
I was reading an article this week about the terrible situation in Egypt. 40% of the people in Egypt live on no more than \$2.00 per day. And with the rising cost of food they are facing some serious issues and people are starting to panic. The government has been subsidizing the production of bread; and during this time of crisis they have even assigned soldiers to the job of baking bread daily to ensure that people can get their hands on the very basics to sustain life. It is the only way they can avert a wide spread panic and serious loss of life. Egypt has suffered like this many times in the past. In fact, it is the only Arab country where they call bread *aish* or “life” rather than Khubz the normal name for bread.

When you are as poor as many Egyptians, daily existence is about daily trying to survive. Bread literally becomes your staple of life. We don't really understand this kind of existence on a practical level and have a very difficult time even connecting to it. Many of us think we are dying if we don't have an i-mac or an i-pod. But although we don't know what it is like to literally live day-by-day relying on the government to provide bread, we grab for our own *aish*—our own bread—in order to survive our condition of spiritual destitution and to cope with the damage that has happened in each of our lives due to the sin that infects all men.

Some of you have suffered serious, serious damage in your life. And the worst part of it is that it often came at the hands of those you were supposed to be able to trust, those who were charged to love and care for you. So you have searched for and found your *aish* which you eat in order to survive the trauma. Now, don't get me wrong, it is not just those who have survived a “living hell” who have their own *aish* but we have all been damaged and ravaged by sin to one extent or another, so none of us is excepted from this. We all have our own form of *aish*; the question becomes what does it look like and are you even aware of what you are eating?

I am going to ask some questions. I want you to think through these and consider what kind of *aish* you might be eating.

- Do you feast at the table of mediocrity or failure—are you convinced that no matter what you do you will never really amount to anything worthy or valuable and will experience no real success?
- Are you driven to be successful in all you do in order to be ok and feel good about yourself? Would others consider you to be a perfectionist?
- Do you need to stay busy and always have something going on in your life so you never really have to stop and deal with either the reality of your practical life or the reality of the hole that is inside you which is screaming for fulfillment?
- Do you need to be right in pretty much all things? Do you need to make sure that everyone knows you are right?
- Do you need to be in control? Do you constantly look for ways to grab control from people and situations so that you can limit the ability for anyone or anything to hurt you?
- Do you need to seek validation from men or from women—whether it is through flirting, attention getting, or serial dysfunctional relationships—just so you can know that someone thinks your special?
- Are you constantly drawn to people who will hurt you, abandon you, use you and abuse you, and ultimately just reinforce your belief that you really are not that lovable and really deserve what you get?
- Have you become a caretaker of the dysfunctional relationships in your life fearing to lose the drips of “love” that they give to you? Do you protect and

defend those who have hurt you constantly making excuses for their behavior?

- Do you punish yourself and blame yourself for all that has happened to you?
- Are you obsessed with what others think of you? Do you continually make changes or adjustments to your looks, to your likes and dislikes, to your attitudes and behaviors just to make sure you fit in to the group?
- Do you often retreat to your cage of depression and self pity in an attempt to care for yourself?
- Have you become addicted to substances or behaviors in an attempt to satisfy the desires of the flesh but which always seem to create a bigger need or demand (whether it is drugs, drinking, sex, pornography, eating, sleeping)
- Have you become hyper religious in order to find approval and acceptance from God and from those who will think you are so spiritual and have your act together?

So what is your *aish*—what is your bread of life? What do you eat in order to cope with the hurt, the ache, the loneliness, the fear and the pain that sits deep within? Does it ever really satisfy you or is the craving ever present. As a believer, is Jesus merely your supplement, your side dish, your snack, your desert or is He truly your *aish*—your bread of life?

John 6:32-60

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the *true bread* from heaven. The true bread

of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

"Sir," they said, "give us that bread every day."

Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me *will never* be hungry again. Whoever believes in me *will never* be thirsty. But you haven't believed in me even though you have seen me. However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day."

Then the people began to murmur in disagreement because he had said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know his father and mother. How can he say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

But Jesus replied, "Stop complaining about what I said. For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. As it is written in the Scriptures, 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. (Not that anyone has ever seen the Father; only I, who was sent from God, have seen him.)

