

Jesus the Bread of Life (John 6:22-40)
Kid's Lesson | The Seven I Ams of Jesus | Perfect Love Kids 2019

Table of Contents

Text of John 6:22-40 (NKJV).....	1
Background Information.....	2
“Bread” in the Bible.....	2
Commentary on John 6:22-40	3
Notes and Thoughts	4
Videos and Craft Ideas.....	4

Text of John 6:22-40 (NKJV)

²² 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—²³ however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks—²⁴ when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. ²⁵ And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?”

²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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.”

²⁸ Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, 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 sent.”

³⁰ Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ”

³² Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

³⁴ Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”

³⁵ And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall 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 by no means cast out. 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 the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Background Information

"Bread" in the Bible

BREAD. Bread was the all-important commodity of the ancient Near East, and the price of grain is an infallible index to economic conditions at any given time. In early Babylonia the grain of corn provided the basic unit for the system of weights, and cereal took the place of money in commerce. Hosea paid part of the price of his wife in grain.

While we possess much information about the price of grain, references to the price of bread are extremely rare because it was usually made by each housewife. One reference from the Hammurapi period (18th century bc) gives 10 *še* (about a twentieth of a shekel) as the price of about 2½ litres (4 *sila*) of bread, and half this amount was a man's daily ration. (B. Meissner, *Warenpreise in Babylonien*, p. 7.) In 2 Ki. 7:1 the price quoted for cereal seems abnormally high, but it was doubtless considerably lower than in the preceding famine. In Rev. 6:6 the prices describe graphically the grim conditions of famine.

Barley bread was probably the most widely used. The fact that barley was also fed to horses (1 Ki. 4:28) does not necessarily imply that it was considered inferior, any more than is oats in our day. Wheat bread was more highly prized and was probably fairly common. Spelt was also used, but rye does not seem to have been cultivated. On occasions various cereals may have been mixed together and, as Ezk. 4:9 shows, even lentil and bean meal were added.

The general term for grain was *dāḡān*. After threshing and winnowing, the grain was either crushed in a *mortar with a pestle or was ground in a *mill by rubbing the upper stone to and fro on the nether millstone. The term for flour or meal in general was *qemah*, and when necessary this was qualified by the addition of the name of the cereal (Nu. 5:15). What was probably a finer quality was called *sōlet* (cf. 1 Ki. 4:22), but some scholars take this word to mean 'groats'. This was the meal used in the offerings (Ex. 29:40; Lv. 2:5, etc.).

The word *qālī*, often translated 'parched corn', was probably roasted grains, which were eaten without further preparation.

The flour, mixed with water and seasoned with salt, was kneaded in a special trough. To this, leaven in the form of a small quantity of old fermented dough was added until the whole was leavened. Unleavened bread also was baked. Leaven was not used in the offerings made by fire (Lv. 2:11, etc.), and its use was forbidden during Passover week. The baking was done either over a fire on heated stones or on a griddle, or in an oven. Leavened bread was usually in the form of round, flat loaves, and unleavened in the form of thin cakes. The form called *uḡâ* was probably the griddle cake, since it required turning (Ho. 7:8).

When bread was kept too long it became dry and crumbly (Jos. 9:5 and 12). In Gilgamesh 11. 225–229, there is an interesting account of the deterioration of bread (ANET, p. 95). (*FOOD.)

That so vital a commodity should leave its mark on language and symbolism is not surprising. From earliest times the word ‘bread’ was used for food in general (Gn. 3:19 and Pr. 6:8, where Heb. has ‘bread’). Since it was the staple article of diet, it was called ‘staff’ of bread (Lv. 26:26), which is probably the origin of our phrase ‘staff of life’. Those who were responsible for bread were important officials, as in Egypt (Gn. 40:1), and in Assyria a chief baker is honoured with an eponymy. Bread was early used in sacred meals (Gn. 14:18), and loaves were included in certain offerings (Lv. 21:6, *etc.*). Above all, it had a special place in the sanctuary as the ‘bread of the Presence’. The manna was later referred to as ‘heavenly bread’ (see Ps. 105:40). Our Lord referred to himself as the ‘bread of God’ and as the ‘bread of life’ (Jn. 6:33, 35), and he chose the bread of the Passover to be the symbolic memorial of his broken body.¹

Commentary on John 6:22-40

6:22–23. A large, culturally Greek-oriented city on the lake of Galilee, Tiberias was named for the emperor Tiberius and built by Herod Antipas on the site of a graveyard. This site effectively kept the most religious Jews out of the city and allowed Herod to dole out favors to allies without interference from other powerful Jews. It does not appear in the New Testament record apart from this mention and, like Sepphoris, the other large city of Galilee (also very Hellenized), does not seem to have been frequented by Jesus.

