



Bread that Renders Humanity Superior to Death:

I am the bread of life, not bodily bread, which puts an end only to suffering from hunger and frees the flesh from perishing of it; rather, I remold the whole living being completely unto eternal life and render humanity, which was created to exist forever, superior to death...What then is Christ promising? Nothing corruptible; rather, he is promising that blessing in the participation of his holy body and blood, which raise a person completely to incorruptibility so that they need none of the provisions that drive away the death of the flesh.

—Cyril of Alexandria on John 6

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Around the Word BIBLE STUDY Eastertide, 2016

The I AM sayings of Jesus John 6:22–71

Session 1: “I AM the Bread of Life”

Bread is a food of the Fall. East of Eden, bread takes work. Seeds are sown. The farmer harvests. The miller grinds. The baker bakes. The truck delivers. The shelves are stocked. The grocer sells. Then we buy and eat. This is our daily bread. And yet, the bread that sustains us is also a sign of our mortality. Bread fills us one moment, and leaves us hungry the next. Bread comes from the earth and feeds our bodies which will one day return to the earth.

What a contrast to Jesus’ declaration, *I AM the Bread of Life*. By the sweat and blood of his brow, Jesus labored under the weight of our sin for you; he suffered and wrestled with thistle and thorn on the cross for you. And then he returned to the dust of the earth for you. Jesus swallowed Adam’s bread of death in order to give you the Living Bread of his flesh and raise you to life. Now, in the Lord’s Supper, Jesus takes the food of the Fall, fills it with his death and resurrection, and turns it into a feast of forgiveness for you. In Jesus’ flesh we have bread that brings immortality. Jesus’ body is true food that will never perish, and in eating and drinking his body and blood, he guarantees that you will never perish either.

Opening: Psalm 145:13–21

¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting | kingdom,*
and your dominion endures throughout all gener- | ations.

**The LORD is faithful in | all his words*
and kind in | all his works.**

¹⁴The LORD upholds all who are | falling*
and raises up all who are | bowed down.

¹⁵**The eyes of all | look to you,*
and you give them their food in due |
season.**

¹⁶You open | your hand;*
you satisfy the desire of every | living thing.

¹⁷**The LORD is righteous in | all his ways*
and kind in | all his works.**

¹⁸The LORD is near to all who | call on him,*
to all who call on | him in truth.

¹⁹**He fulfills the desire of those who | fear
him;
he also hears their cry and | saves them.**

²⁰The LORD preserves all who | love him,*
but all the wicked he | will destroy.

²¹**My mouth will speak the praise | of the
LORD,*
and let all flesh bless his holy name for
ever and | ever.**

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit.**

**as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

Read John 6:22–71

v. 26–27: “Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.””

Why are the crowds following Jesus to Capernaum? What contrast of foods does Jesus present in his teaching at the beginning of the bread of life discourse (v.27)? What is the result of man’s food? What is the result of God’s food?

Read Genesis 3:1–19. Why does Jesus say that the food the crowds were laboring for perishes? How do we as sinful fallen people labor for food (and other material possessions) that perish?

v. 29: “Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

The crowds were stuck on what they must do for God. Why are they asking the wrong question? How does Jesus reverse this commonly held opinion?

v. 32–34: Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave

you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.””

According to Jesus, who gave Israel bread in the wilderness? How is this a foreshadowing of Jesus’ own life and ministry?

In Genesis 3, how was Adam to make bread? Contrast this with Exodus 16. How is the bread God gives different from the bread that man must labor for? How does Jesus embody this bread from heaven? What sign do the crowds give that they still don’t understand Jesus’ words?

v. 35: “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

Four times in John 6, Jesus says “I AM the Bread of Life”. What does that tell us as we read and hear these words?

Read John 4:13–15. Notice how Jesus weaves his earlier statements of living water into this chapter. Why does Jesus use the language of food and drink to describe his saving work?

v. 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 cares for us in both body and soul, as we pray in the Lord’s Prayer. How is Jesus’ promise in this verse (and in v. 39) a comfort for us in body and soul?

v. 44: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”

Again Jesus points to salvation as God’s work alone. Why is this verse comforting to us in our faith in Christ?

v. 48–51: “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 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 is the effect of Adam’s bread and Moses’ bread? How is Jesus’ bread of life different? According to Jesus, what is the bread that he gives? Where does Jesus give us his flesh for the life of the world? See 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.

v. 53–54: So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you,

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unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

What benefits does Jesus speak of for those who eat his flesh and drink his blood? How is this similar to what Jesus gives us in the Lord’s Supper? How are Jesus’ words about both faith and the Sacrament of the Altar? What do we miss if we exclude one or the other from this section of Scripture?



v. 56: “Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”

How do Jesus’ words parallel his teaching in John 15:1ff, where he declares I AM the Vine?

v. 59: “Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.”

The context at the beginning of John 6 is the Passover; here, the synagogue is mentioned. Why is this significant?

v. 63: “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”

Read John 1:12–13. Why must it be the Spirit who give us life in Christ and understanding of God’s Word? Whose flesh is referenced here?

v. 68–69: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

Where do we hear Jesus’ words of eternal life regularly? See Ephesians 3:8–10. What makes Jesus’ word different from all other words that promise life and hope?

Closing: At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing (LSB, 633; st. 4)

Praise we Christ, whose blood was shed,
Paschal victim, paschal bread;
With sincerity and love
Eat we manna from above. Alleluia!

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