

# I AM the Bread of Life

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Living God, we believe that you enabled John the Apostle to remember this encounter and then to accurately write down the words of the Lord Jesus.

Will you now in your mercy and grace help us understand these words, but more important than understand, help us actually live the reality of which they speak. For this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Who is he? The man from Galilee. The carpenter from the despised city of Nazareth.

Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Someone once asked. Come and see was the response. Come and see indeed. We say at First Baptist Church, we are a community following Jesus with a heart for the city.

Jesus. A community following Jesus. A person. We are a community following a person. We are not a community following a program.

[ 1 : 1 1 ] Nor a community following principles to live by. Nor a community following a philosophy or religion or spirituality. We are a community following a person.

A person. Okay. Who is he? Who is this person? The bread, he says. I'm the bread, he says. I, a person, am the bread. The bread of life. The living bread. One of the most audacious claims anyone can ever make.

Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me shall never thirst. Eat this bread and you will live forever.

Whoever. If you have spent any time in the fourth gospel. In the gospel according to John. You know that this is not the first or only time.

[ 2 : 1 4 ] Jesus uses the sacred words. I am. It is the first time. He uses the words. I am with a predicate. With a noun. But it's not the first time.

He uses the phrase. I am. He has spoken this I am before we meet him in John 6. To a woman at a well. Who wants to know where she should go to worship.

And who is impressed by what Jesus says about worship. But says I'll wait until Messiah comes. To which Jesus replies. I am. The one you are seeking.

Not only I am Messiah for whom you are waiting. But I am the one you are seeking to worship. Later on Jesus will say to religious authorities.

Who are very angry with him. Before Abraham even existed. I am. Bread of life. Is the first I am claim he makes.

[ 3 : 1 2 ] With a noun attached. He will go on to say. I am the light of the world. I am the good shepherd. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way the truth and the life.

I am the true vine. You are the branches. Keep on abiding in me. And I in you. And you will bear much fruit. All audacious in their own way. But nothing like.

I am. The bread. Of life. Hugely. Audacious. And a strange way. For a man to refer to himself. Maker of bread. Okay. Baker of bread. Sure. Giver of bread. Yes. But bread.

A person. The bread. Itself. We cannot make it without bread. Bread is absolutely necessary for human existence.

[ 4 : 1 4 ] We can make it without most of the stuff we have. But we cannot make it without bread. I am the bread. I am the bread of life.

What better way to say. You cannot make it without me. I am absolutely necessary for human existence. You can make it without most of the stuff you have.

Says Jesus. But you can't make it without me. Again. Hugely audacious. You need me as much as you need your next meal. Indeed. You need me more than you need your next meal.

I once heard Bruce Metzger of Princeton say. That Jesus does not say. I am the cake of life. He could say that.

Couldn't he? Because he is very delicious in every way. But he does not say that. Because we can make it without cake. Really. We can. We can make it without cake.

[ 5 : 14 ] Cake is a luxury. Bread is a necessity. Had Jesus lived in an Asian country. He might have said. I am the rice of life.

Had he lived in the northern latitudes of Canada. And Russia. And Scandinavia. He might have said. I am the potato of life. I'm not a luxury. I am absolutely essential.

I am the potato of life. I am the potato of life. I am the potato of life. I am the potato of life. I am the potato of life. For human existence. No one. Ever made. Such a claim. Except Yahweh. The God of Israel. Jesus is saying.

To our city. Vancouver. You need me. More than you need your next meal. You realize. Do you not. That in making this huge claim. About himself. Jesus is paying us. A huge compliment. Yes. He's paying us a compliment.

[ 6 : 12 ] For Jesus is saying. That we are the earthly creatures. Who can only. Be satisfied. By heavenly food. Jesus says. That we are the creatures.

Who hunger. And whose hunger. And thirst. Can only be met. By a person. By the great I am. No earthly bread. Can meet the deepest. Longings and cravings.

Of the human person. None of the stuff. We clamor to own. And keep. Can finally satisfy us. That's because. We're too gloriously. Constituted.

For all of this stuff. To fill us. A fact. Made graphically clear. In the wealthy parts. Of the world. The parts in which we live. Where we have all the stuff.

Anyone could ever want. And yet we are so profoundly hungry. And thirsty. We are so gloriously. Constituted. That only a person.

[ 7 : 10 ] Can satisfy the cravings. And longings of the human soul. Our finite hearts. Can only be satisfied. With the infinite. I am. What a compliment.

To us. Now. I suppose. That Jesus. Could have made this claim. I am the bread of life. Anytime. Anywhere. He could have come up.

