

Lesson 2

“I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE”

John 6:35

As a child I loved to eat my mother's home-baked bread. I think I can smell it now, fresh from the oven, well buttered and handed to me with a smile. I have seen children in many countries holding bread in grubby hands, munching as they walk or play. Bread – the universal food – with or without butter!

In Bible times bread was a staple of life. It was baked fresh every day and was an essential part of life. In the East bread is primary, other articles of food merely accessory; while here in the West meat and other things chiefly constitute the meal, and bread is merely secondary.

One of the most well known miracles in the Bible was the miracle bread from heaven called “manna”. (Exodus 16) It sustained the Israelites all through the desert wanderings. It was regarded as peculiarly a gift of God - a daily reminder of God's continual care. It was a symbol for everything necessary for life and well-being.

Bread played an important role in Israel's worship. During the celebration of Pentecost, "two wave loaves" were offered with the sacrifices (Lev 23:17). Bread known as “showbread” consisted of 12 loaves placed weekly in the tabernacle, and later in the Temple (Ex 25:30). The purpose of the showbread was to symbolize God's presence with His people.

Bread is also spoken of often in figurative language many times in the Bible:

- “the bread of affliction” (Deut.16:3) to commemorate Israel's suffering in Egypt;
- "the bread of tears" (Ps 80:5) refers to food eaten in grief;
- "the bread of sorrows" (Ps 127:2) refer to food eaten in distress;
- “the bread of wickedness” (Prov.4:17) the diet of those who practice evil;
- “the "bread of mourners" (Hos 9:4) is bread eaten at the time of death;
- “the "bread of adversity" symbolizes hardship (Isa 30:20).
- "the bread of idleness" (Prov.31:27) is not eaten by the virtuous woman.

In the New Testament, Satan tempted Jesus by saying, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (Matt 4:3-4).

Our Savior adopted as His memorial in the Lord's Supper “bread”, the humble yet sacred article of food, familiar and accessible to all.

With this brief background about bread in the Bible, let us concentrate on the statement that Jesus made in John chapter 6 "*I Am the bread of life*". First, concentrate on:

I. THE STATEMENT'S AUTHOR.

A. Listen To Christ's Claim. Jesus called Himself:

- "the true bread from heaven" (6:32),
- "the bread of God" (6:33),
- "the bread which came down from heaven" (6:41),
- 2 times He said, "I am the bread of life" (6:35,48), and
- one time "I am the living bread" (6:51).

Only a mad man would make a claim like that if it were not true. The Jews objected to Christ's claim – "At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" (John 6:41-42 NIV)

These people had seen and had eaten the miraculously multiplied loaves and fish the day before. What other evidence did they need that Jesus was who He claimed to be? The fickle and the faithless are with us yet today.

B. Look At Christ's Credential.

1. As we saw in the previous lesson, the "**I Am**" statements of Jesus have great significance. In Exodus 3:14 we read, "God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"
2. "**I Am That I Am**" is God's name for Himself. The name means = "the eternal, self-existing one." When Jesus declared Himself to be "**I AM**" He was identifying Himself as God!
3. The Author of the "I Am the bread of life" declaration, is none other than God in the flesh! He is the Bread of God, God the Bread -the food of our souls. He is that to the soul which bread is to the body. He nourishes and supports spiritual life as bread does the physical life.

C. Learn Of Christ's Critics.

1. The Jews who heard Him that day understood that Jesus was saying that He was God. In 6:41-42 we read, "At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"
2. Jesus had just miraculously fed 5,000 people and they now doubt Him? Yes! People are so fickle. They said, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you?" (John 6:30)
3. In John 14:11 Jesus said to Philip, "Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves."

II. THE STATEMENT ANALYZED.

A. The Occasion Of The Statement.

1. The occasion for Jesus' startling statement was the miraculous multiplication of the lad's lunch and the feeding of the 5,000. The mass of hungry humanity came back the next day for a second helping of miracle bread.
2. In fact they said that if he will provide a suitable "sign" they will believe that He is the Messiah (v.30). This suitable sign in their minds was for Jesus to once again provide manna from Heaven as they believed that Moses did for the Children of Israel in the wilderness. Therefore the people were challenging Jesus to produce the bread of God, manna, in order to prove His claim to be the Messiah.
3. Jesus corrected their thinking. He said, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven." (v.32). Furthermore, the Bread of God was a Person and that He was that Person: "For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to world." (v.33.)

B. The Offer In The Statement.

"I Am the bread of life" is a pointed and powerful statement. Let us take it apart as follows: "**I Am**" - here we have The Cause; "**life**" - here we have the Effect.

This self-revelation statement of Jesus endears Him the more to us. “I am the bread of life” – life! Why, that is just what we all want! This was an absolutely new declaration, an offer that they had never heard before. What does this suggest to us?

1. First, Jesus Is Life’s Source.

“I am the bread of life”(v.35) It is no coincidence that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which means “house of bread”! He is claiming to be that which one needs in order to have life and continue to live. Without Him there is existence, but not life! Christ gives eternal life. He not only has that quality of life in Himself, but He gives that life to all those who will come to Him! Not Only Is Jesus the Source of Life but:

2. Second, Jesus Is Life’s Sustainer.

When Jesus spoke of Himself as being “bread” He was using an image that everyone understood. In Jesus’ day bread was more than a common part of the daily diet, it was the staple of one’s diet. Bread is essential to life; it is one of life’s basic elements. It sustains life. In the model prayer in Luke 11, Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” (Lk 11:3).

