

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

John 6:1-59

The First of the Seven Great “I AM” Statements in the Book of John: I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE!

The Context (John 6:1-32): In John 6, it is recorded that Jesus feeds 5,000 men plus women and children (6:1-14). Then, He sends His disciples out on the Sea of Galilee into a storm while He went to the mountain alone to pray; and seeing them in the midst of the sea, He walks on water to them (6:15-19). Then, when the fearful disciples do not recognize Him, He said: “I am” to calm their fears (6:20). The next day, the people come seeking Jesus near Capernaum, and find Him on the other side of the sea (6:22-25). A discussion ensues and Jesus said: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, you seek Me, not because you saw the miracles, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled (6:26). This leads to them asking Jesus for a sign for them to see and believe in Him (6:27-31). Then, Jesus distinguishes between Moses’ manna (bread) from heaven and the “true bread from heaven” (6:32). The manna God supplied (not from Moses, but from God), was not heavenly bread, but earthy nourishment (to meet their physical needs). The “true bread” from heaven is spiritual bread. We pick up the discussion with Jesus speaking in John 6:33-51.

The Four I AM Bread Declarations (John 6:33-51): Jesus goes on to say: “For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life unto the world” (6:33). A clear declaration by Jesus of His continuing incarnation (comes down from heaven) and life-giving purpose (John 3:16-17). They reply: “Lord (likely meaning sir), at all times (ever; always) give us this bread” (6:34). There were likely God-seekers who sincerely desired to receive this spiritual bread, and self-seekers who didn’t understand and continued wanting the Lord to supply physical bread (at all times).

- 1) “Jesus said unto them: **I am the bread of life**, he (the one) coming to Me will never hunger and he (the one) believing on Me will never thirst” (6:35). This is the **first “I am”** in this passage. The ones believing on Him will have their spiritual hunger satisfied, and their spiritual thirst quenched. The life-giving bread was like the living water offered to the Samaritan woman (John 4). Note: “Coming” was the equivalent of eating, and “believing” was the equivalent of drinking; together providing full satisfaction in Jesus Christ.

Then, Jesus tells them that He came down from heaven to do His Father’s will, and He will not cast out (lose) **any** who His Father has given Him. Jesus indicates that once a person has been given to Him by God the Father and truly responds there is not the slightest chance of his ever being rejected again (eternal security). Father and Son aligned in total cooperation. All who believe on Him **has everlasting life** and will be resurrected (the resurrection of the righteous is assured) at the last day (6:36-40). In the end, all is seen to be based on God’s will and purpose (Rom. 9:15-16).

- 2) Next, verse 41 tells us the Jews' reaction: "Then, the Jews murmured (muttered; grumbled- repeatedly- imperfect tense) at Him, because He said: **I am the bread that (Who) came down from heaven**" (6:41). This **second "I am"** in this passage is spoken by the Jews (likely Judaizers among the people) about Jesus. They unbelievably muttered this statement, but it is true about Jesus and He will later declare it Himself. They must take their minds off earthly food and satisfaction and focus on what (Who) God has now sent.

Their second reaction is found in verse 42, when they ask the questions: Is this not Jesus, son of Joseph (whose father and mother we know)? How can He say He came down from heaven? They were essentially saying, he was born to Joseph and Mary, and didn't come from heaven. They were totally wrong; He was not born of Joseph (virgin birth) and did come from heaven (incarnation).

In verses 43-47, Jesus tells them to "stop murmuring" among themselves, no one can come to Me except My Father (who is not Joseph) Who sent Me "draw" (to drag; draw; or persuade) him (that one). God (through the Holy Spirit) draws them unto Himself. He reminds them that they will all be taught of God quoting Scripture (written by the Prophets- Isa. 54:13). The Judaizers' refusal to be taught by God about Him merely demonstrates that they are not of God's genuine people. He further tells them no one has seen the Father (John 1:18); except the One Who is from God (He Himself). A marvelous claim; since even the Seraphim had to hide their faces before God (Isa. 6:1-3). Then, Jesus reminds them again: "Verily, verily" (amen, amen), "The one who believes on Me has everlasting life" (v. 47).

- 3) Next, the **third declaration of "I am"** in this passage: **"I am the BREAD OF LIFE"** (6:48). The message previously given is repeated that Jesus is the Bread of Life and all who believe in Him will have everlasting life immediately. Jesus goes on to remind them that their father's ate manna, but are now dead (v. 49), but this Bread (likely pointing to Himself) Who comes down from heaven that one may eat thereof and not die" (v. 50). Manna gave temporary satisfaction and they ultimately got sick of it (Num. 11:4-6).

- 4) This leads to the fourth declaration of "I am" in this passage: **"I am the LIVING BREAD WHO COMES DOWN FROM HEAVEN"** (6:51a). Jesus goes on to say: "If any one eats of this bread, that one will live forever" (6:51b). He (Jesus) is the "Living (Life-giving) Bread" from heaven that gives spiritual life forever to all who believe. What a wonderful promise!

Now, a new theme is introduced in His teaching, when He says: "The Bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (6:51c). Up to this point the bread has been life-giving bread, offered to be "eaten" by coming to Him and "drank" by believing on Him; thus, responding in obedient faith. From verses 51c-59, there is an obvious change in Jesus' tone and change in His illustration to the Old Testament simile of "eating flesh" and "drinking blood" (which meant killing someone, or benefiting by their death). It would, however, still give life, for that life would be made available

through His death. This concept is another whole study in itself and beyond the scope of the “I am” study.

Three Additional Observations and Applications:

- 1) In the four “I am” statements in this passage, the composite truth about Jesus is “I AM THE LIVING BREAD OF LIFE WHO CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN” (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51).
- 2) This Bread of Life discourse started with many of the people (crowd) that had been fed by the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 men plus women and children. After the people found Jesus on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, the discourse continued in the Capernaum synagogue with the Jewish religious leaders (Judaizers) antagonistically questioning Jesus. Throughout the discourse, Jesus plainly and repeatedly offered them life-giving spiritual bread, but what most of them desired was temporary physical nourishment. Today, Jesus Christ offers the same spiritual bread to all who believe that He is the Great I AM that came down from heaven to die for the sins of all mankind.
- 3) Note: Jesus did not just proclaim a Bread of Life discourse. Before the discourse, He fed 5000 primarily Jewish men plus women and children and shortly after the discourse He fed 4000 primarily Gentiles. His actions illustrated, demonstrated, and verified His message to the world that He was, is, and forever will be the Great “I AM” of Scripture.