"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life. Yes, I am the bread of life! Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. I am the living bread that

came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh."

Then the people began arguing with each other about what he meant. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked.

So Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, unless you *eat* the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, *you cannot have eternal life within you*. But anyone who *eats* my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that person at the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. I live because of the living Father who sent me; in the same way, anyone who feeds on me will live because of me. I am the true bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will not die as your ancestors did (even though they ate the manna) but will live forever."

He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. Many of his disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?"

Wow that was a mouthful. This passage communicates powerful theology whose implications are simply amazing and whose practical application is life changing. We are going to tear this passage apart to make sure we don't miss both the direct and the subtle messages which Jesus was communicating.

First, Jesus once again pulls out the ultimate in theological claims. In verses 35, 41, 48, 51, 58, He says that He is the "I AM"—the ever existent one; the one who always is everything you really need. He calls Himself the bread of life, the bread from heaven, the living bread, and the true bread.

I am the bread of life: The Jews who left Egypt survived on a daily ration of manna (this flaky like substance that fell from the sky and from which they made manna bread, manna muffins, manna shakes and manna-cotti). Similarly, our daily sustenance is to be found in our relationship with God. It does not matter what emotional, psychological, or spiritual damage we have sustained, he is the only One who can bring life, health, and strength to our being. Jesus is also the only One who can satisfy the demands, craves, and the incessant yearning in our souls. Life is only found in Him.

I am the bread from Heaven: This is a double whammy—it's kind of like what He said in *Exodus 34:6*: "I am the Lord, I am the Lord." He is ever existent (always has been, is, and always will be) and He comes from heaven having been sent down to earth by the Father. Do you realize that the mere fact that He has been in the presence of the Father makes Him more than a man. *Exodus 33:20* says that no one can see the glory of the Father and live. *1 Timothy 6:16* says that the Father lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him; thus, Jesus must be God!

I am the living bread: Being the "I Am" He always is. For every generation for every time, He is always relevant and exactly what you need. The verb "living" is in the present active tense so you can be sure that He is always actively involved in the details of your life, whether you are aware of it or not. He is there and He is always what you need!

I am the true bread: This is a claim of absolute exclusivity. Jesus is claiming to be the truth—not to know the truth, not to be able to enlighten you as to the truth, but to be the truth. In this statement Jesus makes it clear that everything else is false, a lie, and has nothing to boast of except for empty and futile promises of hope, meaning, and fulfillment. I know this offends the sensibilities of many, but Jesus makes it clear that all other religions and philosophies for life, at best, can

only provide some sort of temporary fulfillment, but they can never satisfy. That is why man has been on a perpetual search to find meaning in this life and has perpetually failed.

Unless a person lets Jesus satisfy the hunger in their soul, that craving never dies. As a result, many are weary, hopeless, and live trapped in a cage of darkness and depression. This also explains why others are constantly trying new things to be satisfied: new women, new men, new drugs, new jobs, new adventures, new trends and so on. They do this, I believe, not because they really think they are going to find their happiness in these things, but because they don't want to ever stop long enough to face the despair of knowing that it is all futile and will never satisfy. So they try and stay on a high and keep moving to avoid dealing with the truth that nothing they tried or will try will ever fill the hole.

It is interesting that Jesus tells them that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood. We know that the crowd began arguing over this point—"how can He give us His flesh to eat?" Now, remember, these are people who are referred to as disciples. They have heard Him talk in parables and they have seen Him perform the supernatural, so I don't think for a minute that they thought Jesus was talking about cannibalism or some dark ancient satanic rite of drinking blood (which some people have suggested). That is not the reason they had such a hard time "understanding" or "accepting" what He was saying.

They would have understood Jesus to speaking to them out of the Law and the sacrificial system which governed their lives. Understanding a bit about this system helps in properly understanding these verses. There were two kinds of sin offerings, one for the nation and one for the individual. The sacrifice which was offered to gain atonement for the nation was not eaten but part of it was burned on

the altar and the rest was burned outside of the camp fully consumed by fire (which is a metaphor for the judgment of sinners—those on the outside of God’s family).

