

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 20th September 2009

“I am the Bread of Life” (Part 1)

John ch.6:1-35

Introduction

So far in our studies in John’s Gospel on Sunday nights we have seen some of the people Jesus met, while he was here on earth:

- Andrew, Simon, Philip & Nathanael in ch.1
- Nicodemus in ch.3
- The Woman at the Well in ch.4
- The Nobleman and his son also in ch.4
- The disabled man at the pool of Bethesda in ch.5

Some of the People Jesus Met.

John also records

Some of the Miracles Jesus Did:

- Changing the Water into Wine in Cana of Galilee in ch.2
- Healing the Nobleman’s son in Capernaum by just speaking the word from a distance in ch.4
- Healing the disabled man at the pool of Bethesda by just speaking the words, ‘Rise, take up your bed, and walk!’ in ch.5

Tonight we come to John ch.6 and we find there are 2 miraculous signs here:

- The Feeding of the 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish in vs.1-13, and
- Jesus walking on the water in vs.15-21.

Again these are two very clear indications of who Jesus was.

Only God could multiply bread and fish. Only the one who had created all things out of nothing could make 5 loaves and 2 fish sufficient to feed well over 5000 people and still have 12 baskets of food left over!

Clearly this was yet another sign that *‘Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God.’* (John 20:30-31) - The reason why John wrote his Gospel.

In fact, by the end of that miracle, the feeding of the 5000, we read in v.14: *‘After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.’*

BUT: *‘Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.’* (v.15)

So it is beginning to dawn on the people who have been experiencing all of these miracles that there is something special about Jesus. Is he a Prophet, Is he the Messiah. But the problem was they were only looking for a political Messiah – one who would be King in Jerusalem, who would overthrow the Romans – so Jesus knowing this, would have none of it, and withdrew into a mountain area by himself – probably to pray to his heavenly Father.

And that ties in with the rest of Scripture, of course:

e.g. Acts 4:12 'Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved.'

- Except the name of Jesus!

Some would call that narrow-minded or very dogmatic or even intolerant of other religions, but I believe this is God's Plan of Salvation, and God only has one Plan of Salvation – one method whereby we can be saved and get right with God, and one day go to be with Him for all eternity in Heaven.

That plan centers round a person – it's the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is not a cold empty set of rules or regulations to follow – and don't let anybody try to tell you that it is! That's legalism! No, it's a warm, wonderful, relationship with the Son of the Living God – Jesus Christ! That's liberty!

- Do you know Him?
- Have you met Him?
- Have you believed in Him?

Well that's the only way you can be saved!

Come with me and let's begin our look at the Claims of Christ tonight, by looking at the first of the 'I am's of Jesus... John 6:35 – *'I am the Bread of Life.'*

1. The Significance of the words 'I am'

Why does Jesus repeat these two little words 'I am' so much in this Gospel?

Well, come with me to Exodus 3:12-15, where Moses is at the Burning Bush. God is calling him to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt.

Moses makes all sorts of excuses, and then finally agrees to do it.

But in the process he asks God what His name is, so he will be able to tell the Israelites, back in Egypt, who has sent him.

And God says in v.14: *'I am has sent me to you!'*

And in v.15 he adds:

'This is my name forever, and this is my memorial to all generations – I am'

The Holy, unutterable name of God is 'I am' – no Jew would ever take those words on his lips, believing that God's name was too holy for a sinner to say!

And yet Jesus takes those words upon his own lips and claims that He is the 'I am' of the Old Testament. In other words, he claims to be God – 'I am' – Jehovah or Yahweh in Hebrew – no-one is quite sure how to pronounce it, because the Jews never pronounced it for centuries!

As well as using this name in the seven 'I am' sayings of John's Gospel, Jesus actually uses this name at least 3 times on its own in this Gospel as well:

- John 6:20 - *'It is I, don't be afraid!'* (ego eimi). To the fearful disciples as he walked on the water. Linking himself with the Great Creator God of the Old Testament. And in an instant, as soon as they heard those words, their fears died down, and the storm ceased!
- John 8:56-59 - *'Before Abraham was, I am'* (ego eimi). Here Jesus was linking himself with the Pre-existent God of the Old Testament. Here he says it to the Jews, who immediately picked up stones to stone him. Why? Because they took it as blasphemy. The Jews knew exactly what he meant when he said 'I am' - he was claiming to be God.
- John 18:3-8 - Judas has come to betray Jesus and get him arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Look at vs.4-6. Notice what happens when Jesus says (ego eimi) - 'I am' or 'I am he' as it is in our Bibles. The men drew back and fell to the ground! Again they knew exactly what Jesus meant when he used those words, and it had a powerful, over-awing effect on them. Jesus was claiming God's holy name for himself. But this wasn't blasphemy at all, because Jesus was God – God, the Son. 'Jesus was, the Christ, the Son of the Living God.' He was the 'Great I am' come in the flesh!

