

Who Do You Say That I AM?

John 6:22-70

"I AM The Bread of Life"

Introduction

In this series we will be examining the seven "I AM" statements of Jesus, found in The Gospel of John. John's gospel was written so that those who read it would BELIEVE that Jesus was in fact The Messiah sent down from Heaven, and by believing, the reader would have "life" because of putting their faith in Jesus. We do not have to speculate about this fact for John himself TELLS us that this was his reason for writing his gospel (**John 20:31**). To be even more specific, John wanted his readers to understand that Jesus was not only THE promised Messiah, but He was also God in the flesh. This is why he begins his gospel by saying "**In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the word WAS God (John 1:1)**". He goes on to say that this same Word BECAME FLESH and dwelt among men (**1:14**). John's gospel is an incredibly detailed account of the Life of Christ. Because He wants his readers to understand that Jesus was completely man and yet completely God, he uses the number seven (meaning complete or whole) to further drive home this message of the deity of Christ. Apart from many other "sevens" in his gospel, John gives us seven SIGNS (miracles) that demonstrate Christ's mighty power, and seven "I AM" statements made by Christ Himself. The significance of the seven "I AM's" of Jesus is that with each one He is claiming Himself to be God. In the Old Testament when God appeared to Moses in The Burning Bush (**Exodus 3**), Moses asked Him His Name. God responded by saying in Hebrew, "Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh" meaning "**I AM That I AM**". From that day forward, God became known unto the Hebrews by His covenant Name, YHVH, a name which no one today is truly sure how to pronounce, but the name basically means, "The Existing ONE", or "The One That Is".

Just as God was known to His people as THE GREAT I AM, Jesus IS this very same God. He spoke to Moses in the burning bush. He walked with Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. He caused Jonah to be swallowed by the whale. He enabled David to kill Goliath. He sent the plagues to Egypt to deliver His children from bondage, and He was on the mountain top with Moses to give the ten commandments. Some people have a very difficult time reconciling Jesus with The God of The Old Testament, but they are one and the same. God manifests Himself in three persons: God The Father, God The Son, and God The Holy Spirit, but they are all three ONE! Even the Old Testament name for God, "Elohim" is in a plural form. Though the Jews have never been able to grasp it, God has always spoken of Himself as plural and singular. He is One, and yet He is Three in One. That is so hard for the mind to grasp that I will not even begin to try and explain it, I just know that it is truth. When Jesus' earthly ministry began, He was baptized in the Jordan river by John The Baptist (**Matthew 3:16**). The Trinity that is God presented Himself to those who were standing there. Jesus The Son was baptized, The Holy Spirit lit upon Him in the form of a dove, and God The Father spoke in an audible voice from heaven saying, "**This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased**" (**vs. 17**). So there you have it. The Trinity that is God. While the word "Trinity" is Never mentioned in scripture, the reality is there nonetheless. What is left for us then is to decide for ourselves just who Jesus really is. He asked this question of people when He walked this earth, and He still asks it today: "**Who do you say that I AM?**" (**Matthew 16:15**). It is a question that each of us must answer in order to determine where we spend eternity. There has never been, nor will there ever be a more important question!

For the next several weeks we will closely examine the proof statements that Jesus gave us concerning just who He is. They are called "The Seven I AM's", and they are found in John's gospel: 1) **I Am The Bread of Life**; 2) **I AM The Light of The World**; 3) **I AM The Door**; 4) **I AM The Good Shepherd**; 5) **I AM The Resurrection and The Life**; 6) **I AM The Way, The Truth, and The Life**; and 7) **I AM The True Vine**.

Today we will begin with the first I AM of Christ found in **John Chapter 6**. It occurred the very next day after Jesus fed the multitude of five thousand men, besides women and children, using 2 sardines and five small barley wafers. It was a monumental miracle, and needless to say, it left an impression upon those who were there to see it. Unfortunately, the impression that it left upon many of them did not persuade them to trust in Jesus as their Lord. In other words, they had seen God, but failed to recognize Him in their midst! There were four kinds of people there that day who responded very differently to the question Jesus asks of us all. **“Who do YOU say that I Am?”** There were The FREeloaders, The FAULT FINDERS, The FALSE FOLLOWERS, and finally, The FAVORED ONES. As we examine each of these closely this morning ask yourself, “Which one am I?” Who do YOU say that Jesus is?

The Freeloaders

When Jesus fed the multitude, they were so sure that He was the promised Messiah, that they were ready to start a revolution to make Him their king. He miraculously disappeared from among them and sent His disciples speedily across The Sea off Galilee to escape the mob. Even though there was a storm coming and it was for them not the greatest time to be upon the water, Jesus knew that He would calm the storm and keep them safe. It WAS in fact better for them to be away from all this talk of revolution, even if the alternative was a stormy sea! He simply relocated them from one storm to another, while He disappeared and went off into the mountains to pray. Satan was giving him yet another temptation to become a king without the Cross, and Jesus wasn't about to fall for it. He quickly left that all behind Him and got alone with His Father. God had a plan for his sinless Son, and that plan could never be altered by the whims of a mob. Jesus came to die, and this death would ensure that He would one day rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Satan had tried this stunt before (**Matthew 4:9**), and no doubt, he would try it again before it was FINISHED.