To any hungry person. Anytime. Anywhere. And said. I am the bread of life. Come to me and eat. After preaching. His sermon on the mount. About the kingdom life. For instance.

He could have said. In order to live this life. You are going to need. Some sustenance. I am the sustenance. I am the bread of life. But he waited. He waited.

For just the right time. And just the right circumstances. To make his claim. It is another indication. Of his brilliance. So.

[ 8 : 05 ] Consider with me then. The context. In which Jesus. Chose to say. I am the bread of life. The context. Jesus makes his claim.

In the context. Of a miracle. In the context. Of a massive. Miracle. The apostle John. Tells us. That one day. In his public ministry.

A great multitude. Followed Jesus. Around the shore. Of the sea of Galilee. John seems to underscore. The word great. Great. Multitude. They have seen.

And heard. All the mighty deeds. Jesus was doing. Especially his works. Of healing. Now as the day wore on. This great multitude. Became hungry. And thirsty. And all Jesus.

And the disciples. Had at their disposal. Was a little lunch. Brought by a little boy. A little lunch. With five little barley loaves.

[ 8 : 59 ] And two little fish. John seems to emphasize. The word little. Great multitude. Little loaves. Little fish. Fish. What are these.

Among so many people. They ask. Good question. Is it not the question. We asked. What are our little resources. Among the great need. Of the human population.

Of our time. Have the people sit down. Says Jesus. And when they do. Jesus takes the little loaves. And the little fish. Fish.

Gives thanks to his father. Baruch. Atol Adonai. Eloheinu. Melech. HaOlam. And then begins. Distributing. A lot more. Bread and fish. The people.

Says John. Ate. Quote. As much as they wanted. Close quote. Five thousand men. Plus. Their wives. And children. Who are ordinarily. Not tallied in the count.

[ 9 : 55 ] Upwards of ten thousand people. Eating as much. As they wanted. Says John. And when they'd finished eating. The disciples. Gather up. Twelve baskets. Of leftovers. Last Monday morning.

Sharon and I. Were up in Vernon. In the Okanagan. We had driven up there. To meet. To be with our son. And to meet. Our son's new son. Our new grandson. Who had been born. The Tuesday before.

Early in the morning. I was in their living room. Reading the Bible. When our four year old. Granddaughter. Jennifer. Came and slid up. And sat on my lap. Oh those are great moments. What are you doing? Hey grandpa.

I'm reading my Bible. I said. Would you like me. To read you a story? I asked her. Nope. They're all boring. Well.

Here's one. That's not boring. Listen to it. So I told her the story. The feeding of the five thousand. And when I got to the part. About Jesus taking the little loaves. And the little fish.

[ 10 : 52 ] And how he kept giving. More bread. And more fish. More bread. More fish. More bread. More fish. More bread. More fish. More fish. More fish. More fish. More bread. More fish. She said. That's not boring grandpa.

Are there more stories like that? A massive miracle. The only one. All four gospel writers record. More massive than his healing miracles. I don't mean to minimize his healing. Not at all. It's just that in his healing miracles. Jesus takes something that is there.

Something that is there. And is not working. And causes it to work again. He takes hold of eyes. And causes them to see again. That's wonderful. That's impressive. He takes hold of ears that are not working.

And causes them to hear again. Wonderful. And impressive. He takes hold of legs that aren't working. And causes them to move again. Wonderful. And impressive. But nothing like he did. In the multiplication of the bread and the fish.

[ 11 : 52 ] Because there he's taking something that is there. And he's making a whole lot more of it. And he's doing it very quickly. I can't get my mind around this deed.

I mean think of the creativity. That is needed to speed up the process. Of making that much bread. Or think of the creativity involved.

Of making more fish out of fish. Think about that. In that deed. Jesus is demonstrating his ability. To provide for human need.

He can take little. And out of the little. He can provide much for the many. Jesus does not buy into the myth of scarcity. That now rules the world. Jesus knows another world.

A world in which his father operates. Which is why. When he sees the many. And there's only this little resource. He can give thanks. Because from the little.

[ 12 : 53 ] After he gives thanks to the father. He can provide. Beyond human imagination. That. Is the context. In which he. First makes his claim.

I am. The bread. But there's more to the context. The apostle John. Is careful to tell us. That. The Passover. The feast of the Jews.

Was at hand. John 6 verse 4. The Passover. Was at hand. Passover was. And still is. A time to remember. During the Passover.

