

## John 6:35-51 – “I Am the Bread of Life”

(Pew Bible Page: 892)

**Intro:** Jesus was a bomb thrower. He was constantly tossing out verbal bombshells that were destined to produce one of two explosions in the lives of His listeners. In one kind of person, the bombs Jesus threw would produce an explosion of grace, carrying the recipient out of the darkness of this world and into eternal life in the next. In another kind of recipient, the bombs Jesus threw would provoke in the heart a murderous rage that finally resulted in Jesus being nailed to the cross. The same verbal bombshell might provoke either of those reactions depending on the condition of the listener’s heart. Tonight, we continue our studies from the Book of John, centering on one “word-bomb” that Jesus used at least seven different ways in John’s gospel. Our studies will center on Jesus’ persistent self-identification as “I Am.”<sup>1</sup> Why was this term so loaded? What made it so offensive to Jesus’ enemies and so attractive to the people who responded to its call? **Exodus 3:13–15** gives us the answer: **13** *Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”* **14** *God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”* **15** *God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.* Simply put, Jesus’ listeners were either attracted to Him or repelled from Him because He used the covenant name of God, “I Am,” to identify Himself. In the coming weeks, we’ll study each of Jesus’ uses of that name referencing Himself. Tonight, we begin with the first of those – “I Am the Bread of Life.”

**Proposition:** Jesus is the Bread of Life. All who believe in Him will hunger and thirst no more forever.

Billboard:<sup>2</sup>

(vv.35;48;51)	Something Jesus Said About Himself
(vv.37;44)	Something Jesus Said About Those Who Come to Him
(vv.39-40)	Something Jesus Said About His Father

(vv.35;48;51) Something Jesus Said About Himself - Three times Jesus said to His listeners, “I am the bread of life.” **John 6:35 35** *Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.* **John 6:48 - 48** *I am the bread of life.* **John 6:51-51** *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”* What did Jesus mean by this and why did He choose the sign of bread as a representation of Himself? Jesus’ use of this symbol flows from two previous events. First, the people to whom Jesus was speaking were some of those who just one day before had been filled with the loaves and fish at the feeding of the five thousand. These people had seen the *miracle*, but not the *sign*. They knew Jesus had done something extraordinary by multiplying the bread and fish – power to produce daily bread was in His hands. But they missed the *sign*, the *meaning* of the miracle: that the great “I Am” – the One who multiplies bread and fish everyday had come down to them from heaven. Their interest was entirely in the earthly, the “horizontal” issue of

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<sup>1</sup> Some commentators find eight uses of the identifier “I Am” in John. I’m following seven identified by Warren Wiersbe.

<sup>2</sup> This basic outline comes from J. C. Ryle.

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food. Jesus was the heavenly bread they needed and was speaking to them about the “vertical” issue of eternal life. They were oblivious to this and simply wanted to come and make Jesus their king so that they could have daily bread on their tables without laboring for it (cf. Genesis 3:19). So, the first event that triggered Jesus’ use of bread as a sign was the feeding of the five thousand, a sign that identified Him as the “*I Am*” of the Old Testament. The second event (though first chronologically) was the manna given from heaven to God’s people in the wilderness (cf. Exodus 16:35). In the wilderness, God provided bread from heaven to satisfy the *physical* needs of His people. Their hunger was satisfied, and their bodies were sustained by the bread sent from heaven. Jesus chose the symbol of bread to say to His listeners, “I am the Bread that comes down from heaven, not to satisfy your *physical* hunger, but your *spiritual* hunger; not to quench your *physical* thirst, but your *spiritual* thirst. I am the satisfying Bread you need which if you eat of it will result in eternal life – not merely the temporary life on earth you are so concerned about.” Jesus identified Himself as God and called Himself the “*living bread that came down from heaven,*” that gives eternal life.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Jesus said of Himself, “*I am the bread of life.*”

[ILLUSTRATION] The world hungers for daily bread. Ever since the Garden of Eden, Adam’s children have been laboring by the sweat of their brow to put food on the table so that life can be sustained. The daily struggle goes on for millions, and not always with success. Physical life can only be sustained, and only temporarily at that, by daily bread. But, how much greater in our world is the famine that kills men’s souls – “*a famine for hearing the words of the Lord*”?<sup>3</sup>

[APPLICATION] Jesus is the Living Word, the Bread of Life that can forever satisfy the hunger and thirst of man’s soul. But how does one eat that bread? Jesus did not leave us in doubt: **John 6:35 - 35** *Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.* If we would eat the Bread of Life, we must come to Jesus just as we are. Come bringing all our sins, all our weakness, all our creepiness, all our failures, and lay them at His pierced feet. Our spiritual hunger cannot be satisfied until we give up on ourselves. And our spiritual thirst for life eternal cannot be quenched until we believe in Him. To believe means that we Admit that we are sinners; Believe that He is the Savior; and Confess that we must have Him for our own or we will die. It’s the old “A, B, C” method: Admit, Believe, Confess (or Call). The Bread of Life is still available today to any who will come and dine. It’s as simple as “A, B, C.”