The storm upon the sea that night was furious, but in the midst of it, Jesus came to His disciples walking upon the water. This sight actually scared them more than the storm itself. Upon realizing that it was Jesus, and they were safe, Peter actually gets out of the boat and walks upon the water for a short time with Jesus (**Matthew 14:22-33**), although John fails to mention this in his accounting. Jesus immediately calmed the storm, and then miraculously relocated the boat upon the shore in Capernaum (**vs. 21**). What a day of miracles it had been for His disciples to witness!

When the crowd from the day before got word that Jesus was in Capernaum, they also got in their boats to follow Him. When they asked how He got there, He refused to answer and told them that the only reason that they came was to get another free meal (**vs. 26**). They weren't interested on having their hungry souls filled with the message of Christ, they were much more concerned about getting another free lunch. They had made up their minds that if He was going to feed them everyday with fish sandwiches, then they were going to follow Him wherever He went! Here they were in the presence of Almighty God saying in essence, “Oh I didn't come for the sermon. I'm here for the fish sandwich!” How pitiful is that? They were nothing more than freeloaders. I have met so many people like that in my ministry. They could care less about the spiritual, they just want stuff. Just a few weeks ago, a lady came to our Wednesday night Bible Study and asked for money. We invited her to stay for the study, and she wasn't the least bit interested. She wanted the money, but not The Word. It happens all the time.

Jesus told these freeloaders that if they only understood who He was, then they would realize that He WAS the Bread of Life, and that by believing in Him they would satisfy the spiritual hunger that was within each of them (**vs. 27**). He was in essence saying to them, “You sailed across a sea to get a fish sandwich, but you don't realize that I can give you ETERNAL LIFE! Stop thinking only of your stomachs and ask me for what you truly need.” They responded by saying, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” (**vs. 28**). They were still trying to figure out how to get God to help them with another miraculous feeding, but Jesus answered them and said, “This is the work of God, that you

BELIEVE in Him whom He has sent.” (**vs. 29**). Do you know how these people responded? **“Show us a miracle so we can believe.”** WHAT?! He had just miraculously fed them the day before, but they needed ANOTHER miracle in order to believe? So, these freeloaders start working an angle with The Savior. “Hey, the Pharisees teach us that when the Messiah comes He will feed us again with Manna like Moses did for our ancestors in the wilderness” (**vs. 30-31**). Why don't you feed us with some manna and then we can believe in You? Again with the stomachs! Jesus said, **“I AM the Bread of Life, he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. But you have seen Me, and yet you do not believe.”** What was Jesus saying exactly? That HE WAS THE MANNA! The Manna in the Old Testament (**Exodus 16:11-34**) was just a foreshadowing of The True Manna that would one day come to the earth to satisfy the hunger of those who would believe. Have you ever really considered that the manna was just another Old Testament picture of Christ? Allow me to explain.

1. It was round. It had no beginning or end.....Just like JESUS
2. It was white. It symbolized sinless purity.....Just like JESUS
3. It came down from heaven.....Just like JESUS
4. It was God’s provision for His people.....Just like JESUS
5. It could only be gathered while there was time.....Just like JESUS
6. It was sweet to the taste.....Just like JESUS
7. It gave life.....Just like JESUS

You see, Jesus IS the true MANNA that came from heaven, but those who only thought of their physical needs, while neglecting their spiritual needs, completely missed the point. Jesus explained to them that they would never be able to understand unless The Father gave them the ability to see beyond the physical and look into the spiritual (**vs. 37**). Did you catch that? You cannot come to have faith in Jesus unless God brings you to it. With this in mind, might I ask a few questions this morning? Did you come to Jesus for the things that you want? Or, did you come to Him for what you truly need? Have you truly BELIEVED in Him enough to give Him your life? Who do YOU say that HE IS?

The Faultfinders

It becomes apparent from reading the text from **John 6** that at some point this ongoing conversation, about The Bread of Life that came down from Heaven, was taken inside the Synagog at Capernaum (**vs. 59**). Possibly Jesus had addressed the crowd outside the Synagog, and when those who were just there for the food realized they weren't getting another free lunch they departed leaving Jesus there with His followers and the local Pharisees. It was the Pharisees that were actually offended at Jesus’ statement about being the Bread of life Sent down from Heaven, because they, unlike the folks that just left, knew EXACTLY what he meant by that. To say that He came down from Heaven was to be equating Himself with God, and the religious leaders didn't like that one bit (**vs. 41-42**). He told them to stop grumbling about it, because they too would never be able to see the truth unless they were enabled by His Father (**vs. 43-44**).