If you remember, Jesus was tried and beaten to a pulp within the city but He was taken outside of the city to be crucified. On the cross He took on the sins of every man, woman, and child, was forsaken by the Father, and was judged on our behalf. His death removed forever and for all time the issue of sin which had separated God and man. This is why we are told that He died for the sins of the world. As a result of His sacrifice, every man, woman, and child now has the opportunity to choose to eat the bread and enter into a relationship with God. Sin has been atoned for by the sacrifice of the Son, and it is only through the Son that a person can find both eternal life and temporal satisfaction as they experience eternity now.

After the offering for the nation was presented to God, then the individual sin offerings were made. The parts that were not burnt on the altar were not burned outside of the camp, but were actually eaten by the priests and their sons. It was their portion and was considered to be particularly holy. This symbolizes a very important truth. Although Jesus died for the world, a person still has to sit and eat to personally appropriate the benefits of the sacrifice. It also speaks to the fact that those who eat are those God has chosen and set apart to eat. He speaks to this in *verses 37, 44*.

Now there was another offering known as a peace offering. But unlike the sin offering that was offered up for all and fully consumed by fire, or the offering that was eaten by the priests, the peace offering was eaten by the family that offered it to God. The peace offering symbolized that there was peace between the one who offered the sacrifice and God. In other words, the issue of sin had been dealt with by the sin offering and now they were able to present a free will offering of thanks to the Lord. In this offering they would take the breast and the shoulder of the

animal and lift it up in the sky and wave it back and forth symbolizing that all belongs to God and that He is Lord over all. Then they would eat the offering symbolizing deep intimate fellowship with God.

There was also a drink offering where they would pour out some of the wine on the altar as an offering to God. During the Temple worship, the drink offering was the signal for the priests and Levites to begin their songs of praise to God. This sacrifice celebrated forgiveness and symbolized the joy in the heart of a believer at having been restored to a right relationship with God.

So when Jesus says that a person must eat His flesh and drink His blood in order to have eternal life, it is these sacrifices that they would have been thinking of, the individual sin offering, the peace offering and the drink offering. So culturally there was nothing too weird about what He said; it just strikes us as odd having no practical familiarity with that system.

So why was it so hard for them to understand and accept what He was saying—even for the twelve disciples? Again, I don't think it was because they were confused by the metaphors, but everything always goes back to wrong belief which always results in unbelief. What was their wrong belief? The Jews were looking for a Messiah but they never imagined for a moment that the Messiah would offer Himself up as a sacrifice and actually die. Even today most have never been willing to connect *Psalms 22* and *Isaiah 53* with the Messiah; yet, these passages clearly prophesy that the Messiah would offer His life up as a sacrifice taking on the guilt and sins of us all. Those passages even predict, in detail, the manner in which Jesus would die, almost 1,000 years before crucifixion was even invented by the Romans.

These disciples had much grander nationalistic ideals in their head. They were errantly fixated on all the passages that refer to the Messiah's second coming

where it is said that He is going to come as a conquering King crushing all His enemies under His feet. They were expecting the Messiah to free Israel from foreign occupation and restore freedom to its people; and they believed this would be a very violent undertaking. So it was not even in their paradigm of thinking to consider that the Messiah must first suffer and die before He comes to rule.

So when they said: “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” they were saying: we don’t understand how it is even possible for you, a man, to become a sacrifice. What would that look like? How would we participate in that? We have the animal thing down, but a person? We are confused! Their question tells us that they understood the metaphor they just could not fathom the implication. Their wrong belief locked them in a cage of bewilderment and unbelief.

In addition, this King, this Ruler, this Conqueror could not have been raised in the house down the street in their own neighborhood. In the scriptures He is described as possessing such glory, power, and might that they could not have even imagined that son of Mary and Joseph, whom they knew, could possibly be the One. The picture did not fit the Messianic and overall religious presuppositions about what their future looked like and what they believed God was supposed to do for them.

Now, let’s talk about this idea of eating His flesh, for Jesus used a couple of different words to describe this process. In *verse 51* and *53*, where He says that he who eats this bread will live forever, He uses the common word for eat and it is in the aorist active tense. What He is saying in this colorful way is that if you take a bite (yes, you are the one who has to choose to take a bite, God is not going to force Himself on you), it will be as if you have always been eating. In other words, you will be ushered instantly into eternal life and not only will you live forever but this eternal life will be within you.

