

JESUS, THE BREAD OF LIFE

John 6:22-40
Key Verse: 6:35

Lesson #16

The crowd that gathered around Jesus in verse 2 gathered because of Jesus power and love in healing the sick. They were simple and child-like and wanted Jesus' help for their immediate problems. The crowd that came looking for him in Capernaum, however, was not so simple. They had changed. They had political purposes. They had tasted the bread Jesus gave them, but instead of being filled with gratitude and praise to God, they were filled with greed and ambition. Instead of wanting to know Jesus and seeking to learn from him, they wanted bread, and they had their own agenda. They wanted Jesus to be their king and solve forever their material problem. They wanted to be on permanent welfare under a very rich king.

Jesus was faced with a choice. He could please the crowd or he could please God. He could not do both. Pleasing the crowd was easy and would bring immediate results. He could do as they asked and make more bread. He could justify this by scripture, citing Moses. Moses gave the people in the wilderness manna to eat every day. The Messiah was to be a prophet like Moses, so giving bread to eat every day seemed to be a fitting thing to do. Since this material benefit was what the crowd was seeking, they would be happy and would surely make Jesus their king. Jesus could have reasoned, "If I am their king, I can make them obey God." But Jesus knew better. Man's logic and way of thinking is very different from God's way of thinking and working.

Jesus said, "I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me." What did God want him to do? God sent him not to give material bread but to be the bread of life, to give himself for the life of the world. He would die on the cross to take away the sins of the world. He would indeed become a King, King of men's hearts, King of everyone who stands on the side of truth (18:37). He would rule over a kingdom not of this world. He would become the bread of life by dying for the sins of the world and rising from the dead on the third day. We eat this bread of life by believing, by receiving him into our hearts to rule our lives.

The crowd's problem was that they were interested in the gift, not in the Giver. Verse 32 says, "It is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my father..." Because they did not know God, the Giver of every good gift, they lived life on a physical, material level. They had no personal relationship with God, even though they believed in him intellectually. They were not really interested in knowing God, or in allowing him to rule their hearts and lives. They only wanted to use Jesus to get bread. This is the great problem with faith based on miracles: There is no personal relationship with God, and thus, no spiritual life in such belief.

When, by faith, we receive Jesus, the Bread of life, by faith we find our deep inner hunger satisfied and our spiritual thirst quenched.