

THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD:

[Part 4 – I AM The Bread of Life]

So far in this series on the greatest story ever told we have looked at:

- **The prayer of Jesus in John 17**
- **The confrontation Jesus faced in John 18**
- **And Jesus' crucifixion in John 19**

And now before we look at His resurrection, we are going to consider today:

- **Who is this Man that died upon a cross?**
- **What did He claim to be?**
- **And how must this revelation affect our lives?**

Many years ago there was a Scotsman who travelled to America > He took almost all of his money and purchased passage on a great ocean liner.

In preparation for his trip he stocked up on crackers, cheese and fruit before departure so he would have a good stash on board for the trip.

After the ship set sail he did fairly well for the first four or five days > However, the crackers became stale, the cheese soft and mouldy and the fruit began to spoil.

Finally, the old Scot got so hungry he took some of his money and headed to the dining room for a good meal.

Imagine his surprise when he found out that everything in the dining room was included in the cost of the ticket > All that he could have ever eaten was already included in the price of his ticket from Scotland to America.

And God has provided you with all the essentials for eternal life without price and without cost.

For this Jesus who died on a cross is the bread of life > The One who provides all the sustenance we need for real life.

To sustain life it's important that we have a balanced diet > And bread is often called an essential, the staple of life.

- **What are the essentials in your life?**
- **What do you really need in order to exist?**
- **What do you think you need to be a happy, healthy, meaningful person?**

Jesus made an interesting observation in:

John 6 : 27

The food that Jesus gives remains forever and has the effect of producing life forever.

Is Jesus Christ so real to you spiritually as something you can taste?

Is He as much a part of you as what you eat?

The Lord God who created us is able to satisfy our greatest and most important needs in life > He is able to satisfy, and will always satisfy the deepest longings of the soul.

And He has demonstrated this faithfulness in the history of Israel > God miraculously delivered the Israelite slaves in Egypt.

They hadn't finished singing praises to God for His sovereign deliverance before they started grumbling at Moses.

They came upon bitter water and the Lord showed Moses a tree that he was instructed to throw it into the waters and the waters became sweet.

The LORD demonstrated Himself as, **"I, the LORD, am your healer"**.

They wandered around in the wilderness of Sin and after about fifteen days they started whining:

"Remember the good old days?" The people began to grumble against Moses and the LORD because their food supplies were running out.

An the LORD rained down **"bread from heaven"**:

Ex 16 : 11 – 15

V 31

It may have been like corn flakes, or sugar frosted flakes.

V 35

They were discovering what Paul said in Phil 4:19, **“And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus”**

Jesus Himself said, **“seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”**.

You see when the Lord has His hand in your mouth you are fed generously.

Now back to Jesus' feeding of the 5,000.

A great multitude of people kept on following Jesus because they were seeking the signs He was continually performing on the sick:

John 6 : 5

I always love the next verse:

V 6

Then:

V 7 - 11

They didn't just get a taste of the bread and fish > They ate **“as much as they wanted.”** He provided all they could eat.

V 12 - 13

These were not scraps on the ground, but pieces, broken by Jesus in the baskets > He always provides more than enough.

And if Jesus is in reality Lord of the universe, why should we balk at this miracle? He who created the universe surely has power to go on creating what He wills to do.

After feeding the people Jesus withdrew to the mountain away from them because they were ready to seize Him and make Him king.

The next day Jesus used this miracle to teach a great spiritual truth about Himself.

Now we all know that bread is necessary for life, and in the time of Christ bread was the only staple in most people's diets.

Without bread, men died.

And Jesus now sets forth clearly that He is the One whom men and women could not do without > You and I cannot do without Him > You and I remain spiritually dead without Him.

He is the life, and He in truth is all you need.

The next day when the people found Jesus they wanted another free meal on wheels > If He did it once, can He do it twice?

Go ahead and show us!

The rabbis had taught that when the Messiah came He would duplicate the miracle of giving the manna.

One taught, **“What did the first redeemer do? He brought down the manna. The last redeemer will also bring down manna.”**

Jesus knew they were out to manipulate Him, so He offered them something more than physical food:

V 27

But they insisted on another “sign” to prove His credentials:

V 30 – 31

Jesus was speaking of the fact that He was God’s gift to men and that God desired men to believe in Him.

