

# Nourishment<sup>1</sup>

When Jesus appeared in public He invariably drew a crowd. Of those who were drawn to Him there were a relatively few who sought Him because of what He said. Most came to Him because he performed miracles, and when they returned they wanted to see more. John wrote in his gospel, in the Sixth Chapter,

1 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). 2 A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.<sup>2</sup>

Interest of the people, for the most part, lay in what Jesus could do for them in their health, or in their material necessities. This is not an evil thing in and of itself, but it shows that their interests were mundane, physical. As it was for His acts of healing, so it was for His material gifts, for we read further in John that the multitude of people came to Him in the wilderness, and the disciples had not enough food to feed so large a crowd. In this case there were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother said to Jesus,

John 6:9 "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?" 10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.

So, on that day, in a remote part of Galilee, Jesus fed more than five thousand people with the simple fare of five loaves and two fish. But were they satisfied? No, for on the next day the crowd followed Jesus to Capernaum, and there they sought Him until they found Him. Then,

John 6:26 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."

He fed them with barley loaves and fish, and they wanted more. But in this case their focus was on the wrong kind of food. They should have sought the food that nourishes to eternal life. Many of the people in the crowd that Jesus fed that day were like Esau. Esau was a man of the field as Genesis describes him. He was a hunter and he could cook the flesh of game that he acquired in the hunt. A day came when Esau came in from the field and he was a hungry man; in fact, he was famished. Esau was hungry for the food which

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<sup>1</sup> Article updated and expanded in May 2026.

<sup>2</sup> All Scripture references are taken from the *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. The Lockman Foundation.

perishes. So hungry was he for physical food, in this case bread and lentils, that he sold his birthright to his brother Jacob for a bit of stew.<sup>3</sup>

There are many people today who neglect their eternal soul in order to obtain their daily bread. They work for the food which perishes, and neglect the food which endures to eternal life.

There is the story of a man who owned a mule, but he greatly resented the cost of keeping him. Hay was difficult to obtain. Oats were too expensive. So he decided that he would substitute sawdust for the oats in the mule's diet. That worked well so he endeavored to substitute even more. He knew that he would have to do this gradually; otherwise, the mule would notice, so, periodically, he increased the amount of sawdust. Everything went well for a while, but by the time the mule got used to the sawdust, he died.

The moral of the story is this: food that preserves life is not adulterated. The sawdust that the mule received is like the spiritual food that people are receiving in some churches today. The world wants to substitute more spiritual sawdust and less of Christ and that is what the churches are doing.

Human beings are living on a diet of physical food that will keep them alive--for a while, but not forever. There is other food that will keep a man alive forever. That food is Christ, Himself. But when Jesus told the people who followed him about this they did not understand His message. They said,

John 6:30 "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? 31 "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.' "

Jesus answered them,

John 6:35 "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."

Now notice this: He did not say that he would show them another miracle so that they would believe what He said; He did not say that he would give them more physical food so that they would believe; He did say, "I am the bread of life." Therefore, the proper spiritual diet is Christ, not more signs, not more physical bread.

Among the most enigmatic things that Jesus said was,

John 6:47 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. 48 "I am the bread of life. 49 "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 "This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

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<sup>3</sup> Genesis 25:29-34.

The opponents of Jesus heard this and began to argue among themselves. They said, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

They still did not understand. They thought he was speaking in a literal sense. Jesus did not attempt to simplify his words, but doubled down on His metaphor:

John 6:53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. 56 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

How difficult this is to understand for people who are unwilling to part with their desire for material food (or thinking only of worldly influences and pleasures). To those who think of acquisition of daily bread as their highest occupation there is here naught but enigma, a riddle couched in words that reveal, yet conceal. Unless a man turns away from his desire for things that satisfy only the flesh he will not understand the fundamental truth of what Jesus attempted to tell him. Jesus expects him to listen to the words He spoke, and to imitate the way He walked. Thus, discipleship is expected to be total. If the "bread" of Christ is willingly received in this way it has wonderful transforming effects.

