

"I AM"

Seven Great Claims of Christ in the Gospel of John

"I AM... The Bread of Life"

John 6:22-71

Sunday | April 17th, 2016 | Pastor Patrick Bowler

CONSULT THE SCRIPTURES

John 6:1-71

Exodus 11, 12 and 16

Deuteronomy 18:15-19

Colossians 2:17

Hebrews 8:5-7, 10:1-5

Psalms 34:1-8

CONSULT THE SCHOLARS

[Patrick Bowler] "The Old Testament types ¹ of Christ provide such a rich glimpse into the person and work of Jesus. The aforementioned Jewish historical events (The Passover and the manna in the wilderness) fit this qualification. For example, the Passover (the type) foreshadowed Christ's substitutionary death on our behalf on the cross (the antitype, or fulfillment). Thus the Apostle Paul referred to Christ as, "our Passover lamb" (1 Cor. 5:7). At this point, it is important that we ask the question, 'which is of greater value, the type or its fulfillment?' If the former's sole purpose is to direct attention to the latter, does that not suggest that the fulfillment is of greater importance? Paul, concerning the Sabbath and Jewish festivals, wrote that, "These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (Col. 2:17). The book of Hebrews speaks at length on the value difference between the old covenant and the new (See Heb. 8, 10). The writer of Hebrews continues by referring to the law as having "but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities" (Heb. 10:1). The Apostle Paul wrote that the glory of the new covenant "far exceed[s]" that of the old.² Thus we understand that Jesus is greater than manna, since manna's very substance is Christ.

The ministry of Jesus was met by a similar response to that of the frosted flakes on the desert floor 1500 years earlier. The Israelites' response to seeing the manna on the ground was to ask, "What is it?" Israel's response to the ministry of

Jesus was to ask, "Who is this?" For example, after Jesus told the sinful woman in Luke 7 that her sins were forgiven,³ the others in the room responded by asking, "Who is this, who even forgives sins" (Lk. 7:49)? His teaching also begged the same question; those in the crowd were often "astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes" (Mk. 1:22). After the healing of a demon possessed man in Capernaum, the crowd responded, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him" (Mk. 1:27). Yet another time, Jesus and His disciples were in a boat during a storm. Jesus was taking a nap and His disciples, overcome with fear, woke Him. He rebuked the wind, which resulted in a "great calm" (Matt. 8:26). The disciples said to one another, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him" (Matt. 8:27). The response was no different following Jesus' miraculous provision of food in John 6, which has already been discussed. No wonder the crowd pursued Him into the second day.

... The Israelites had left Egypt for the Sinai wilderness and it wasn't long before the provisions they had brought with them were depleted. Bread was an essential part of the biblical diet; to have it or not was metaphorical for well being.⁴ In the Old Testament, when judgment was brought on Israel for their idolatry, God spoke of breaking their "supply of bread,"⁵ thus removing His divine provision and protection from the land. In contrast, by providing the manna in the wilderness, God was communicating that He was with them and that His hand would sustain them in providing for their physical needs. It was in this original provision of "bread from heaven" that God not only sustained their physical lives, but foreshadowed provision for their eternal lives in Christ. This eternal need was, of course, their greatest need and therefore would require something greater than manna to meet it. This is wrapped up in Christ's claim to be "the bread of life." He brought further clarification in the latter part of verse 35 when He said, "Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." This is extremely reminiscent of His discussion with the Samaritan woman in John 4. Like before, He was not referring to physical hunger and thirst here; He was speaking to their greatest need for eternal life.⁶

¹ "A type is... an entity found in the OT that prefigures one found in the NT. The initial one is called the "type" and the fulfillment is designated the "antitype." Either type or antitype may be a person, thing, or event, but often the type is messianic and frequently refers to salvation" (Elwell, Walter A.; Comfort, Philip Wesley: Tyndale Bible Dictionary. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2001 [Tyndale Reference Library], S. 1276).

² 2 Corinthians 3:7-11

³ Lk. 7:48

⁴ Ryken, LeLand, Dictionary of Biblical Imagery (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998) p. 117

⁵ Lev. 26:26; Ezek. 5:15, 14:13

⁶ Patrick Bowler, Jesus' Self-Attestation, "I Am The Bread Of Life," (Missional Christology, Resurgence Training Center, Oct. 2009), p. 11-17.

DISCUSS

1. Pastor Patrick talked about the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament as being one of promise and fulfillment. Explain.

Notes:

2. In the Old Testament, in what ways does God's provision of manna (i.e. "bread from heaven") serve as a promise? What about the Passover feast in the Old Testament?
3. In Col. 2 and Heb. 8, 10, it talks about the relationship between a shadow and its substance. Which is greater, the shadow or the substance?
4. If the Passover and the provision of manna are promises, what is the fulfillment in the New Testament?
5. In light of the Passover, provision of manna and Jesus' miracle of feeding the 5000, what is the significance of Jesus' claim in Jn. 6:35 ("I am the bread of life")?
6. Read Jn. 6:60-71. Why the difference in the responses between the "many disciples" and the "twelve?" What is your response to Jesus' claim?
7. What immediate applications can be made in light of this text?