However they said they would believe in Him if He could do what Moses did and feed them again.

But who gave the manna?

Not Moses, but God.

And what’s more, the manna was not true bread from the true heaven > It was earthly bread from a visible sky that God provided.

V 32 – 33

Their immediate response was to ask Him to give them more of this bread, and Jesus then clarifies the kind of bread He is offering which is true bread that alone satisfies the genuine hunger of the human soul.

V 35 - 40

That was one piece of bread that was hard for the crowd to swallow.

They wanted fish now, not eternal life.

By saying **“I am the bread of life that came down out of heaven,”** Jesus was claiming that He alone could meet the essential needs of our lives.

In chapter four He said He was the **“living water;”** now He is the **living bread.**

This is the first of the seven “I-am” sayings in the gospel of John:.

- **I am the bread of life (6:35)**
- **I am the light of the world (8:12)**
- **I am the gate for the sheep (10:7, 9)**
- **I am the good shepherd (10:11,14)**
- **I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)**
- **I am the way and the truth and the life (14:6)**
- **I am the true vine (15:1, 5)**

All showing that Jesus is the precious gift of eternal life > And here in John 6 He repeats this **‘I Am’** statement:

V 48, 51

Just as the water Jesus offers quenches all thirst, so the bread He offers banishes all hunger.

And the bread He offers is Himself > He is the One whom God has sent; He is the One who has come down from heaven; He alone is the One who satisfies.

Knew

The Jewish people understood that Christ was saying He was of divine origin.

“I am the bread which came down from heaven.”

His **“I am”** is a solemnly emphatic statement.

Jesus took the name of God at the burning bush and linked it with the symbol of perfect sustenance for human life.

No one but Yahweh, Jehovah can make that claim > Jesus is identifying Himself with the LORD of the OT.

He is demonstrating absolute deity. He is saying:

“I am what every sinner needs, and without what I provide he will perish eternally. I alone can satisfy the soul and bring eternal life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and are dead.” In contrast, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven.”

The inference is that we should feed upon Him and grow > He alone is what is necessary for our spiritual life.

Jesus’ words are strong and emphatic > Without Jesus we are spiritually gasping and starving > With Jesus, having received Him as our Saviour, we will never be hungry or thirst again.

For us it rules out for ever that unsatisfied hunger or unquenchable thirst that those who don’t know Jesus experience > Whether they know it or not, all people have within them a God shaped hole that only Jesus can fill.

And without Him there is only a burning thirst and gnawing hunger > With Him complete satisfaction and total contentment.

When we are saved we enter into a life-transforming, vital union with Christ > This new life Christ gives us is His life and we go on receiving it in increased abundance from the moment we are regenerated throughout eternity.

Eph 3 : 14 – 21

God promises to enlarge our spiritual capacities until the full life of the infinite Christ is reproduced in us.

As we feed upon Christ, we receive strength for daily living > Our daily life is to be lived in Christ’s power after we receive Him as our Saviour.

And nothing will ever separate the believer from God once we receive Jesus in faith.

You remember what we read in:

John 6 : 37

It is a mistake to view this as a promise that points to Jesus’ receiving of anyone who comes to Him confessing belief.

The term here **‘drive away’** is literally **‘cast out’**, and it regularly refers to something that is already ‘in’ (e.g. The driving out of the sheep and cattle who were already in the Temple area in chapter 2:15).

Therefore the idea is not about Jesus' welcoming people, but about Jesus' keeping people whom the Father has given into His care.

This verse is about the protecting, nurturing capacity of Jesus > Jesus will never lose a single one of those who have come to Him:

John 10 : 27 – 30

The emphasis Jesus is making is that all those who have come into Him and believe will never be lost.

God the Father gives divine bread, and whoever eats of it will live forever.

John 6 : 53 – 54

Jesus will not lose a single one the Father gives Him.

V 44

Because we are dead in our trespasses and sins we cannot come to Jesus unless the Father draws us > It is the work of the Holy Spirit to change our hearts and bring about spiritual birth so we can come to Him.

