

I am the Bread of Life
John 6:35

Jesus never wrote a book. Yet no other person in history has had more books written about them. The closest we come to biography are the Gospel accounts. Perhaps the closest we come to autobiography are the seven "I am" statements of Jesus in John's gospel which raised the ire of the religious leaders. They regarded Jesus committing blasphemy, laying claim to the revelation of God's great name "I am who I am" given to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14,15).

Scholars have spent the last five thousand years trying to understand the meaning of "I am who I am" and there is still no consensus. No doubt Moses spent the rest of his life trying to figure out exactly what it meant. By asking God to reveal his name, Moses was seeking to understand the essence of God's character, his quintessential being. God's name was more than a name. It represented his very being, his entire character and attributes. The mystery of an eternal, unchangeable God who does not owe his existence to anyone else, eternally present embracing the past and the future is beyond human comprehension.

God's name is inscrutable, so hard to comprehend. There are some things we will never understand. At the expense of appearing flippant, God is who he is. And that's all there is to it. Beyond time, he has no past or future as we know it, only an eternal present. As Matthew Henry observed, "The greatest and best person in the world must say, 'By the grace of God I am what I am' but God says absolutely, and it is more than any creature, person or angel can say, 'I am who I am'". Likewise, Alexander McLaren wrote "You and I have to say, 'I am what I have become', or 'I am that which I was born to' or 'I am that which circumstances have made me'. God said 'I am who I am'. All other creatures are links. All other being is derived and therefore limited and changeful. Because we live, we die. But God lives forever, a flame that does not burn out. He gives and is none the poorer. He works and never grows tired. He loves and he loves forever. And the fire burns on, unconsumed and undecayed."

However, we are more privileged than Moses, God has given us a new name to call him. It is the name, the only name by which we must be saved viz Jesus. When Jesus declared "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35), he was revealing the human face of God. No other person, no human ideology, no religious system, no amount of sincerity or morality will suffice. Only faith and trust in Jesus will pacify the longing of the human heart, satisfy the hunger of the soul and quench its thirst. Just as bread is necessary for life, is suitable for everyone and needs to be eaten daily, so too the presence of Jesus is essential for spiritual life. Jesus was quite clear, quoting Moses... "man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4). May we never be content with eating sporadically, picking at our spiritual food with a jaded appetite. Jesus has prepared the richest of fare. May we come to his table and enjoy the banquet.

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