

ORDER YOUR NEXT HAMBURGER FROM HEAVEN

“And the ravens brought him [Elijah] bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the brook” [1 Kgs 17:6]

*In the last 30 years or so, the hamburger has become a very popular meal, especially among young people. With the fast pace of modern living, people hardly have time to cook at home. So, they are encouraged to go to fast food restaurants, such as **McDonald**, **Burger King** and **KFC**, to eat-in or take out. People are even encouraged to use the “drive-thru” so that they don’t need to get out of their vehicles to order or to eat. The packaging is neat, attractive and very disposable. A major selling point is that you can have it “your way.”*

*Basically, the hamburger is an exaggerated sandwich! The sandwich consists of two or more slices of usually buttered bread with a layer of meat, cheese, or the like, in between. The hamburger uses soft round bread rolls, a cake of minced, usually fried beef, enhanced with onion rings, lettuce, pickles, etc., as your taste pleases! Therefore, whether you call it sandwich or hamburger, the key components of the meal are **bread** and **meat**. The rest is to get more money out of the consumer’s pocket! The success of the fast food business in general and the hamburger in particular has attracted sharp criticisms from concerned parents and nutritionists who claim that such foods are deficient in essential nutrients, especially for children and young adults. Yet, the fast food culture is spreading rapidly into the developing world and the Transition economies of Eastern Europe. Therefore, it can be assumed that the hamburger is fast becoming a universal meal.*

*No matter how well you have enjoyed your last order of hamburgers, you may not soon want to go for another one. In fact, it is very rare to find someone who can eat hamburger for breakfast, lunch and dinner every day for a long time! But, over 500 years before the coming of Christ, God unfolded another of His own brands of hamburgers which have very interesting features. As the drought that God had caused by the word of prophet Elijah began to bite, God asked him to go to a roadside “restaurant” by the brook, Cherith. There, God used spiritually unclean birds, ravens [cf.: **Lev. 11:15**] to deliver to Elijah “bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening” [**1 Kgs 17:6**]. He must have been there for a long time because the brook could not have run dry overnight. The drought lasted for 3 ½ years [**1 Kgs 18:1; Jam. 5:17**], and it was only when Elijah moved to stay with the Zarephath widow that the ravens stopped making deliveries [**1 Kgs 17:9-16**]. There is no evidence that Elijah was malnourished or that the food was monotonous. Therefore, the hamburger from heaven must have some qualities that we need to know about. Let’s find out from today’s lesson.*

1. The essential features of the hamburger from heaven

Moses was leading over three million people through the wilderness to the Promised Land. Soon, they ran out of the food supplies that they had carried from Egypt: the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic [Num. 11:5]. In response to their cries, God provided them a meal from the heavenly kitchens:

*When the children saw it, they said one to another, it is manna, for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, **this is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat** [Ex. 16:15]*

This bread from heaven has variously been referred to as “the corn of heaven” and “angel’s food” [Ps. 78:24-25], or “spiritual meat” [1 Cor.10: 3]. This bread had the following features:

- i. “He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating” [Ex. 16:18];
- ii. Those who gathered beyond their daily need discovered that “it bred worms and stank” the next morning [v.20]. Yet, on the sixth day of each week, they were expected to gather twice as much bread (because the manna did not fall on the Sabbath day) and “it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein” [v. 24]. Moreover, God commanded Aaron to keep “an omer full of manna” in the tabernacle of the Lord “for your generations” and it remained preserved fresh [v.33];
- iii. This “bread from heaven” sustained the children of Israel for 40 years until they reached the Promised Land [v.35].

Alluding to this story thousands of years later, Jesus Christ said:

*Our fathers did eat manna in the desert as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. ... verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but **My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven for the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world** [Jn 6:31-33].*

Jesus then claimed that He is “the bread of life: he that cometh to Me *shall never hunger and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst*” [Jn 6:35]. He went on:

*I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; **and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.... Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you** [Jn 6:51, 53].*

Now, we are in a position to understand the spiritual symbolism of the hamburgers delivered to Elijah by the brook [1 Kgs 17:6]. If Jesus Christ is the bread from heaven and that bread is His flesh, then, *He is the hamburger from heaven!* Here are some interesting parallels:

- i. Just as an unclean animal, the raven, was used to deliver Elijah's hamburger, a shadow of the Incarnate Christ, so also was the Cross, a degrading method of execution reserved only for non-Romans, used to deliver the bread and flesh of Jesus to us. Under the Law of Moses, a person who had committed a sin worthy of death was hanged on a tree "for he that is hanged is accursed of God" [Deut. 21:22-23].
- ii. Elijah survived the drought. He never died a natural death, but was instead taken up to heaven in a whirlwind [2 Kgs 2:11]. Jesus has said, "he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" [Jn 6:58].
- iii. Elijah drank of the brook and it dried up. But Jesus has offered His blood as our new drink and He will dwell in us as we drink that blood [Jn 6:56]. Once we believe on Him and He dwells in us, then out of our bellies "shall flow rivers of living water" [Jn 7:37-38], and "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him *shall never thirst*" [Jn 4:14].