But humankind’s greater need is for soul food. “I am the bread of life” addresses. The need of the soul. Jesus is essential to our lives. We cannot live life, eternal life, without Him. He alone can sustain spiritual life and health. Not Only is Jesus The Sustainer of Life but:

3. Third, Jesus Is Life’s Satisfaction.

Jesus satisfies eternally. “And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). Some of the most dissatisfied people in the world live in luxury. There are people who have more than enough to eat and a comfortable place to live yet they are not satisfied.

We are born hungry. As an infant we are hungry. As we grow our hunger grows. Within the depths of our being is a hunger that earth’s bread cannot satisfy. Only “the living bread that came down from heaven” (v.41) satisfies that hunger.

St. Augustine expressed it like this: “Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our restless soul can find no rest until they find their rest in Thee.” Eating literal bread satisfies temporarily. Eating the spiritual Bread that Jesus offers satisfies permanently – “never hunger” – “never thirst” again!

III. THE STATEMENT APPROPRIATED.

Jesus' declaration that he is the Bread of Life is also His invitation for us to taste and experience the abundant life that He alone provides. We do not need to speculate about how to appropriate the Bread of Life. Jesus tells us how as He continues to talk to the bread-seekers that day. Will they appropriate Him as the Bread of Life? Let us find out. I suggest two principles that apply here::

A. There Must Be An Appetite For The Food.

What prompts us, motivates us, to eat physical food? We hunger – we have an appetite for it. It is also true regarding the soul. We must sense our emptiness and need for food for the soul. Jesus said to these people in John 6:27 “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life.”

These people had appetites for food for their stomachs but they seemed to have no appetite for food for their souls. Do we? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.” (Matt.5:6) How is our spiritual appetite for the Bread of Life?

B. There Must Be Assimilation Of The Food.

“Bread” is mentioned 17 times in John 6 and the word “eat” or “eats” ten times. Bread is meant to be eaten, consumed, assimilated. At least 5,000 had eaten the miraculously multiplied bread and fish.

Jesus used the process of physical digestion to teach spiritual truth. Food must be eaten - taken into the body to provide physical life and health. Likewise, we must “take in Christ”, appropriate Him in order to receive eternal life. Jesus said, “This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may **eat** of it and not die” (John 6:50).

Jesus continued and His words were met by revulsion. He said, “If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:51-54)

The people rebelled at Jesus words: “Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can understand it?’ From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.”(Jn. 6:65-66)

They failed to make a distinction between the physical and the spiritual. How do we “eat” Christ? Not literally of course. The realm of the spiritual is experienced by exercising faith. We believe, receive, appropriate, accept by faith, Christ, the Bread of Life, into our lives.

John 6:29-30 “Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You?” Jesus replied: “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who **believes** in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not **believe**.”(Jn.6:35-36) Jesus continues: “*But there are some of you who do not believe.*” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not **believe**, and who would betray Him.” (John 6:64,65) Then some said, “we have come to **believe** and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (John 6:69)

Eating is believing! Believing is eating! That is how we appropriate the “Bread of Life.” Have you appropriated the Bread of Life for your soul’s hunger?

SUMMATION

1. Jesus is “the bread of life” come down from heaven;
2. He is the source, sustainer and satisfier of life eternal;
3. He enters the life of the one who “eats”, that is, “believes”, “receives” Christ, the Bread of life.

This lesson has not been intended to be an exposition of the entire 6th chapter of John’s Gospel, but an explanation of the central statement that Jesus made in the chapter which is “I Am the bread of life.” However, I must not miss the opportunity to give God’s view of salvation in this chapter. It is as follows:

1. **God Draws All Who Are To Be Saved.** (Jn.6:44) “*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.*”

We hear much these days about churches having “seeker services”. That is, services for those who, ostensibly, are seeking God. I have trouble with this emphasis in the light of John 6:44 and Rom 3:11 which tells us “There is none who seeks after God.” If God did not draw no one would come to Him!

2. All Who Are given to Christ Will Come. (Jn.6:37a) “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me...”

This verse obviously speaks of the sovereignty of God. Yet, God is not standing on the sidelines a helpless spectator until we decide we want to believe; and only then does He come into the process. The truth is that no one can come to Jesus unless the Father initiates the contact. (6:44) From the first to the last our salvation is something that God brings about. Yes, we are called upon to repent and believe but the process begins with God.

3. All Who Come Will Be Welcome. (Jn.6:37b) “...and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”

There is the assurance that those who come to Jesus receive only the warmest of welcomes. Again we have an emphatic double negative in the Greek: “Him who comes to me I will never, no never cast out.”

4. All Who Come Are Safe Forever! (Jn.6:38-40) “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

CHALLENGE

1. Those of us who have been drawn and have come to Christ and by faith have appropriated the “Bread Of Life” have a great responsibility. As 2 Sam 17:29 says, “The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.”
2. We are the Savior’s Bread Brigade! Please pass the Bread – the Bread of life!

A dear friend and previous mentor, Dr. N. A. Thompson, Sr., visited the church in Tennessee of which I was then pastor. He was in his 86th year and had just finished preaching a two-week series of church meetings. Mrs. J asked him when he was going to retire. He answered, “how can I stop when so many are hungry and I have the Bread of Life?” Join the Bread Brigade and pass the bread! So many are hungry and we have the Bread of Life.

***“O taste and see that the LORD is good;
How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!
(Psalm 34:8)***

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