The people would remember. With humility. The sprinkled blood. Of the lamb. The blood. Which. By which they were brought. Out of slavery. In Egypt. The blood. Which caused judgment.

To pass over. Israel. During the Passover. People would remember. With awe. The power of God. That the living God. Was able to separate. The waters of the Red Sea.

[ 13 : 47 ] And enable. The people to pass over. To the new land. And during Passover. People remember. With gratitude. The great gifts. Of God's grace. How Yahweh. Miraculously.

Provided manna. From heaven. And the flesh of quail. So the people would survive. In the desert. And Passover was. And still is. A time to renew hope.

In fact. All the feasts. Of Judaism. Are all about renewing hope. In what sense? Well the Moses. Who had led the people. Out of Egypt. And the Moses.

Who had prayed. For manna. To come from heaven. Promised that one day. God would send.

Another leader. Like himself. Who would speak. God's living word. Deuteronomy. 18. 15.

The Lord. Your God. Will raise up for you. A prophet like me. From among you. And you shall listen. To him. Now by the first century. There was the growing expectation.

[14:41] That on some Passover. God would send. This prophet like Moses. And there was the growing expectation. Get this. The growing expectation. That expectation.

That this prophet like Moses. Would bring with him. The same miraculous provision. Of the desert. There was a saying. In the first century. As was the first redeemer.

So is the final redeemer. As the first redeemer. Caused manna to fall from heaven. So shall the second redeemer. Caused manna to fall from heaven. That is the context. In which Jesus chooses. To say. I am the bread. But there's more to the context. There is a challenge. John tells us. The people were impressed. I would be.

And John tells us. That the people. Hear. The nonverbal claim. Jesus is making. And multiplying. The bread. John 6. Verse 14. When therefore.

[15:36] The people saw the sign. Which he had performed. They said. This is indeed. The prophet. That is to come into the world. They recognize. Here now. Is the prophet. Moses promised. So impressed.

Are they. That they want to make. Jesus king. He will have nothing of it. So he slips away. He is a king. But not the kind of king. They wanted at that time. The next day.

The great multitude. Finds Jesus. On the other side. Of the sea of Galilee. Jesus had passed over. And Jesus said to them. Truly. Truly. I say to you. You seek me. Not because you saw.

A sign. But because you ate. Of the loaves. And your stomachs are filled. You got a free lunch. That's why you're following me. You didn't see the sign. In John's gospel.

Sign. Is a technical word. Sign. Sign. Refers to a mighty act. Which though meaningful. In and of itself. Points beyond itself. To a greater reality. The people saw the effect.

[16:31] Of the sign. Five thousand people were fed. But they didn't see the sign itself. The multiplication of bread. Points beyond itself. To a gift. That is never exhausted. To a satisfaction.

That never passes. So Jesus exhorts the crowd. Do not work. For the food that perishes. But for the food that endures. To eternal life.

Which the son of man will give you. Now when Jesus uses this. This word work. Their minds. Their religious minds. Shift to good works. Good works that are done. To earn the pleasure.

And care of the living God. So they asked Jesus. What shall we do. To do the works of God. Jesus answers. John six. Verse twenty nine. This.

Is the work of God. That you believe in him. Whom he has sent. What did you just say Jesus. Wait just a minute.

[17:27] This is the work that pleases God. To believe. In you. Again. Audacious. Hugely audacious.

So the people challenged Jesus. They asked for a sign. They want some kind of miracle. To validate. That Jesus can make such a claim. About himself. But did he not just give a sign. He just fed five thousand people. Is this feeding of the five thousand people. Not a sufficient sign. No. It's not. Why not.

And here. We are coming to the heart of the matter. The multiplication of the bread and fish. Is not a sufficient sign. Because the bread. Jesus. Fed the five thousand. Is bread from the earth. Not bread from heaven. The bread. Jesus miraculously provided. By the seashore. Was not like the bread. God miraculously provided. For the people in the desert.

[18:23] The bread. The people had. In the desert. Was bread from heaven. But as William Barclay notes. The bread. Jesus provide. Provided. Had begun. In earthly loaves. And issued. In earthly loaves.

Are you with me? Do you see. Do you see. The challenge. That the. The crowd has. What they're trying to understand. So they quote from Psalm 78.

Psalm 78. Rehearses the events. Of the Passover. Jesus says to them. John 6. Verse 31. Or they say to Jesus. Sorry. John 6. Verse 31.

Our ancestors. Ate the manna. In the wilderness. As it is written. He gave them. Bread. Out of heaven. To eat. He gave them. Bread. Out of heaven.