I've met a lot of people like that in church as well. They only seem to be there to critique. They claim to belong to God, but they cannot understand, nor do they care to take part, in spiritual things. They are AWESOME at criticizing others in the body however! If they Had a spiritual gift it would be “the gift of criticism”! (There IS no such gift by the way. These Pharisees at the Synagog that day were more concerned in finding fault with Jesus’ words than actually considering that the one who stood before them was in fact GOD. They thought that they were actually doing God a favor by opposing the teachings of Jesus. After all, how could this Man possibly be The GREAT I AM? They all knew his parents, Mary and Joseph. Those people weren't anything special, just common, poor people. Don't miss out on God, because He doesn't do what you expect Him to do. His ways are NOT our ways (**Isaiah 55:8**). If the

Pharisees that day had simply listened with their hearts and prayed for God to give them wisdom, they would have met God that day in Capernaum. But sadly, they just used the opportunity to make themselves appear more spiritual than they were as they criticized the very one who could have made all their Biblical learning make sense! He could have opened the scriptures that they loved so much and shared with them their true meaning. He could have shown them that every verse in their law was pointing to The Manna that would come down from Heaven, not just to sustain life, but to give eternal life to all who would believe. They could have been saved, but they were too busy trying to prove that they knew more than Jesus. Did you come here this morning with a Receptive heart, or a critical eye? Throw away your pride and come to Christ. Who do YOU say that He is?

The False Followers

Jesus didn't need to be told about any man, for he could see what was inside them (**John 2:25**). He could see on that day that He had some followers who were false, just like Judas would later prove to be false (**vs. 70**). For whatever the reason, political or otherwise, these people followed Him, and yet their hearts were far from Him (**Matthew 15:8**). The time had come to also send them away. Jesus continued His teaching of accepting Him as The Bread of Life by saying that His flesh was indeed food, and his Blood was indeed drink that would give everlasting life (**vs. 51-55**). Many of His false followers took this literally to mean that Jesus was promoting some kind of cannibalism! They responded by saying, "This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it?" They didn't wish to hear any more. That was the last words that they ever said to Jesus, and they left that day, never to follow Him again (**vs. 66**).

The Catholic Church has also misinterpreted the meaning of Jesus' words here and actually espouses the belief that in this passage Christ was speaking of taking communion. Catholicism teaches that when a true believer takes the bread and the wine of communion that it LITERALLY becomes The Body and Blood of Christ. This is NOT true, and it also is NOT what Jesus is speaking about here. He was talking in "spiritual" terms (**vs. 63**), and what He was actually saying, is that ANYONE who believes that He is God and accepts His death upon the cross as a payment for their sins, the same will receive everlasting life. The manna that God sent to the children of Israel saved them for a time, until they were hungry once again, but The True Manna that came down from Heaven would save for ALL time (for eternity). Jesus is The Bread of Life! Anyone who comes to Him has the assurance from God that they will live forever. We call it The Gospel or The Good News of Jesus Christ.

Many people attend church these days, but not all are true followers. They follow for many different reasons. They sit in the chairs, or pews, as the case may be. They sing worship songs, and even pray sometimes. But, if Christ were to give them a "hard saying" or, in other words, ask them to do something that they didn't like, they would be gone in a heartbeat. We've all seen this before. People are so excited about being followers of Christ until he requires them to actually DO something, or hard times come their way. Then, they are history. They didn't like the message. So, they walk away from the messenger. To follow Jesus means to deny yourself and take up your cross and follow (**Luke 9:23**). This too is a "hard saying". Is this what you signed up to do when you gave your life to Christ, or were you only in this for the easy life? Will you also turn away, if you feel that he is asking too much of you?

The Favored Ones

After Jesus had finished speaking, the crowd had thinned down drastically. He turned to his disciples and asked, **"Will you also go away?"** I LOVE Peter's response! **"To whom shall we go? You have the words of life."** (**vs. 68**). You see, I don't believe for a moment that Peter actually UNDERSTOOD completely, everything that Jesus had said, but one thing was for certain, Peter believed in Jesus! You do not have to fully understand every single scripture verse in the Bible in order to become a Christian, you simply have to BELIEVE in Jesus and ask Him to forgive you of your sins. Peter may not

have “got it” when Christ explained about The Bread of Life, but Peter believed it when Jesus said He was God, and therefore, whether he understood them or not, he knew that every word Jesus spoke was absolute truth. It’s called faith, and without it, we can never hope not please God (**Hebrews 11:6**). Peter simply took Jesus at His word. He wasn’t a Freeloader, a Faultfinder, nor a False Follower. He had been drawn to Jesus by the Father. He had settled it in his mind once and for all that Jesus was in fact THE GREAT I AM. Peter was one of the Favored. He was a true follower of Christ and would one day even lay down his life to prove it.

Jesus said, **“I AM The Bread of Life”**. By doing so, He was claiming to be God. Do you believe that He was? Some have said that Jesus was a great prophet. Others have called Him a good moral teacher, and still others say He was a great example for us to follow, but still just a mortal man. None of these can actually be true. He was either God in the flesh, or the greatest liar who ever lived. You cannot have it both ways. What is your answer to HIS eternal question, **“Who do YOU say that I AM?”**

Jesus, we believe that YOU are The TRUE MANNA that came down from Heaven, and We Believe that You are GOD!

And ALL of God’s People said... TRUTH!!!