

## Structure of the Johannine Discourse On Bread (*Jn 6: 31-51a*)

The Structure is recognisably based on that of a rabbinic synagogue sermon. That it was originally conceived as such probably explains the rather abrupt news of 6:59, that it was taught at Capernaum, *in the synagogue*. The editor has disguised the sermon as a piece of dialogue, but it is still quite easily visible.

**Preliminary argument** between Jesus and the crowd:

- 1 Christological question: “When did you come here?”
- 2 Jesus accuses the crowd’s intentions: arraigns them for misplaced appetite:  
He promises them a better form of food.
- 3 The people demand a lesson: “What is it to work for God?”
- 4 **THE WORK OF GOD IS TO BELIEVE IN THE ONE HE HAS SENT.**
- 5 The people demand a sign in exchange for their faith.

**The Discourse: First Citation from Scripture** (supplied by the congregation)

“He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” (Ps 78:24)

- 1 The Rabbi reads the text, attributes the pronoun, chooses the tense of the verb:  
“God (*not* Moses) gives you (*not* gave you) bread from heaven.”
- 2 The concept of *true* bread
- 3 **Ego eimi:** “I AM the bread from heaven”.
- 4 The people ask for this true bread always. Jesus arraigns them for lack of faith.  
He promises that no-one who comes to him will be rejected.  
He claims divine warrant for his mission and for his present challenge.  
He holds out the promise of eternal life to those who believe in him.
- 5 The Jews begin to murmur against Jesus (cf Exodus/Numbers against Moses)

**Second Citation from Scripture** (supplied by Jesus - provenance uncertain)

“They will all be taught by God”

- 1 Jesus appropriates this text too, saying that to be taught by God is to come to himself.
- 2 He claims uniquely to have seen the Father.

**Summary of the Discourse**

“I am the bread of life: your fathers ate manna in the desert and are dead; but this is the bread that comes down from heaven, that a man may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.”

# The Enlightenment of the Blind (*John 9*)

## 1 **Question from the Disciples**

“Who sinned - this man or his parents - for him to be born blind?”

The question is what some call the Problem of Evil, in a particularly Jewish frame. The underlying assumption is that God would not allow this disability without some culpability; that it prevailed from birth seems to imply heredity. The disciples are impelled, by their contemplation of one man’s affliction, to ask a universal question.

Jesus’ response is creative and stimulating: “He was born like this so that the works of God might be manifested in him.” The *finality* of an evil condition thus lies in the possibility of its resolution at the hands of God.

## 2 **Jesus Identifies himself as *phos tou kosmou***

The *ego eimi* saying that immediately follows is the clue to the meaning of the whole incident: it sets the scene for the enlightenment of this one man, which will demand of Jesus a physical work in time (which, incidentally, breaks the Sabbath): but it also lifts the truth displayed by this Sign into the universal mode, with the words *I AM the Light of the World*. The involvement of God in the deed of Jesus is seamlessly declared in the *ego eimi*. The universal meaning of the Sign is declared in *tou kosmou*. When the Jews begin to debate the meaning of what has happened, they will be confronted with the question about the salvation of the world; and the man who is about to be enlightened will travel from darkness, into the worship of the Light of the World. The irony of the story is perfectly expressed in the question, “Are you trying to teach us, you, a sinner through and through from your birth?” The *darkened* are refusing the possibility that the *enlightened* may have something to teach them; and they are begging the disciples’ question with which the chapter began: they have already eliminated a man born blind from their consideration.

## 3 **The reverberations of Jesus’ Sign**

That Jesus now “disappears” from the scene is a consummate piece of the Evangelist’s artistry. Once again, as at the beginning, *no-one can see Jesus*. He is only going to be talked-about; but the charged particle in this chapter is the newly enlightened man. Although he has scarcely had time to orientate himself with his new sense, he is being questioned about what has happened to him. If you lay down his responses side by side you will see how cleverly the story is unfolding: if you do the same with “the opposition”, similar light will dawn. The one who was blind slowly moves into full possession of the Sign; the opposition slowly take full possession of its refusal. When the enlightened-one has finally lost all his stake in the community of his birth, he meets Jesus in full light, is finally evangelised, believes, and worships Jesus.