Elsewhere Jesus alluded to this simple idea,

John 10:1 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. 2 "But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. 3 "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 "When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 "A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

- The disciples of Jesus hear no one else.
- The disciples of Jesus follow no one else.

Jesus is the bread of life. His statement bridges the physical and the spiritual realm. Dining upon Christ is the same as believing in Christ and receiving spiritual instruction from Him. Eating His flesh and drinking His blood is the same as being completely united with Him through faith. It is devoted discipleship where the disciple feeds (as it were) upon the complete discipline and instruction of his Master.

Luke wrote,

Luke 6:40 "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.

- The devoted disciple wishes to become like his teacher. Thus, he pursues the knowledge of Christ above all else, and values anything different as less important.

As Paul wrote to the Philippians,

Philippians 3:7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things

to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Christ is the "bread," the spiritual food of life. Both by implication and through metaphor Jesus said this: as eating is to bread (which keeps one alive physically); so, believing is to Christ (which keeps one alive spiritually). If believing in Christ keeps one alive spiritually then why would you want to substitute anything else?

It is true that by faith one suffers with Him and dies with Him on the cross in His substitutionary death, because his flesh represents His body of suffering, and His blood His substitutionary death. Yet in the context of John 6:53 the Apostle has in view the spiritual source of the believer's sustenance and renovation.

From the annals of the Second World War comes a story about prisoners who were held in Japanese concentration camps. The operators of the camps served "food," but what they offered daily was a mixture. There was a certain amount of grain, meal or rice, so that if anyone asked, it could be said that enough basic food was in it to prevent starvation. But one by one the prisoners starved anyway. It was a mystery, but investigators discovered the cause when they learned that the operators of the concentration camp had mixed castor oil with the food to be given to the prisoners. The result was that the food would be expelled from the body of the prisoners before much nourishment could be absorbed into the system.<sup>4</sup>

Christ is the spiritual food of life but He must be ingested by faith in order to impart the life giving nourishment. However, the world will try to prevent assimilation of Christ into the heart by whatever means it can find. In some cases by using a spiritual purgative. So the Christian must be diligent to insure that the food taken in is pure Christ, not some Christ along with a doctrine that flushes out what Christ brings. Disciples must assimilate nothing but the unadulterated Christ.

Moreover, the spiritual food that a person takes in must be Christ. It cannot be anyone or anything else when one expects nourishment unto eternal life.

There is the story of a woman named Taylor who was evaluating the suitability of a family to adopt a Vietnamese orphan, so she stayed with them for the weekend. At breakfast on the first morning she asked them if she might have cereal. The man whose name was Andre Previn reached for a jar of health food cereal that his sons ate every morning. From that he poured her a generous bowlful. While she ate, Mr. Previn expounded on the nutritional value of the cereal. Miss Taylor made no reply until she had finished the bowl of cereal. "To be quite honest," she admitted, "I'm not crazy about it."

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<sup>4</sup> Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 299). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

It was then that Mr. Previn's eye fell on the jar from which he had served Miss Taylor. "I'm not surprised," he said, "I've just made you eat a large bowl of hamster food."<sup>5</sup>

Be careful what you accept as spiritual food. It just might be food for hamsters--if you take my meaning. Many of the churches today serve spiritual food that is analogous to hamster food. It accomplishes little but the ruination of the one who dines on it.

For example, not long ago an Episcopal church in Scotland held a service in which a girl sang a passage from the Koran which specifically denies that Jesus is the Son of God and says that He should not be worshipped.<sup>6</sup> The observance denied one of the central doctrines of the Holy Scriptures. To say that this was hamster food would be an enormous understatement. Note what the Apostle John had to say about this kind of practice,

2 John 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

That this travesty took place in connection with the Eucharist makes it doubly a dishonor to Christ, and an abysmal act of ignorance.

Therefore, you should carefully test the doctrinal structure of the church or religious organization you attend. If its doctrines do not meet the test of Scripture, leave it.

Remember what Christ said,

John 6:51 "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

- "...if any eats of this bread, he will live forever..."