I want you to try to remember the significance of those two little words as we look at the Seven 'I am' sayings of John's Gospel over coming weeks and months: Jesus was quite simply claiming to be God come in the flesh! And here on this occasion, as God the Son, he claimed to be...

2. The Bread of Life. (v.35)

Now we need to look at the context of the chapter here:

Verse 3 tells us that the Jewish Feast of Passover was near. That was also known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

In the next verse it is Jesus who raises the issue of where they are going to find enough bread to feed all of these people. He knew what he was going to teach them, but he asked them nevertheless.

Then Jesus proceeds to feed all 5000 + people with 5 loaves of bread.

So the people have all eaten and had their fill – costing them nothing – Free! But, next day they go looking for Jesus and they found him in the Synagogue at Capernaum, and it's there he preaches to them about the 'Bread of Life.'

He realized they had come after him, not because they believed in Him, but because they just wanted more bread (v.26). - Bread was their staple diet.

But the Feeding of the 5000 has reminded these people of their forefathers, the Israelites, being fed by manna from heaven in the wilderness on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land (v.30-31).

So Jesus takes them from where they were at, and what they were thinking about, and begins to teach them:

1. It wasn't Moses, but God, who gave them the manna. (v.32)

My Father will now give you the true bread from heaven.

'For the Bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.'

It's a bit like Jesus when he was talking to the woman at the well. He starting talking about water – 'Give me a drink' – but before long he has brought the conversation around to talking about himself, and how he could give this woman water that would mean she would never thirst again. He was talking about the eternal life he could give her, if she would only trust him.

And he gets a similar reaction here in v.34: *'Sir, from now on give us this bread.'* She had said back in John 4:15, *'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.'*

But these people, just like that woman, were missing the point. Yes, Jesus was using the basic necessities of life – bread and water – to get them thinking, to help him to make his point, but they got stuck with the physical illustration, and couldn't see the spiritual parallel.

The fact is that we need Jesus, and what he can give us (for eternal life) just as much as we need bread to eat, and water to drink, to stay alive.

2. So who or what is this bread from heaven? (v.35)

Well, Jesus tells them again, very plainly, 'I am the bread of life' - he was talking about himself. It was him they needed, not just the things he could give them, like bread or miracles, or healing – they just needed Him, himself! 'I am the Bread of Life' – you need me! No more and no less – you need me!

What about you? Do you just want the things that Jesus can give you, or the things that Jesus can do for you? The things that you can ask Jesus for in prayer – or do you really want Jesus for himself? To have that relationship with him, getting to know him, better and deeper for yourself, spending time with him, and in His Word, finding out what it is he wants you to do with your life, what he wants you to do, guided by His Word, or do you just want to be 'good livin for the livin' as someone has said – for the things you get out of being a Christian. Christianity is all about Jesus – it's all about Him. Don't get side-tracked, or get your eyes of him – it's all about him and you in relationship. He came down from heaven and died for you on that cross. He wants you, to get to know you, and to make you all that he intended you to be.

3. He pointed out a difference between himself and the manna (v.35)

Down in v.49, which we will come to next time, Jesus says, that the Israelites ate the manna in the desert, but they still died. It didn't last forever.

But, by contrast, 'Jesus is the bread of LIFE!' as he says in v.35 – eternal life – and so he goes on to say in v.35:

*'He who comes to me will never go hungry,
and he who believes in me will never be thirsty!'*

So what Jesus gives us, what Jesus can do for us, lasts forever. If Jesus gives us eternal life, it can never be lost, otherwise it wasn't eternal in the first place!

3. So how then can we be saved? (v.35)

Jesus tells us to simply come to him and believe in him in order to be saved.

Come and Believe:

Come to the Lord Jesus Christ – accept who He is – 'I am' – God himself.

Come to the one who came down from heaven and took upon himself our flesh and blood.

Come to the one who gave his body over to death on the cross for our sins – and for the life of the world (v.51). – (More about that next time).

Come and Believe:

Believe that he died on that cross for you personally – and for your sin.

Believe that He rose again and now lives to be your Saviour.

Believe He will take away your sins, if you ask him to.

Come to Him, and Believe in Him.

Remember John's reason for writing this Gospel in John 20:30-31 – *'These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.'*

Jesus will give you life, eternal life, and you'll never hunger or thirst again.

But you must come and believe in Him for yourself.

No-one else can do it for you. Come and Believe in Jesus tonight!

© Ian Grant 2009