Which hamburger from any of our popular fast-food restaurants can give us such assurances? That's why I am recommending that you place your next order for one from heaven rather than from McDonald or Burger King or KFC!

2. Placing an order for hamburger from heaven

(a) Which restaurant?

McDonald does not own the restaurants where its logo is prominently displayed. Rather, the company operates the *franchise system*. The company sets minimum standards (health, safety, staff welfare, geographical coverage, exclusive rights, etc.) that franchisees must satisfy. Once you meet them, you are given a franchise to use the company's name for a fee. In most cases, you may be required to buy the essential ingredients and recipes from the franchise owner. The franchisee is the owner of the specific location but he/she is expected to behave as if he/she is an integral part of the worldwide company.

In the same vein, heaven does not build churches or hearts of obedience. Human beings do. But, if you want a franchise to sell "Jesus-burgers," here are heaven's minimum requirements:

- Your body must be the temple of God (i.e., Christ-believing and Spirit-led) [Jn 1:12; Rom. 8:14; 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16-18]

- Your place of worship should be edified (i.e., built-up spiritually) and walk in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit [Acts 9:31]. It must be a house of prayer, not a den of thieves [Jer. 7:11; Lk 19: 45-46]
- Your place of worship must see itself as *an integral part of the Church, the bride of Christ* [Eph. 5:30-32].

To merely put up a church sign with the name of Jesus or Christ added will only make you what Isaiah has prophesied:

And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, we will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach [Is. 4:1]

Your heart and your church must be a living one so that God can deliver His hamburger to His children through your franchise.

(b) *What to order*

Sometimes, you may prefer other items to the hamburger when you go to a fast-food place. Similarly, “*man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live*” [Deut. 8:3]. Jesus is the Word of God [Rev. 19:13] and “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” [Jn 1:14]. Therefore, you can order hamburger from heaven in the following ways:

- By partaking in the communion service in your church as often as possible. Before His return to heaven, Jesus instituted the Holy Communion [Matt. 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:19-20]. He took bread, gave thanks to His Father, broke it and said to His disciples, “This is My body which is given for you: *this do in remembrance of Me*” [Matt. 22:19]. He also took the cup and prayed likewise, saying, “This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you” [v. 20]. “*As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till He come*” [1 Cor. 11:26].
- Eat the word of God, which is the food for your spirit. The Psalmist says, “O taste and see that the Lord is good” [Ps. 34:8]. Jeremiah ate the word and “it was unto me *the joy and the rejoicing of my heart*” [Jer. 15:16]. An angel gave John a little book to eat which he did, and “it was in my mouth sweet as honey, and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter” [Rev. 10:10]. Of course, God’s word is truth [Jn 17:17] and truth is bitter! The armour of God that every true believer is required to put on has, among others, *the shield of faith* and *the sword of the spirit, the*

word of God [Eph.6: 16-17]. Faith comes by hearing the word of God [Rom. 10:17].

(c) *How often to order*

The ravens delivered twice a day to Elijah, in the morning and in the evening. For our physical bodies, we give thrice a day: breakfast, lunch and dinner. This is only a habit and there is nothing sacrosanct about it! But what menu do we have for our spirit, which will last forever (in heaven or hell)?

Jesus has promised us, “I am the bread of life: ***he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst***” [Jn 6:35]. Now, let us amplify what He is saying. “He that cometh to Me” should read “He that cometh to Me and ***remaineth with Me***.” Similarly, to “he that believeth on Me” should be added “and ***continueth to do so***.” That promise belongs to those who endure to the end! [Matt. 10:22]. So, as often as possible, order your hamburger from heaven, especially the Word-of-God variety, so that your heart and mind can stay on God.

(d) *At what price?*

Hamburgers can be quite expensive, especially outside of the United States. Happily, the one from heaven is not so. ***It is priceless but free!***

The Israelites received it free of charge for 40 years. Elijah did not pay a dime for the twice-a-day deliveries. That is why we are more than conquerors through Jesus that loves us [Rom. 8:37]. That is why, speaking through Isaiah, the Lord said:

Every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price [Is. 55:1]

(e) *Nutritional value*

The hamburger from our best fast-food restaurants cannot meet all the food needs of our bodies. So, we need other supplements. On the other hand, the hamburger from heaven is ***abundant [Is. 55:1-3], satisfying (Ps. 22:26), enduring [Jn 6:48-51] and life-giving [Jn 6:53-63]***. So, you can afford to eat it for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks!

3. Conclusion

We are discussing deep spiritual matters: put your mouth where your heart is! If you love the world and its ways, then, you can feed on the hamburgers of this world and become fat with “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life”

[1Jn 2:16]. But if you go to Jesus, the bread of life and the fountain of living waters, you will find “righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost” **[Rom. 14:17].**

So, what are you waiting for? Order your next hamburger from heaven. You’d be glad you did!