The nourishment that comes from Christ admits to no dilution or adulteration. Neither is it an eclectic buffet where one can choose the part he wants. Therefore, learn to discern Christ as spiritual food, and to separate other offerings from your spiritual meal--because your eternal soul depends on it.

Georg de Hevesy was a Hungarian chemist. He received the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1943 for his work on radioactive tracers. There is a story about Hevesy in

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<sup>5</sup> Fadiman, Clifton, *The Little Brown Book of Anecdotes*. p. 458.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/01/11/koran-verse-denying-divinity-christ-sung-aloud-scottish-cathedral-service/>

which he questioned the quality of food offered by his lodgings. So, one evening, he decided to conduct a simple experiment. While his landlady's back was turned he slipped a microscopic quantity of a radioactive substance into a piece of fatty meat that he had left at the side of his plate. The following day the landlady served meat for dinner. Hevesy passed a Geiger counter over his plate. Its ominous clicks confirmed his worst suspicions. He had seen that meat before. Within a few days he changed his lodgings.

There is no test through which a Geiger counter, or similar device, can tell you the quality of your spiritual food. But you can put it to the test. Paul told Timothy,

2 Timothy 3:15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

- Use the Scriptural test.

Victor Lindlahr, an American nutritionist, popularized the English phrase “You are what you eat” in health campaigns and in his book which he entitled *You Are What You Eat*. The phrase means that the food that you consume directly shapes your physical health, mental well-being, and overall condition. It is a reminder that your body and mind reflect the quality of what you put into them.<sup>7</sup> How much more does your spirit reflect the quality of food you put into it.

For example, consider what the Psalmist wrote,

Proverbs 4:14 Do not enter the path of the wicked

And do not proceed in the way of evil men.

15 Avoid it, do not pass by it;

Turn away from it and pass on.

16 For they cannot sleep unless they do evil;

And they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble.

17 For they eat the bread of wickedness

And drink the wine of violence.

The soul food of people given to evil is wickedness and violence. One should not expect to dine on lust, corruption and violence and remain unaffected.

Isaiah the prophet wrote,

Isaiah 55:1 “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. 2 “Why do you spend money for what is not bread,

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<sup>7</sup> Copilot.

And your wages for what does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,  
And delight yourself in abundance.

3 “Incline your ear and come to Me.

Listen, that you may live;  
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,  
According to the faithful mercies shown to David.

- The word of the Lord is genuine bread,

There is a vast difference between Christ as spiritual food and the food offered by the world. Jesus said to Thomas the Apostle,

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

- There is no other way but Christ.
- Any other offering of spiritual food leads not to God, but to spiritual starvation.

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

- Jesus is the true Bread and the true Drink.

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’ ”

- The spiritual bread is God’s word.

Jesus said,

John 6:48 “I am the bread of life. 49 “Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 “This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 “I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”

- Jesus is superior to manna. Jesus sustains spiritual life.

Matthew 6:11 ‘Give us this day our daily bread.

- This scripture takes on added meaning when one considers Christ as our daily bread.

John the Baptist said of Christ,

John 3:36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

- Faith in Christ leads to eternal life.
- The wrath of God abides on the one who does not obey<sup>8</sup> Christ.

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<sup>8</sup> also may be translated "believe."

- Faith and obedience are the two sides of the same coin.

Jesus said,

Luke 6:46 “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? 47 “Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 “But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

- Don't attempt to fool yourself by saying you believe in Christ while at the same time you ignore what He said. That would be like the immature person expecting to grow to maturity while refusing to eat.
- The grace of God in Christ which the Christian possesses through faith is not permission to sin. That would be license.

Let us not tempt the Lord as did Israel of old. Avoid their mistakes. Feed upon Christ as Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

1 Corinthians 10:1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

But the Israelites craved evil things; they were idolaters; they acted immorally; they tempted the Lord; and they grumbled.

They were destroyed.

1 Corinthians 10:11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

So, for those of us "upon whom the ends of the ages have come," let us eat the spiritual food, and drink the spiritual drink--which is Christ. Because of what the Lord Himself said,

John 5:24 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.