

BREAD OF LIFE DISCOURSE

Inverted Parallelism of John 6:22–59

- A “they themselves got into the small boats, and came to **Capernaum**, seeking Jesus” (22–24)
B “you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you **ate of the loaves**, and were **filled**” (25–26)
C “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the **food** which endures to eternal life” (27)
D “This is the **work of God**, that you **believe** in Him whom He has sent” (28–31)
E “it is My Father who gives you the **true bread out of heaven**” (32)
F “the **bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven**, and **gives life** to the world” (33–34)
G “I am the **bread of life**” (35)
H “you have seen Me, and yet do **not believe**” (36)
I “All that the Father gives Me shall **come to Me**, and the one who **comes to Me** I will certainly not cast out” (37)
J “I have **come down from heaven**” (38–39)
K “I Myself will **raise him up** on the last day” (40)
L “The Jews therefore were **grumbling** about Him (41)
M “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?
How does He now say, ‘I have come down out of heaven?’” (42)
L’ “**Do not grumble** among yourselves” (43)
K’ “I will **raise him up** on the last day” (44)
J’ “the One who is **from God**” (46)*
I’ “Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, **comes to Me**” (45)*
H’ “he who **believes** has eternal life” (47)
G’ “I am the bread of life” (48)
F’ “This is the **bread which comes down out of heaven**, so that one may eat of it and **not die**” (49–50)
E’ “I am the **living bread that came down out of heaven**” (51)
D’ “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life” (52–54)
[conceptually the **work of God** here is eating and drinking and to eat Jesus’ flesh and drink his blood is to **believe** he is the bread of eternal life; cf. 47–58]
C’ “My flesh is true **food**, and My blood is true drink” (55)
B’ “he who **eats this bread shall live forever**” (56–58) [eat loaves and live physically (26) *contrasts* with eat bread of life and live forever (58)—a better reason to seek Jesus]
A’ “These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in **Capernaum**” (59)

NOTES:

1. I have inverted verses 45 and 46 to maintain the parallelism (these inverted verses are marked with an *).
2. The paradox at the center was hard to understand and believe because Jesus was revealing his hypostatic union: “Jesus, the son of Joseph” is his humanity and “I have come down out of heaven” is his deity (cf. John 1:14; Phil 2:5–7). This is also called the doctrine of *kenosis*: Jesus is perfect humanity and undiminished deity inseparably united in one person forever” (R. B. Thieme, Jr.).
3. Jesus does not explain the paradox in the center (verse 42) in the second half of the inverted parallelism (verses 43–59). Instead he propounds a figure of speech that is even harder to swallow—“eats My flesh and drinks My blood” (verses 51–57)! This figure is offensive even to his disciples (6:60–65) and “as a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore” (6:66). So much for accommodating his teaching to the sensitivities of the audience! Think about it: in presenting the gospel he repeatedly uses a metaphor that causes many “to stumble” (6:61). He could have used the less offensive bread of life metaphor throughout, but obviously chose not to. Why? Apparently neither accommodation nor giving offense makes any difference in a person’s response to the gospel: “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me” (6:37a) or “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him. . . .” “It is written in the prophets, AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me” (6:44–45) or “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father” (6:65). And “of all that He has given Me I lose nothing” (6:39b). Compare Jonah’s half-hearted message to Nineveh (chapter 3). True disciples, however, not fully understanding this difficult and offensive teaching, give him the benefit of the doubt because they believe he is the Messiah (6:67–69). Looking back, we can see the symbolism of the Lord’s Supper: to eat the eucharistic bread is to eat the bread of eternal life (“he who eats this bread shall live forever” verse 58) is to eat Jesus’ flesh (“the bread. . . is My flesh” verse 51); and to drink the eucharistic wine is to drink Jesus’ blood (“My blood is true drink” verse 55) is to “never thirst” (verse 35).
4. The setting apparently begins outside the synagogue (6:22–26) and ends in the synagogue of Capernaum (6:59). Perhaps the multitude followed Jesus into the synagogue where he continued his teaching on the Bread of Life. Where the discussion with the multitude ends and the synagogue sermon begins is not clear.

PARALLELISM EMPHASIZING ETERNAL SECURITY: INVERTED PARALLELISM OF VERSES 37–39

- A “All that the Father gives Me. . . I will certainly not cast out” (37).
B “will of Him who sent Me” (38).
B’ “will of Him who sent Me” (39a),
A’ “all that He has given Me I lose nothing” (39b–c).

STEP PARALLELISM OF VERSES 39–40

- A “will of Him who sent Me” (39a),
B “I lose nothing” (39b), (worded negatively)
C “raise it up on the last day” (39c).
A’ “will of My Father” (40a),
B’ “have eternal life” (40b); (worded positively)
C’ “raise him up on the last day” (40c).