The Father draws us to the Son in order to be saved.

When man fell every part of his being was affected > No one merits a right relationship with God > We are all slaves to sin, estranged from God.

Our only hope is in God > We need His help > Unless He takes the initiative we can never be saved.

As **A. W. Pink** writes:

“The unregenerate sinner is so depraved that with an unchanged heart and mind he will never come to Christ. And the change, which is absolutely essential, is one, which God alone can produce. It is, therefore, by divine ‘drawing’ that anyone comes to Christ. . . .It is the power of the Holy Spirit awakening within him a sense of need. It is the power of the Holy Spirit overcoming the pride of the natural man, so that he is ready to come to Christ as an empty-handed beggar. It is the Holy Spirit creating within him a hunger for the bread of life,”

No individual can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him > The thought of divine initiative in salvation is one of the great doctrines of the Gospel.

Men like to feel independent > They like to think that they can come to Jesus entirely of their own volition.

Jesus assures us that this is an utter impossibility > No man, no man at all can come unless the Father draw him.

Our salvation is not initiated by man himself, but by a movement of divine grace.

It is God who brings men to Himself although by nature they prefer sin.

Calvin speaks of “**an effectual movement of the Holy Spirit, turning men from being unwilling and reluctant into willing.**”

The God who sends Jesus for man, on the other hand, draws man to Jesus > The two divine works, external and internal, complement and complete each other.

The happy moment is when they meet in the heart, and man's will is gained.

Jesus, the true bread, is God's gift to us and we who are spiritually hungry, must consume this bread through another of God's gifts > Faith.

This living bread has to be eaten > Jesus explains:

V 47 - 51

Jesus emphasizes in V 50 that this “**eating**” is a singular event, a decision to believe and appropriate the gift of eternal life.

Jesus is the living bread that came down through His incarnation, and the sinner must eat this bread and which is that decisive moment he believes.

It is a once for all decision > “**Eat**” refers to appropriating Christ.

It is believing on Him as your Saviour > Any person who truly takes this decisive action will live forever.

V 53 – 58

Referring to His incarnation, Jesus said He is the living bread that came down from heaven, and in His blood that we drink, Jesus is referring to His death.

Jesus is flesh offered in sacrifice > Jesus is giving Himself for the world > He offers Himself up as a sacrifice.

His “gift” is a sacrifice, a blood sacrifice that will atone for the sins of the world > Earlier Jesus was described as the “Lamb of God” that takes away the sin of the world.

Our salvation depends on the sacrificial death of Jesus > That is the living bread.

We have hope because Jesus Christ died for our sin.

When we eat His flesh and drink His blood, we assimilate by faith the great provision God has made for us in the death of Christ.

In Jesus’ strange words, then, we recognize a powerful and vivid metaphor to denote coming to Him, believing in Him, appropriating Him by faith.

His death is mine when I believe on Him > It becomes life to me > I make Him mine forever by an act of faith > I need not, indeed cannot receive Him a second time because He never leaves me.

There is an important practical application of this figure of speech that we need to consider:

Eating is necessary if we are to take advantage of the bread freely offered > Unless I eat the bread will not nourish me.

I may examine it, study it, smell it, read up on it, but it is useless unless I eat it > I will not be nourished unless I eat it.

All the knowledge in the world about Jesus Christ will avail me nothing until I “eat” Him > Knowing the truth about Him, speculating and arguing about it, talking about it will do you and me no good until we believe on Christ.

When we eat we respond to a hunger.

When we are really hungry we don’t grumble and complain, we eat.

When the Holy Spirit awakens our spiritual need we feast on Christ.

Without the bread of heaven Jesus offers we perish eternally > When the Holy Spirit creates the hunger within us we promptly and gladly receive Him.

Eating means appropriation > I do not assimilate the bread into my body until I eat > I must make the food my own, and when it becomes a part of me through the digestive process I gain strength.

Jesus may be beautiful, attractive, and appealing to me, but until I humble myself and receive Him as mine, I am still without the spiritual life He gives.

Not until I appropriate Him, not until I receive Him as mine, shall I be saved > Then, He who before was outside, will indwell me.

