

Metaphors of Christ #5: Christ as the Bread of Life

We have so far seen Christ as the Word, the Life, the Light of the world, and the Lamb. Now we will see that He calls himself the Bread of God, Bread of Heaven, the Bread of Life, and the True Bread. In fact, it will become apparent that there are inseparable connections between the metaphors of Bread, Word, and Life, and even Lamb. As bread is what sustains our physical lives, the “Bread of Life” is the one who came down from heaven to give and sustain our spiritual lives, that we would “never hunger”, “never thirst”, and “never die”.

Jn. 6:1-13 – multiplication of barley loaves and fishes

6:22ff. – people follow Jesus across lake, ask for a sign, like Moses and the manna

6:26-29 – Jesus said they were following not because of a believing response to the miracles, but because they wanted physical food. He said we should be seeking the true, spiritual food that will sustain us, and which endures to eternal life, and which only comes from him. There is more to life than just the physical.

6:32 – Moses didn’t give the manna, God did. Even so, the bread of God is the One (Himself) that God sent into the world, to give life unto the world.

6:35 – Jesus said plainly, “I am the bread of life”, and that to partake of that bread is required that we

1. Come to Him (“he that cometh to me shall never hunger”)
2. Believe on Him (he that believeth on me shall never thirst”)
3. Labor for that true food (27 – “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you”) How do we do that? V. 28-29 – “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

It may seem strange for him to say that we will never hunger or thirst, since in Mt. 5:6 says “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled”. It is not that we will have no spiritual desire, but that we will always have available the satisfaction of that desire. Christ is always there to sustain us, to strengthen, and to satisfy us in our desire for more of him.

Jesus’ promise is to give eternal life to those who believe (6:47). The physical manna preserved their physical lives in the wilderness those 40 years, but they still died. Those who eat the true bread will never die (48-51).

We all like food and drink. Why? Taste, and smell, and fellowship are some of the enjoyable aspects, but besides enjoyment, we eat for strength, sustenance, and growth. Yet physical food merely allows us to live for awhile in this present world. It has no effect on our spiritual lives (unless negatively, through gluttony and drunkenness). But as we require regular food and drink to sustain our physical lives, we also require spiritual food to sustain our spiritual lives. Jesus gives us everlasting life when we come to him in faith. Some people think they can come to Jesus one time, “get their ticket punched”, and then go on their way without change. But being a Christian means daily walking with him, coming to him, believing on him, and eating of that spiritual bread. If you don’t experience Christ as the Bread of Life, your spiritual life will shrivel and die, just like you would starve without physical food.

To tie together the ideas of Christ as both Word and Bread, see Dt. 8:3. His word is our food – Jer. 15:16, 1 P. 2:2.

Back in Jn. 6 it gets even stronger, saying that unless we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we have no life in us (51-58). What does it mean to “eat Jesus’ flesh” and to “drink his blood”? Obviously it is not to be taken literally, as cannibalism, but is to be understood in a figure. The Communion that we take as a church ordinance is a public and group profession symbolizing our remembrance of Christ’s body and blood shed for our salvation, but it is significant that it is only occasional. We need a daily communion with Christ – not the symbolic bread and wine, but the eating of the word - reading it, meditating on it, and conforming our lives unto it in obedience.

Jesus even went on to give this as an explanation, when many were offended at what he was saying. Jn. 6:63 – the words that I speak are spirit, and they are life. We need that word daily, it is how we partake of eternal life.