Like them, you might be thinking how that is even possible, how can eternal life be in me? Well because, when you take a bite and eat from this bread, Jesus will make within you a new creation that is separate and distinct and free from your old sinful nature. I have often used this graphic as a simple way to depict this. Prior to taking a bite, or prior to putting your faith in Jesus, you are bound to your old sinful nature who is an enemy of God. But when you believe, Jesus gives you new life and this part of your being is eternal and it is the dwelling place of the Spirit of God. So everyone who has eaten of this bread has eternal life within them. This is the miracle of new birth.

In *verses 54, 56* and *58*, however, Jesus uses a different word for eat. This word means to gnaw or chew. It is a picture of someone who is really breaking it down and seriously dining. In *verse 54*, the verb “have” is in the present active indicative tense. So the way you want to understand this is as follows: The one who chews and gnaws on my flesh, is one who already has eternal life in them and they are presently and actively experiencing that eternal life. In other words, the person who prioritizes the Word of God in their life and lets the Word be authoritative over their life is a true believer. It is a powerful word-picture of a person who has found that their sustenance or nutrients for making it through every single day of their life is the Word of God. To this person, Jesus has become the very fulfillment of all they need.

Then in *verse 56* Jesus says that the person who abides, or who remains in close fellowship with Him, is the person who chews and consumes the sacrifice. This statement emphasizes the fact that the Word of God is the only pathway for oneness with Jesus and unity with the Godhead.

In *verse 58* Jesus says that even religious substitutes are not enough to bring you life. If you think that you are ok because you are participating in things of

God, going to church, and even reading your Bible because it is the “Christian” thing to do, it is simply not enough. Sure, their ancestors ate the manna, which was a miraculous provision of God, but they all died. Similarly, it does not matter how much religion you practice, if you do not eat of the bread of life, you will die!

Verses 37-44 should bring great comfort to every believer. If you choose to believe that He is the only one who can satisfy the yearning in your soul and if you choose to trust Him to be, in effect, your sin offering and your peace offering then He will ensure that you will spend eternity in heaven. This is the will of the Father and Jesus always does the will of His Father. He will raise you up on the last day; that is guaranteed. Although you have died, one day you will live.

It is also wonderful to know that if you come to Jesus He will not reject you. There are no qualifications and no tests you have to pass, you just have to make the choice to place your faith in Him and He will receive you. In addition, you will never fall out of His care. I know that many Christians who have backslidden or who are still chewing their own *aish* get worried and start to wonder if they might have lost their salvation. The good news is that if you have truly placed your faith in Jesus, there is nothing you can do to impact His promise to you of eternal life; it is in you! Jesus won't lose you, me, or anyone else—our future is absolutely safe and secure in His hands. Peter states this truth simply, beautifully, and in a way that is impossible to misconstrue and is like a soft pillow upon which we can peacefully rest.

1 Peter 1:3-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the

resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Notice it is the Father who draws or allures people to the Son. In *verse 37* it says that those the Father has given to the Son will come to Him. The verb “come” is in the future active indicative tense meaning that it is going to happen and there is no chance that it is not going to happen. Every person the Father calls will come. No one can come to the Son unless the Father draws them to Him (*verse 44*). So this should challenge any notion that you have that you control your destiny. As the “I Am” – the ever existent one—He is always in control.

Jesus then says something absolutely fascinating in *verse 45*. Jesus quotes from *Isaiah 54:13* where God promises that He Himself will teach and instruct all the citizens of “New Jerusalem” (which is to be understood as a metaphor for true believers). As we chew on the Word of God, *1 Corinthians 2:7* and *12* tells us God will reveal to us His secret wisdom and that God has actually given us His Spirit so we can know the wonderful things of God. *1 John 2:27* says that since we have received the Holy Spirit living within us, He will teach us all things. I think this is incredible. If you are not gnawing on the Word, you are missing out on the wisdom of God for your life.

Now before we get to the reaction of the crowd, Jesus puts an exclamation point on this whole teaching in *verse 57* He says that He lives by the power of the living Father and in the same way, those who partake of Him will live because of Him. This reminds me of the time Jesus told Satan that men are not to live by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God (*Matthew 4:4*). In

other words, if we “birth” life into our belief by making every choice according to the truth of the Word, then we will experience eternity now. We will be complete, satisfied, and no longer hunger or thirst to satisfy the desires of our old sinful nature. We will truly live because of Him.