(vv.37;44) Something Jesus Said About Those Who Come to Him – Wonderful as the good news is, the text confronts us with the fact that not everyone who sees the miracle accepts the sign. **John 6:41–42 - 41** *So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” 42 They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”* Remember who is making the statement: it is those who only one day before ate and were filled with the bread and fish Jesus multiplied. They saw the miracle but rejected its meaning. Why? Because their minds were consumed with the horizontal things of earth.

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<sup>3</sup> Amos 8:11

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“We know his mother; we know his father. How can he say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” They stumbled because they thought they knew Him, but, they were in spiritual darkness – ignorance of God, knowing neither the Father nor the Son. In verses 37 and 44 Jesus explained their difficulty: **John 6:37 - 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. John 6:44 - 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.** For anyone to come to Jesus, the Father must have first *given* them to Jesus. For anyone to believe in Jesus the Father must first *draw* that one to Jesus. The language is unmistakable, and its meaning is plain: God is always previous in all matters, and never more so than in the matter of salvation. John has already explained this to us in **John 1:9–13 - 9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.** So, God is previous in salvation, but man must respond to God’s invitation to life through His Son. The same Bible that teaches us God’s sovereignty, teaches us man’s responsibility. It’s a divine mystery we can’t wrap our minds around. God is 100% responsible for our salvation; yet man is 100% responsible for his choices. God isn’t willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9) and yet some do perish, and it is their fault entirely (Matthew 23:37). While we may not be able to resolve the mystery of the intersection between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, one thing is plainly stated by Jesus that gives us great comfort: **John 6:37 - 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.** WHOEVER comes to Jesus will NEVER be cast out. God’s sovereignty and man’s response are somehow working together to produce an eternal result – one that neither the Father nor the Son will ever go back on.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Jesus said to all who come to Him, “*I will never cast [you] out.*”

[ILLUSTRATION] The doctrine of God’s sovereignty is a soft pillow for believers to rest their heads on at night. We may not understand all things about the intersection of God’s previous working, and our present response – there are divine paradoxes we can’t get our heads around. Nevertheless, they are true. But here is a word to rest on: Have you come to Jesus the best way you know how? Then He says to you, “*I will never cast [you] out.*”

[APPLICATION] If you have heard the call of Jesus, and you have responded the best way you know how, go home and sleep well. You have His word on it: “*I will never cast [you] out.*”

(vv.39-40) Something Jesus Said About His Father – In these two verses, Jesus reveals to us His Father’s will: **John 6:39–40 - 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.** Jesus tells us two things about God the Father’s will. First, He tells us that the Father wills that Jesus will retain everything the Father gives Him. God has given to Jesus all things, but it is obvious that what Jesus is specifically referring to are the people in verse 37 He says the Father has given Him. Here is a promise to

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all who respond to the call of Jesus: He will lose not even one of those the Father has given Him but will absolutely “raise him up on the last day.” Second, to drive His point home and make this doubly certain He follows up this categorical statement with another revelation of God’s will in verse 40: The Father wills that EVERYONE who looks to Jesus for salvation will have eternal life and be raised on the last day. When things are thus repeated by God *it is always done for our assurance*. It is God’s way of making us doubly sure of receiving the thing He has promised.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Jesus said of His Father, “He absolutely wills that all who believe in Me will have eternal life.”

[ILLUSTRATION] The story is told in Numbers 21:5 of the people of God complaining against God and Moses during their Wilderness journey. “*Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness,*” they asked, “*For there is no food and water, and we loathe this worthless food.*” The manna God had given them, the bread from heaven God sent to sustain their life on the journey had become tiresome to them, so the Lord sent fiery serpents among them, and the people died from their bite. When the people repented, God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole in the sight of the people. Whoever looked to the bronze serpent would live, even though he had been bitten by the serpent. All anyone needed to do was look and live.

[APPLICATION] Jesus tied that story to Himself in **John 3:14–15 - 14** *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.* Ryle makes the application: “*Our Lord draws a picture... from the story of the brazen serpent, by which bitten Israelites in the wilderness were healed. Everyone that chose to ‘look’ at the brazen serpent might live. Just in the same way everyone who desires eternal life may ‘look’ at Christ by faith, and have it freely. There is no barrier, no limit, no restriction. The terms of the gospel are wide and simple. Everyone may ‘look and live.’ We are taught, furthermore, that Christ will never allow any soul that is committed to him to be lost and cast away. He will keep it safe, from grace to glory, in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Not one bone of his mystical body shall ever be broken.*”<sup>4</sup> What a blessed word of reassurance to the struggling saint! Jesus is the Bread of Life given by the Father so that all who believe in Him may have life. Jesus commits Himself to raise up at the last day whoever puts their faith in Him. The Father wills that nothing can keep the one who trusts Jesus from being raised up on that day. If that is not good news, what is?

**Conclusion:** The point of this whole exercise is this: *God is for you*. Jesus hurled a “word-bomb” into the crowd that day and the explosion of grace it produced in the hearts of all who believe is still reverberating around the world in our day. The Bread of Life has come and all who look to Him in faith will live forever, raised up on the last day. The gospel is indeed good news for modern man, and that good news is only true because Jesus is the great “*I Am.*”

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<sup>4</sup> J. C. Ryle, Expository Thoughts from the Book of John: Vol. 1 – Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, PA.