



SEEKERS of TRUTH

By Edward H. Goit, Sr.

Question:

Please explain Christ's words in the sixth chapter of John, "I came down from heaven"; "the living bread which came down from heaven"; and "ascend up where he was before" (vs. 38, 51, 62).

Answer:

Prior to speaking these words, Jesus fed about five thousand men with five barley loaves and two small fish. This great multitude, having had their hunger satisfied by this miracle, sought Jesus the next day. When they found him, he admonished them, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you" (John 6:27). They asked, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Jesus answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

They then inquired, "What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat." Jesus replied, "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven.... I am *the* bread of life....For I came down from heaven."

Christ told the multitudes that if they wanted life, they must believe on him whom God had sent. He further said, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). Jesus declared himself to be the "bread of life," "the living bread which came down from heaven," and explained that "the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 5:51).

The foregoing Scriptures teach the origin of Jesus, not his preexistence. God's Word predicted a coming Messiah, not one already in existence, but one who was to come into being. (See Gen. 3:15; Deut. 18:15; Isa. 7:14; Jer. 31:22; 2 Sam. 7:12; Isa. 53.)

The Jews declared that Jesus was the son of Joseph, and thus denied that he was the Son of God. Having this understanding, they could not accept Jesus as God's Son, nor understand the virgin birth of Jesus, which teaches that Jesus came down from heaven by the union of the Holy Spirit with the virgin Mary (John 6:41, 42; Luke 1:26-35).

Jesus makes a comparison between his flesh and the manna of the wilderness. (See John 6:33, 48-51, 58). Both came down from heaven exactly the same way. (John 6:31; Ex. 16:4, 14, 15.) The bread (manna) which Israel received in the wilderness came from God, in the sense that God is the giver of all things to all of His creatures. Bread, generated out of nature's substance by God's power, is manna from heaven. In like manner, the fruit of David's loins manifested in the flesh of Mary, formed and energized by the Holy Spirit, became the Son of God, the living bread (manna) from heaven.

The Jews murmured at this comparison and strove among themselves (John 6:41,42, 52). Many of Jesus' disciples also murmured and deserted him, for it was difficult for them to accept his teaching (John 6:58-61, 66).

This same thought is expressed in other references. In John 3:13, Jesus had neither ascended nor descended literally. In John 8:23, Jesus was no more literally from above than the Pharisees were literally from beneath.

Christ came down from heaven just as "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Jesus proceeded forth and came from God as all sons do from their fathers. Since Jesus' Father was in heaven, Jesus came down from heaven. *His origin was heavenly!* (See John 8:42; 16:28.)

When studying John 6:62, it is often assumed that the phrase, "where he was before," means heaven, and that Christ personally existed in heaven before he came to earth. The word "ascend" is the Greek word *anabaino*. When used in the New Testament, it means "to go or come up," not necessarily to heaven. It is possible to ascend without going to heaven.

(See Acts 25:1; Luke 19:28).

The Old Testament teaches us a lesson that the New Testament parallels. "Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived" (Num. 21:9). This brass serpent was a type of Christ, for Jesus states in John 3:14, 15, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Jesus said, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:28). This lifting up signified *the cross*, and is explained by the following scripture: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die" (John 12:32, 33). Jesus was first lifted up *in type*, in the form of a brazen serpent in the wilderness. Later, as *the antitype*, he was lifted up on the cross for whosoever will.

It was necessary for Jesus to ascend to Jerusalem, so that all things written by the prophets, especially concerning his death on the cross, might be fulfilled. Jesus did not go to heaven when he was lifted up. He died on the cross. In John 6:61, 62, Jesus asked his disciples if they would be offended if they would see the Son of man ascend, or be lifted up, and crucified on the cross. His followers did not understand. Some today still do not understand this, are offended by it, and reject it. He is a rock of offense to many.

(See Luke 18:31-34; 1 Pet. 2:8.)

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