But we have to be willing to bet our life on who God says He is and what He promises to be for us. We are to reject what we believe to be the tangible reality around us and come to learn how tangible the intangibility of God really is. He will speak to you. He really will show you His will for your life. He really will be your provider, your protector, your defender, your friend, your Father, your lover, and all that you need if you let Him. But you have to stop chewing your own *aish* and let go of the illusion that you have “control” over your life. If you do He will be more real to you than you could ever fathom.

John 6:61-71

Jesus was aware that his disciples were complaining, so he said to them, "Does this offend you? Then what will you think if you see the Son of Man ascend to heaven again? The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But some of you do not believe me." (For Jesus knew from the beginning which ones didn't believe, and he knew who would betray him.) Then he said, "That is why I said that people can't come to me unless the Father gives them to me."

At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you also going to leave?" Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God."

Then Jesus said, "I chose the twelve of you, but one is a devil." He was speaking of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, one of the Twelve, who would later betray Him.

This should be our motto: Human effort accomplishes nothing; it is worthless to save you or to satisfy the ache in your heart. If you eat your own *aish*, you will be perpetually hungry. Only Jesus' Words of life and truth can accomplish those feats though a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus calls out His followers. He asks them if it is really all that hard to understand and accept the scriptures which say that He must be lifted up as a sacrifice for the world, that having come down from God only He has the power to grant eternal life, or that as the "I Am" He will be what you always need, when you need it, to survive the difficulties and trauma of this life. Then He adds some sarcasm and says: will you seriously wait until you see me ascend into heaven before you finally get it and choose to believe?

This brings us to one of the saddest verses in the Bible: John 6:66. They turned and no longer walked with Him. They refused to abandon their paradigm about who and what the Messiah was going to be; it was too much to ask. Personally, I don't believe it is by chance that this is verse 666, I think this is evidence of God's handiwork in every part of the assembly of His Word—every part! The Spirit guided all aspects of the Word coming to us, even how it was ultimately organized. In Biblical numerology, 6 is the number of man. 666 is therefore an emphatic statement of man putting his faith in himself, believing that he knows, he understands, he has control over his own life, and believing that in this world he can be like god. 666 is the number that reflects the ultimate exaltation of man and ultimate rejection of God: 6 rejection of the Father; 6 rejection of the Son; and 6 rejection of the Holy Spirit.

The twelve must have been freaking right at this moment. Everyone was leaving. Their movement had gained such great momentum and the numbers were continuing to increase, but with one intense message it was done; everyone left. They were probably wondering why Jesus had to push so hard.

But then Jesus turns and calls them out: “Are you going to leave too?” Then Peter said some of the most beautiful words that probably graced Jesus’ ears the entire time He was on earth. “Lord (or my master) to whom would we go? You alone have the words that give eternal life. We believe them, and we know you are the Holy One of God.” This is amazing. Peter was choosing to stay not because of the miracles he saw, not because he ate of the fishes and the loaves, not because of the crowds and the numbers, but because He placed His faith in the Words of the Lord. Peter did not yet understand all that Jesus said (that will come evident later) but He was convinced that Jesus was the promised One who came from God.

Please understand, miracles never truly convince anyone. They always want another sign. Crowds are no indication of faith; it does not matter how many follow. All that matters is whether or not a person makes the choice to believe and then makes the choice to continually believe by living according to every Word that comes from the mouth of God. This is how eternal life is received and daily experienced. All else is just religion which is why Jesus makes this comment about Judas? Looking, talking, and acting, like one who loves the Lord is not enough. Each person still has to choose to place their faith in Jesus and let Him become their only *aish* or bread of life. All else will never satisfy. Even the best behaved “disciple” can be a tool of the devil. Do not be deceived!

Tonight, I challenge you to let go of the *aish* you have held to. Let go of the false hope that it will somehow help you, preserve you, and keep you safe. Jesus is

the true bread of life. I invite you to truly believe, surrender it all, and place your entire hope in Jesus Christ.

Let's Pray.