

THE BREAD OF LIFE, JN.6:25-51, MK.6:30-52

Who Is I AM? #1

◆**Intro:** In WW2 the Germans forced many 12-13 year old boys into the Junior Gestapo. They were treated harshly and given inhumane jobs, and far removed from their families. When the war ended, those who survived wandered about without shelter or provision. An aid program to post-war Germany placed many in tent cities while doctors and psychiatrists worked to restore their health. Many would awaken in the middle of the night screaming in terror. Then one doctor had an idea: after feeding them a large meal, they were put to bed with a piece of bread in their hand and told to save it for the morning. They slept soundly, for after so many years of hunger, they finally had some assurance for the next day.

◆**1.** God's desire for his children, the human race, is for each of us to feel the warm, blanketed, and tucked-in security of his love. He has said it many times. One of those times is in the claim Jesus made in our text today. **He claimed to be the Bread of Life. Just what did that mean** to the people he spoke it to? You can tell that when Jesus fed this crowd of more than 5000 (The count didn't include women and children. In Jewish culture, even the boy with the fish wouldn't have been counted in a report on the crowd.) –you can tell that the people thought back to the great stories surrounding Moses.

◆**A. Jesus reminded them of Moses:**

◆(check out 6:14 Moses promised a great prophet like himself!).

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- ◆ During their 40 years of wandering on the way to the Promised Land, they ate manna that appeared on the desert floor daily, which God told them he'd send. This scene is similar. Mark's Gospel tells us it was a "desert place." Rabbis commonly taught that the Messiah would repeat acts of Moses.
- ◆ And Mark also observes that the people sat down in orderly groups of numbers, almost directly reminiscent of the way the tribes of Israel camped in orderly groupings around the Tabernacle in the desert. Writings discovered in Qumran community near the Dead Sea describe the true Israel assembling in this manner in the desert at the Final Judgement.
- ◆ B. So it's safe to say that the people here were pretty certain Jesus was at least another Moses, a great man, someone close to God. Jesus reminded them of other prophets and teachers: Jesus' miracle with the bread here is also similar to another ancient prophet, namely Elijah (and Elisha his protege). Elijah (1Kings 17) provided a widow with perpetual flour and oil, ie. bread. Elisha (2Kings4) miraculously fed 100 men with just 20 barley loaves.
- ◆ So there they are, whispering from one sweaty ear to another that this fellow could be our candidate! He could take our country places! This is not unlike what many folks even of different religions will say about Jesus: that he was a great

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teacher, a great man. The Koran, Islam's book, agrees that Jesus is a fine teacher. Not as great as Mohammad, but fairly wise. Lots of people in our own city know about Jesus and are willing to admit he was a wise teacher that helped humanity in his day. But you see, Jesus was not a good teacher. Someone who says the kind of things Jesus said is not a helpful individual really.

◆ First off He said he came down from heaven. (v38) Hello? Everyone knows where babies come from!

◆ Second, he said he would make you live forever, you know, longer than 102, Shangrila, Fountain of Youth, the whole bit! (v27, 47, 51) He said he would make sure that after you're dead he'd bring you back to life if you'd believe in him! (39, 40, 44, 54)

◆ What would you say to a guy walking up to you at the mall who said this kind of thing? You'd think he's either a loony-bin, or a con-artist, or an actual God he claims to be -but certainly not a nice teacher among men. When you ask people what they think of Jesus and they say he was a great teacher, you should tell them that he really didn't leave that as an option.

◆ Who is Jesus to you? What place in your life does he hold? A pretty nice guy whose book you might read to your kid one day? Interesting but Netflix is better?

◆ In so many ways we are as clueless as Jesus' audience was. What Jews didn't fully realize is that Jesus was telling them that

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he's much much more that a great human leader, or a handy resource now and again. And we mustn't miss this either.

◆Verse 11 says he "gave thanks". Well every Jew gives thanks in the same way before eating: "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the ground." And then what does Jesus do. He "brings forth bread." He multiplies the molecular structure of barley grain before their very eyes! It's miraculous!

◆So what is the message of this miracle? I'll give you a hint. It's the same message of Jesus walking on water. In Mark 6:51 after Jesus calms the storm on the lake, it says this:

◆*"but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I (I AM). Don't be afraid." Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened." Mark 6:49-52, NIV.*

◆What was the message of Jesus' stroll across the waves of Galilee? These men are freaking out! Their jaws are in the bilge water on the bottom of the boat! They're like, "Who ARE you?" But I guess when Jesus was multiplying bread they were not that surprised. ("Oh, more bread? Cool. Hey Bartholomew, Jesus was more breeaad!")

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◆ Jesus' claim to be the Bread of Life is a claim to be nothing less than the Creator God, the first source of all life. He is showing them, and us, that he is the engineer of the Milky Way galaxy! That the world is his playground. That he is not just another nice man. That his name is ever so much more than something you say when a car almost side-swipes you. That whether a cut on your finger heals, or your cancer goes away -it's literally within his power and up to him. Jesus is the reason the tips of your fingers are tapered and not square. Without Jesus there would be no nuclear fusion. No Jesus; no breathing. No Jesus; no gravity. I mean, that's what he's saying. I just wish there were some way to describe him to you!

◆ *"He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south. He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted. When he passes me, I cannot see him; when he goes by, I cannot perceive him. If he snatches away, who can stop him? Who can say to him, 'What are you doing?'"*
Job 9:8-12, NIV.