To eat. To paraphrase the people. They're saying. Something like this. Look Jesus. We're really impressed. With what you did. And we really like. The bread you gave us. No complaints there. But. Even you must admit.

[19:18] That there's a big difference. Between the bread. You gave us. And the bread. That Moses gave us. That's the context. In which he makes the. I am the bread of life. Claim. A

challenge.

Which brings us. Then. To yet another factor. In the context. Of his claim. A form. A sermon. Form. John is careful.

To tell us. That Jesus makes his claim. That Passover. In the synagogue. That is. Jesus develops this claim. In the context. Of the worship life. Of Israel. John 6. Verse 59.

These things. He did. In the synagogue. Synagogue. Now. Why is that important. For us. In the first century. Teaching in the synagogue. Followed. A prescribed.

Form. Here's the form. The text of the day. Is read. The preacher of the day. Then paraphrases. The text. The preacher of the day.

[ 20 : 14 ] Then comments. On the words of the text. One at a time. And then the preacher of the day. Concludes. By rephrasing. His paraphrase. I'll say that again. The text is read.

Like today. The preacher then comes. And rephrases. The text. And then. One by one. Comments. On the words of the text. And then in conclusion.

Rephrases. His own paraphrase. In the synagogue. After that day. Of feeding the 5,000. The people then. Give Jesus the text. He gave them.

Bread. Out of heaven. To eat. Psalm 78. That's the text of the day. He gave them. Bread. Out of heaven. To eat. Now watch what Jesus does. With the text. It's John 6.

Verses 32 to 33. That's why your Bibles. Are open in front of you. Right now. John 6. 32 to 33. I'll wait till you find it. John 6.

[ 21 : 10 ] 32 to 33. Truly. Truly. I say to you. It is not Moses. Who gave you. The bread. Out of heaven. But my father.

Who gives you. The true bread. Out of heaven. For the bread of God. Is that which comes down. Out of heaven. And gives life. To the world. Now notice what Jesus has done. He's clarified. That it was not Moses.

But God. Who gave the manna. In the wilderness. That confusion. Often happens. God does a mighty deed. And humans get the credit. For it. And Jesus says. It's not only that God.

Gave the bread. But gives the bread. Even now. And Jesus says. As sweet as the manna was. It is not the true heavenly bread.

The manna. Fed Israel. For 40 years. This other bread. That comes from heaven. Will feed the whole world. Forever. The people's appetite is.

[ 22 : 07 ] Wedded. So is mine. They say. Lord. Evermore. Give us this bread. I. I. I.

Am. I. Am the bread. I. Am the bread of life. A person.

The bread. Then Jesus. Expands on this claim. By following the first century sermon form for synagogues. He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.

Not Moses. But God. Not gave. But gives. Not just any heavenly bread. But the true bread. Bread. Out of heaven to eat. And Jesus works with each of those words. Bread. Out of heaven.

To eat. This in part. Is why. John was able to remember. Jesus sermon on the bread of life. It's a very simple sermon. Bread. Out of heaven. To eat.

[ 23 : 04 ] Bread. I'm the bread. Jesus develops that in verses 35 to 40 of John 6. Out of heaven. I came down out of heaven. Jesus develops that in verses 41 to 51.

To eat. Eat this bread and you'll live forever. Jesus develops that in verses 52 to 57. What a context. In which to make this claim. There's one more factor to the context.

A story. Jesus makes this claim. Within a larger story. That is being read and reflected upon. During the feast of Passover. This is the case with all that Jesus teaches about anything.

He's speaking within the context of. And to. A larger story. So. At Passover that day. Other texts were being read also. One of them was Exodus 16.

In Exodus 16. The text says. That bread from. That God would rain down. Bread from heaven. Every day. What a promise. Bread from heaven.

[ 24 : 07 ] Every day. And the text says. The people were to go out. And they were to gather this bread. That was given every day. Each new day. They had to go and gather a day's portion.

Except on the day before the Sabbath. When two days portion. Would be rained down. Now the point is. God will provide everything for the people. But only one day at a time.

You know the story. If you went out. And took too much. It rotted on you. God is going to provide. But only one day at a time. The people have to go out and gather.

One day. At a time. So. What does this have to do with Jesus' claim? Jesus says in verse 35. I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me. Will never hunger. Whoever believes in me. Will never thirst. That word never. Has bothered me. A long time. Because. There are times. When I come to Jesus one day. [ 25 : 02 ] But the next day. I am very hungry and thirsty. Does that ever happen to you? Now I know. That when I feed on Jesus. That feeding is going to.