6:24–26. The crowd wants to follow a prophet who will provide free food and political deliverance—another Moses. But they miss the central thrust of Jesus’ mission (cf. 6:15).

6:27–29. The dialogue between Jesus and the crowd plays on the term *work*; Judaism stressed righteous works, but Jesus singles out one work: faith in him (Jewish teachers praised Abraham’s “work” of faith in God, but Jesus’ demand is more specific). They then demand from Jesus a “work,” which now means a sign (v. 30), as it sometimes does in Jewish literature. The “seal” (v. 27) means that God has attested Jesus; cf. comment on 3:33.

This passage is a regular Jewish midrash, or homily, on Exodus 16:15 and Psalm 78:24, which Jesus quotes in John 6:31. Jesus paraphrases, explains and expounds in a manner characteristic of ancient Jewish teachers, yet his hearers fail to understand him. Ancient teachers sometimes made their lectures hard to understand to sort out genuine followers from the masses.

6:30–31. The crowd still wants him to act as the new Moses they expect—on an earthly, political level. Many Jewish people expected manna to be restored in the world to come. Like other ancient writers, John was free to paraphrase his material in his own words; here the crowd cites Scripture as if they are rabbis in a debate (Ex 16:4, 15; cf. Ps. 78:24; John seems to know and use both Hebrew and Greek versions of these texts).

6:32–33. One method of Jewish exposition was “Do not read this text as saying *x*, but rather *y*.” Jesus says, “Not Moses, but God really gave this bread.” His hearers would have to agree; that was technically how Moses had put it (Ex 16:4, 15; cf. Deut 8:3). Like many other interpreters of his day (see, e.g., the Dead Sea Scrolls), Jesus is concerned to apply the biblical text to their present situation.

¹ W. J. Martin, “Bread,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 145–146. Logos Bible Software.

6:34. They hear him on a different level from the meaning he intends (cf. 4:15), so he explains further. The ignorance of opponents or minor characters was often used as a foil to further a main argument throughout ancient literature (Plato, rabbis, novels, etc.).

6:35–40. Jewish expositors had already often used manna as a symbol for spiritual food, God’s law, or Torah/Wisdom/Word. The dead would be raised to eternal life “on the last day,” the day of the Lord, when God would transform the world and inaugurate his eternal kingdom.²

Notes and Thoughts

Bread was one of the simplest and most common kinds of food in the Ancient Near East. Making bread is a relatively simple process—mix a little bit of water and oil into some flour, knead it into dough, then bake it over a fire, on a baking stone, or in an oven. These ingredients were readily available and affordable, so bread was easy to make. For these reasons, bread was a staple in the diets of people from all walks of life.

Because bread was so common, it became a popular spiritual symbol. In the Old Testament, God used it as a spiritual symbol to teach some truths to His people, the Israelites. The Jewish holiday of Passover, which serves as a reminder of God’s deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, uses unleavened bread because the Israelites left quickly so the bread didn’t have time to rise (Exodus 12). And when the Israelites wandered the desert wilderness for 40 years under the direction of God’s servant Moses, God provided “bread from heaven” for the Israelites to eat, which they called “Manna” (Exodus 16). So, God instituted bread as a symbol for His divine deliverance and sustenance for His people.

Jesus revealed an even deeper spiritual meaning of bread. As the Gospel of John says, “And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst’” (John 6:35, NKJV). When Jesus spoke these words, his Jewish audience remembered the Passover bread and the bread from heaven that God provided their ancestors in the wilderness. They understood the spiritual symbolism of God’s provision and sustenance, as well as the connection with God’s servant Moses. They understood Jesus’ claim that this symbol of deliverance and sustenance pointed to Jesus, elevating him above Moses and equating Him with God (John 6).

Passover celebrates when God delivered the Israelites from Egypt. The bread from heaven, or Manna, reminds us how God sustained the Israelites in the desert wilderness. These historical events point to Jesus--God the Son--who delivers us from sin and sustains us in our Christian faith as we live in this unbelieving world. This is just another example of how God’s Word, our spiritual “bread,” points to our Savior and Sustainer, our “bread of life,” Jesus Christ.

Videos and Craft Ideas

Live action clip: <https://youtu.be/PIQoUezk94w>

Animated clip: <https://youtu.be/4CPUApodJOQ>

Recipe card holder: <https://www.daniellesplace.com/html/bible-crafts-bread-of-life.html>

Bread card box: <http://www.christiancrafters.com/breadoflife.html>

² Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Jn 6:22–40. Logos Bible Software.