gorged ourselves during the holidays?)

This simply reflects our preoccupation and often obsession with the physical to the neglect of the spiritual (loving and serving God).

Jesus points this out when He said, “**you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.**”

The **signs** were a reference to the *miracles* Jesus had been going around doing—He called these ‘signs.’

A sign *points* to something—often something important.

The miracles that Jesus went around doing were signs that pointed to Him as the Messiah (Isa. 35).

Some got it while others were too fixated on their physical needs to see the spiritual significance of His miracles—but as I said some got it:

**John 6:14 (NKJV)**

**<sup>14</sup> Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." [Deut. 18:18]**

Then the Lord challenged them not to be so focused on the physical that they miss why He had really come into the world—

**John 6:27 (NKJV)**

**<sup>27</sup> Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."**

Now understand, when Jesus said, “**Don’t labor for the food which perishes**”—He wasn’t saying, “*Don’t work to buy food, just sponge off of others.*”

Rather He was saying, *“Don’t let your life be consumed with laboring for your physical needs when the greatest need a person has is spiritual (receiving eternal life).”*

This is emphatic in the Greek—*“make salvation the object of intense desire—the true ‘obsession of your life.’”*

One author said—

*“Satisfying one’s physical appetite is not the most important thing in life. Man consists not only of body, but of spirit and soul as well...Man should not live as if his body were all. He should not devote all his strength and talents to the feeding of his body, which in a few short years will be eaten by worms.*

*Rather, he should make sure that his soul is fed day by day with the Word of God. ‘**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.**’*

*(Matt.4:4) We should work tirelessly to acquire a better knowledge of the Word of God.*

*When the Lord Jesus said that God the Father had set His seal on Him, He meant that God had sent Him and approved Him. When we set our seal to something, it means that we promise that it is true. God sealed the Son of Man in the sense that He endorsed Him as One who spoke the truth.”*

Furthermore, we must be careful that we also don’t make the mistake of interpreting what Jesus is saying this way, *“Do not labor for the (physical) food which perishes—but instead labor (work hard) for everlasting life.”*

Of course, we know that the Bible clearly teaches that eternal life is a free gift to any who believe in Jesus Christ and ask God for it by faith—as Jesus went on to imply: **“which [eternal life] the Son of Man will give you”**. (v.27)

However, the crowd seems to have interpreted what Jesus said as a command to work hard so as to **‘earn’** eternal life—which caused them to ask the second question they asked Jesus that day:

## **B. "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" (v.28)**

It shouldn’t surprise us that these people, steeped in a legalistic religious system known as Judaism, would think that they needed to work for God’s approval and earn His blessings—including and especially the blessing of eternal life.



It shouldn't surprise us because all religions are based on what man *does* for God—in that regard, religion says “DO”.

The word "religion" comes from a Latin word which means '*to bind*' in the sense of binding someone to an *obligation*.

The Dictionary defines "obligation" as "*duty*" which, in turn, is defined as "*a thing which a person ought to do; a thing which is right to do.*"

Therefore, religion is an obligation or duty to do certain “right things” (which *right things* depends on each religious group to define what those *right things* are).

And if a person is faithful to do what their religion says constitutes good works—then they will earn a place in heaven when they die.

Let me just say that there are really only two ‘religions’ in the world—the religion of *human achievement*; and the religion of *divine accomplishment*.

Every religion and religious system in the world apart from Christianity falls under the category of *human achievement*.

This system believes that—what a person does for God will earn them His favor, merit His blessings, and ultimately get them into heaven (if their religion believes in heaven).

Only Christianity (which is not a religion but a relationship) falls under the category of *divine accomplishment*—what God has done for us.

Religion says “DO” — Christianity says “DONE” as in “*It is finished*” (John 19:30).

Religion comes from man and is an expression of his pride (his effort to prove he is good enough to work for and earn a place in heaven)—it is man-centered and works oriented.

Christianity comes from God and is Christ-centered and *grace* oriented (grace means ‘unmerited favor’, ‘underserved blessing’—receiving a gift from God that we didn’t earn and don’t deserve).