Awaken even greater hunger for him. So I know about that. Hunger that comes out of being filled. What I am referring to. Is that hunger. That comes out of this sense of being empty. Come to me and never hunger.

Believe in me and never thirst. What gives? The tense of the verbs. Come and believe. That is what gives. They are in the present tense. And in the Greek.

The present tense emphasizes continual action. Keep on. Jesus is saying. Keep on coming. Keep on believing. Whoever keeps on coming. Will never thirst.

Hunger. Whoever keeps on believing. Will never thirst. The great multitude. That day on Passover. In the synagogue. Knew what that kept. Keep coming means. The people had to go out.

[ 25 : 58 ] Every day. Each new day. I am the bread of life. You need to come to me. Every day. When we find ourselves hungry.

And especially when we find ourselves. So hungry. We are now craving. This bread that perishes. We are to take a clue. That we are out of habit. Of coming. Keep coming.

Keep believing. Each new day. Now. There is another. Section of scripture. That is at play. At Passover. And it may surprise you. It is Genesis 2 and 3.

Genesis 2 and 3. We are read through. The Passover season. In Genesis 3. We hear the phrase. Cast out. Or drive out. Because of the sin of Adam and Eve.

Because they declared independence from God. Which is what eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil means. Because of that sin. Humanity is cast out of the garden.

[ 26 : 59 ] Genesis 3 verse 27. The Lord cast them out. And then. The Lord stations these angelic watchers. To make sure humanity can't get back in the garden.

And reach the tree of life. That is because God does not want humanity to have this life. While humanity is living independently of him. It will not work. Cast out.

And kept from the tree of life. Now. This text. And this theme. That is running through the minds of the worshippers. In the synagogue on the Passover. And those who hear Jesus speak. Have in their minds.

This phrase. The tree of life. And cast out. I am the bread of life. Not just bread. The bread of life. I wonder if tree of life.

Wasn't the inspiration for the phrase. Bread of life. I am the bread of life. Then Jesus says. John 6 verse 37. Listen. All that the father gives me.

[ 27 : 55 ] Shall come to me. And the one who comes to me. I will certainly. Not cast out. Not cast out. Not cast out.

Do you hear what Jesus is saying? The way to the tree of life. Has been opened. He opened it. By dealing with the problem of sin. Come to me. I am the tree of life.

And you will certainly. Not be cast out. Now. The Genesis story. Comes into play. In one more place. And here now. We come to the very heart. Of Jesus claim.

In Genesis 2. God warns Adam and Eve. Not to eat from the tree. Of the knowledge of good and evil. Do not declare independence from me. It won't work. Genesis 2. 17. You shall not eat from that tree.

Lest you die. For in the day that you eat of it. You will die. Eat of it. You will die. Eat of it. You will die. Eat of it. You will die. Genesis 3. Verse 6. She took and ate. And she died. And so did Adam.

[ 28 : 55 ] And all her children. The whole human race. Eat of it. And die. Eat of it. And die. Eat of it. And die. The phrase is ringing in the hearts and minds of those people on Passover. Eat of it. And die.

Ready? I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness. And they died. Then Jesus says. Listen. It's verse 50. Of John 6. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven. So that you may eat of it and not die. Eat of it and not die. Eat of it and not die. Eat of it and not die. To eat the bread that Jesus is. Is now to enter into the life we lost at the fall.

So who is he? This person. We are seeking to follow in the city. I am that without which you cannot live. I am absolutely essential for human existence.

Come to me every day. Believe in me every day. I give myself. As bread. Which is why the Lord's Supper is the identifying feast of the Christian church.

[ 30 : 05 ] As we meet at the table. To remember our Lord. He comes. As we meet around the table. To remember that he died for the sin of the world.

He comes. And he feeds us. The earthly bread and earthly wine remain. Earthly bread and earthly wine. But somehow as we eat and drink.

Jesus comes. And he feeds us. Heavenly bread. He feeds us. Himself. She took and ate.

She took and ate. She took and ate. Those two verbs do not come together in the rest of the biblical story. Nowhere in the rest of the Bible do you find the words.

Take and eat together. Until that night. Before he went to the cross. When the bread of life said. Take.

[ 31 : 08 ] Eat. This is my body. Given. For you. So come. Come for supper.

This is the bread that comes down out of heaven. And gives life to the world. Not. Cast out. Eat. And not die.

All right. Look at the■. With the spine. Looks like. What do you do? Is it? Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.