Only then can I know Him as the bread of life, nourishing my soul.

Now eating is a personal act > It is something no one else can do for me > Watching others eat a nourishing meal will not do anything for me.

And no one can receive Jesus Christ for you or me > It is a personal act.

Unless you have 'eaten' the Bread of life, unless you have personally received Christ as yours, it has all availed you nothing.

Christ crucified, who is now alive for evermore is the only one who can save you > For there is salvation in no one else; there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

If you are only eating physical food you will only prolong your earthly life and die > However, when you eat the bread of God you obtain the bread of life and you will never die spiritually.

When you believe in Jesus' vicarious substitutionary atonement for your sins, in that very moment He saves you for all eternity.

In the moment that you believe what Jesus did for you personally then you spiritually eat His flesh and drink His blood.

In that moment God give us eternal life and we are regenerated spiritually.

We eat Him by believing on Him, committing our lives to Him, taking Him into ourselves so that He becomes a part of you and you of Him.

We eat and drink Christ when we say, "**Lord Jesus, I want You as my Saviour > I realize that You died for me on the cross and I want Your death to stand in for my death. I give myself to You. Receive me as Your follower.**"

Faith in Christ means to commit yourself to Him.

When we place our trust in Jesus, God places His eternal life within us and will keep us until the last day.

But Jesus is also emphasizing that this heavenly bread makes that life of the age to come to be enjoyed by anticipation here and now.

He knows you and what you need and how to meet it > There is power in the name of Jesus Christ > It is His life that sustains us in our most difficult journeys through life.

We come to Him when we are tired, weary and exhausted and He gives us our daily strength and rest > Jesus alone gives us this daily supply and He bids us come feed upon Him.

Is Jesus as real to you spiritually as something you can taste or handle?

Is He as much a part of you as what you eat?

He must be as real to you as a hamburger or a cheese sandwich.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, **“Give us today our daily bread.”**

When you believe on Jesus as your Saviour, it is the beginning of a whole new life that brings about a living relationship with Him which is to grow by feeding upon Jesus every day.

Give us **“today”** and do it **“daily”** stresses the idea of repeated requests > He can give us **“our daily bread”** because He is **“the bread of life.”**

He invites us to come daily with our most important needs.

We need to pray daily, **“Lord, give me the spiritual bread that comes down from heaven and satisfies my soul”?**

You see there is no mystical power, or something meritorious in the act of eating > The nourishing spiritual power is in the food eaten.

Every time we remember that Christ died for us we feed on Him in our heart by faith with thanksgiving > And Jesus stresses the continuous appropriation of His flesh and blood.

To eat and drink for a Jewish person was to share in and partake of the privileges of friendship.

It is our responsibility to daily eat, and appropriate the spiritual food Jesus provides through His sacrifice on the cross.

He has made a perfect daily provision for our every spiritual need.

And He invites us to come daily and feast upon this marvellous provision.

But how do we “eat” our daily bread?

Well we can’t appropriate Christ daily until we get to know Him daily.

We have to get into the Scriptures that tell about Him.

Has Jesus Christ become our daily bread?

We feed ourselves on Christ daily by cherishing and obeying His Word > His words are spiritual, life-giving food.

Read the Gospels repeatedly.

Pray over what you have read.

Ask the Holy Spirit to make your mind receptive to the word of God.

Become so familiar with Jesus that you give Him pre-eminence in your mind and heart > Yield to Him in all that you do.

We need to meditate often on the meaning of His death and resurrection for us > We need to get into His Word daily and find Jesus in it.

Develop an intimate, personal, communication with Jesus on a daily basis > Learn to talk to him through out the day > Draw from His person by abiding in Him.

Gal 2 : 20

Paul was feasting on Christ.

How is your spiritual appetite?

Do you find yourself grumbling and complaining or feasting on Christ?

John 6 : 60 – 69

Do we believe and know that Jesus is the Holy One of God?

Do we believe and know that Jesus is the Bread of Life?

If so to what extent are we feeding on Him?

Let’s “eat” His flesh and “drink” His blood by:

- **Meditating on Him**
- **By dwelling on His Word**
- **And by resting our faith on Him.**