And so, these people wanted to know what works they could do that would please God enough so that He would grant them eternal life—

**John 6:28-29 (NKJV)**

<sup>28</sup> Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" <sup>29</sup> **Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."**

Here, Jesus is being a little facetious in that He picks up their ‘lingo’ and uses it answer their question—without intending to mean that faith was a ‘work’. (Elaborate)

Jesus made it clear that only one “work” was necessary for a person to be saved—to believe on the Savior, the One sent from the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ.

When a person believes on Christ, he or she is not performing a good work that *earns* them salvation (Romans 4:2-5).

Salvation is a gift we receive (by faith)—not a reward we earn by our works.

**Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT2)**

<sup>8</sup> God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. <sup>9</sup> Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

**Titus 3:5 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, [i.e. ‘born-again’]

And so, in the context of the ‘Bread of Life’ discourse where Jesus is talking about their need for eternal life—He comes against legalism (the enemy of receiving eternal life).

Let me say in closing that legalism is a serious problem in the Body of Christ, causing many to feel condemned in their walk with God.

What exactly is legalism?

It is the belief that I can become holy and please God by obeying laws—it is measuring spirituality by a list of *do*’s and *don*’ts.

Again, it’s the idea that God can be pleased, placated and indebted to us by our good works and religious observances (going to church, lighting candles, praying the rosary, helping in the local food pantry etc.).

Many pastors teach that salvation is a gift we *receive* by faith—but then *hold onto* by our works.

**Galatians 3:1-3 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> O foolish Galatians!...Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? <sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

One pastor said—“*Throughout church history, some Christian groups have fallen into the same kind of error, insisting that conformity to countless man-made regulations and ceremonies is necessary for true godliness. Whether in the form of extreme ritualism or of strictly prescribed codes of conduct. In my pastoral experience, I have counseled many people who have suffered severe emotional and spiritual damage because they have tried to live holy lives on the basis of a high standard. I have seen the consequences of these attempts: either the person becomes a pretender, or he suffers a complete collapse and abandons his desires for godly living.*”

OR—feels so condemned by their failure to live up to their church’s list of ‘holy-requirements’ to please God and get to heaven—that they give up and either walk away from Christianity altogether, or in some cases even—commit suicide.

➔ Relate to a woman who came to our church years ago who couldn't live under the weight of condemnation for her failures that she took her own life.

God loves you feely and unconditionally—regardless of your weaknesses and failures—all of which He knew *before* He ever called you to be His child.

He is NOT the proverbial 'Police Officer' staring at you to find proof of crimes committed so that He can punish you—He is your loving Heavenly Father Who only wants good for you.

Let me close with a true story about a little boy named William.

William is a pastor's son who, at the time of this story, was about 7 years old.

It seems that William was a rambunctious little boy who often pushed the patience of his teachers.

One Sunday while driving home from church William, who was unusually quiet, suddenly blurted out, "*Dad, is God watching me?*"

William's father knew something was behind that question and so he asked, "*Why do you ask me that William—did someone tell you God is watching you?*"

William responded in a sheepish tone, "*My Sunday school teacher told me God is watching me—is it true dad? Is God watching me?*"

William's father probed deeper, "*Why did your Sunday school teacher tell you God is watching you William?*"

"*Well, because, I was kinda acting up in class—but is it true dad? Is God really watching me!?*"

Now this pastor knew that the way he answered that question had the potential to shape his son's concept of God for many years to come—so, he prayed quickly for wisdom and then said to his son—

*“Yes William it’s true, God is watching you—He’s watching you because He loves you so much He can’t take His eyes off of you!”*

And the same is true for all of God’s children—God is watching you!

He’s watching you, not because He’s angry with you or disappointed in you or disgusted because you fail.

He’s watching you because He loves you so much, He can’t take His eyes off of you!

And like any parent, He wants what’s best for you—and so He patiently keeps watching over you, protecting and guiding you each day.

And when you fall, He stands ready to pick you up, dust you off, take you in His arms and whisper in your ears, *“I forgive you child, now draw your strength from Me and I’ll teach you how to walk with Me better in the future”*.

That’s the heart of our Heavenly Father!

I hope you understand that as we enter this new year.

I hope so, because, only relating to God thru His grace and love and not thru a system of laws will bring you close to Him and give you a blessed and victorious year, this year, in your walk with Jesus!