

Jesus' Great "I Am" Statements, Part 2: I Am the Bread of Life

Jesus' feeding of 5,000 men, in addition to untold numbers of women and children, using just two fish and five small barley loaves was a miracle of such magnitude that it is recorded in all four gospels. (See Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15). A great multitude of people had been following Jesus for several days listening to his teaching and observing his miraculous healings. On this particular day, it was getting late and the multitude needed to be fed. Jesus fed more than 5,000 people with a little boy's lunch of two fish and five barley loaves. They people had plenty to eat and twelve baskets of leftovers were collected. A miraculous sign, indeed, that provided Jesus the perfect opportunity to make the first of his great "I Am" statements. Jesus is the Bread of Life!

The day after the miraculous feeding, Jesus saw that the crowd had followed him on to Capernaum. Jesus knew that while the people originally followed him so they could see him perform miracles, their motive was to now follow him to get fed! (John 6:26). Jesus used this opportunity to impart an important truth to the people. He said, "*Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.*" (John 6:27 NIV). In other words, Jesus was telling them that they were so preoccupied by food that they were missing out on the fact that their Messiah had come. He explained there are two kinds of food - food for the body, which is not the most important, and food for the spirit, which is absolutely essential. What we need is food for the spirit. Natural food only sustains our physical life for a time, but Jesus gives eternal life!

Jesus went on to tell the people that they needed to believe in him because he was sent from God. (John 6:29). In their unbelief, the people proceeded to ask Jesus for a sign, such as duplicating Moses' miracle of causing manna to fall from heaven. (See Exodus 16). In response, Jesus explained that it was *God*, not Moses, who gave the manna, so they must take their eyes off Moses and focus them on God. Jesus also explained that while God gave the manna in the past, God has now given us the true bread in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus went on to identify what the true bread is. Jesus said:

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. (John 6:35-40 NIV).

Jesus went on to say:

I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. (John 6:48-51 NIV).

A person can survive a long time on only bread and water but then they eventually die. Bread is a basic food item, so much so that “bread” is a synonym for food in general. In fact, the phrase “breaking bread together” indicates the sharing of a meal with someone. Bread, then, was simply a word that encompassed all nutritious food. Jesus explained that he is so much more than plain old bread that provides bodily nourishment. He is the true Living Bread of Life that came down from heaven to nourish our soul! In his book, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*, Dr. Warren Wiersbe said, “He came, not just to sustain life, but to give life!”

By boldly declaring that he is the Bread of Life, Jesus was saying that he alone is the means by which we can obtain eternal life. Choosing Jesus is *essential* for eternal life. In his sermon, Jesus contrasted what he offers to us as our Savior with the bread he miraculously created when he fed the 5,000 people. Natural bread satiates physical hunger for a short time, but Jesus is the spiritual bread that brings eternal life. Jesus' focus was not on alleviating physical hunger and thirst. In fact, in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” (Matthew 5:6). When

Jesus declared that, “Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty,” he was saying that he will satisfy our hunger and thirst to be made righteous in the sight of God that we might live with him for all eternity.

In this sermon, Jesus taught the crowd, and us today, about process of personal salvation. Jesus explained that salvation involves both God’s divine sovereignty and mankind’s responsibility. In this regard, God the Father gives men and women to the Christ the Son, but people must choose Jesus, which means to, believe in him. (John 6:37-39). When Christ died on the cross, he took our sins upon himself and made atonement for them. When we choose Jesus, our sins are imputed to him, and his righteousness is imputed to us. Jesus assured us that nobody who came to Him would ever be lost but would be raised at the last day. (John 6:39-40, 44). Jesus is our Bread of Life. Choose Jesus today!

God bless.