◆ If we truly lived in awareness of who he is, the first thing we did in the morning would not be to go turn the coffee on. We'd fall on our faces before taking a step and ask for instructions!

◆ **2. So what does this man for us?**

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◆A. Since Jesus is the Creator God, I have an eternal hope in him. Remember the German boys? War had ravished their world. They didn't know where or to whom they belonged. For a decade before WW2, the youth of Germany as early as ten years old had been systematically conscripted into an organization called Hitler Youth, raised in education camps designed to make the state their family, Hitler their father, and world domination their goal. But it was all gone! Hitler was dead. Germany was destroyed. They had no reason to be! They needed hope for just tomorrow!

◆Guess what? In Christ you don't have hope just for tomorrow. It's eternal security that he offers you. People often live their entire lives in fear of the future. Even many Christians are deceived into spiritual worry because they think their salvation somehow depends on them, and we all know down deep that we can't be trusted to never choose wrongly. But look at what Jesus says: (note: In this text to "come to" Jesus, and to "eat his body" and to "believe on" him all mean the same thing.)

◆verse29: The one thing required for eternal hope is to believe that Jesus is your bread of life.

◆v37: tells us that those who "come to" him (or believe on him, or eat his bread) are *given to Jesus by the Father!*

◆v39 says the reason Jesus came was to collect those the Father already gave him!

◆v44 says that nobody ever comes/eats/believes *unless the Father literally pulls them in!*

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◆ Why is a person who comes to Jesus, who eats this Bread of Life, who believes in him for eternal existence, confident? Well, do you believe Jesus is your Creator and Savior? Then you are one the Father already gave the Son. And you are one the Father has given faith! And you are one the Son will never lose.

◆ *"Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness-- a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time," Titus 1:1, 2, NIV.*

◆ Who did God make a promise about saved people to before time? No one was there! Except the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Answer: The Father promised the Son all his chosen/ elect before he even made time. Therefore hope in the Son extends beyond time into eternity.

◆ Have you eaten the bread of life? Have you believed Jesus is your only hope for salvation? Have you come to him?

◆ *"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." John 1:12, 13, NIV.*

◆ And the whole process began before time. Live your life in never ending hope. You have been granted to live into forever. You have been chosen from Heaven, and Heaven's plan cannot be foiled! Yes, you will mess up, and you will fail at some of the good that

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God made you to do. But Jesus has paid for even the sins you have not yet considered! You will be with him in paradise! And he takes back his kids an infinite number of times. You have eternal security! (This does not mean we don't suffer consequences of our sinning. Sin always causes deaths in some way, but your destiny cannot be lost.)

◆ Have you **not** eaten the Bread of Life? Then I say believe on him today. Repent of sin today. Come to him today. And enter into the mysterious realization that God came after you first, and has been all along the way. That's how much he loves you!

◆ B. As the Creator God, Jesus is my central reason to be. That is to say, you must understand that all the longings deep inside, all the delights you experience, all the hopes and wishes and places where you look for satisfaction and meaning are really your longing for God. You were created to live a human life with a more than human God! You were designed to get to know your real dad.

◆ Which is to say, that making money is not why you must grow up and graduate and land a job. Becoming educated is not why you were born, except to the extent that it helps you and the world discover the spiritual realities we're talking about. Finally becoming a buff dude, or a hot babe will not ultimately fulfill you even if it seems like it for a moment.

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◆ *"Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. "" John 6:27, NIV.*

◆ The fifth best-selling Beatles book is a Christian one, *The Beatles, the Bible, and Bodega Bay* by Ken Mansfield. This US manager for Apple Records (Beatles' label) tells about his wonderful times with the Beatles before they broke up. Then things went downhill for him, and in the mid-1980s he hit bottom. During that time, he fell in love with a lady who loved him back, but loved Jesus more. Because Ken wouldn't follow Jesus, she broke off their relationship. So he decided he had to meet this Jesus who commanded so much of her love. He did, and he fell in love with Jesus too. And he makes crystal clear that as grand as it was to be with the Fab Four, they in no way compare to Jesus. He writes:

◆ They (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are the authors of the map I needed for my journey. I needed a chart, a journal with clear directions, a log to refer to—a guidebook wherein their commands could speak to my wandering spirit. I needed a book so powerful that its very words could burn a living message into the absolute heart of my heart. I needed the irrefutable, holy Word of God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of the very seas I was lost upon! For the greater part of my journey that began the day I set sail from the rugged shores of Northern Idaho, I had none of these. Unfortunately, Billboard magazine was my Bible; the record charts, my God; and

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prestigious positions, my purpose. The Holy Grail was a Grammy, and the best table at the Brown Derby the Promised Land.

◆**Conclusion:** Seven times in the Book of John Jesus says I AM... It's the Old Testament name of God that Jews wouldn't even repeat. It's the term YHWH, translated capital LORD, in our english. We will look at these claims in these seven weeks leading up to Easter. And with every one of them, we will be urging each other to take another step toward him. The Bread of Life tells you eternal security and life beyond you grave stone are his to give you! I'll close with another WW2 story: When the GI's reached one of the islands in the South Pacific, they encountered a tribe that at one time were head-hunters. But now they proudly displayed their own copy of the Bible. One GI responded, "Oh we've outgrown that sort of thing." to which the islander replied, "It's a good thing we haven't, or you would have been a meal by now." You see, they came to Jesus, they ate the bread of life, and it changed everything!