

The Gospel of John 6

Feeding the 5,000 is the only miracle recorded by all the Gospel writers, cf: Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44, and Luke 9:10-17. In the last chapter, Christ revealed Himself as the Giver of Life. Here He shows Himself as the support and guide of life.

John 6:1 After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is *the sea of Tiberias*.

If we are correct about the date of the miracle at Bethesda, that it was at the Passover, then this incident is about a year later. Matthew says Christ had just learned John the Baptist had been put to death. This was about the 3rd year of Christ's ministry. He cleansed the temple months before His 1st Passover, cf: John 2:13: the miracle of Bethesda was at His 2nd Passover, cf: 5:4. This was the 3rd Passover, cf: John 5:1 and Jesus then left Herod's jurisdiction. Luke explains why Luke says that "Herod sought to see Jesus." The sea of Tiberias was better known to Gentile readers than the Sea of Galilee.

John 6:2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

Great multitudes follow and throng Him so that He has no leisure even to eat. From all parts of the land they come to listen to His teachings and be healed.

John 6:3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

The mountain and the eastern shore was uninhabited.

John 6:4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

The time of year is noted by the freshness of spring, around April 1st. Passover began on April 17th, in the year 29 AD, and crowds gathered for the journey to Jerusalem. The gathering of a crowd, even as large as 5,000, for so famous a teacher, was not unusual. Maybe the plots to kill him explain why Jesus did not attend this 3rd feast, "His hour was not yet come".

John 6:5 When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

Other historians say He was filled with compassion. They had been fed no spiritual food, only man-made traditions. Jesus asked Philip about bread for them.

John 6:6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

Jesus often asked questions for their moral effect upon others.

John 6:7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

This was a sum that was beyond their ability to pay. A denarius, or, a penny was the hire of a day laborer in Israel.

John 6:8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

John 6:9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

Barley was the food of the poor lower class people. The fish were probably salted and dried.

John 6:10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

Mark says that they sat down in companies, literally, a suite of parties, in the form of a Roman tri-clin-ium or Greek symposium. A semi-circle with 3 sides often referred to in the New Testament as reclining at meals. It was in the month of Nisan "the month of flowers", or, the time of spring grass, thus, there was 1 loaf for every 1,000 men. Matthew account adds "besides women and children".

John 6:11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

He who eats without giving thanks is stealing from God.

John 6:12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

God does not allow wastefulness. Nature wastes nothing, not an ounce of matter is wasted.

John 6:13 Therefore they gathered *them* together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

John 6:14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. Cf:

Deuteronomy 18:18-19 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. 18:19 And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require *it* of him.

John the Baptist had denied he was that prophet.

John 1:21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

The expected prophet that Moses spoke of was to be king of Israel, and the head of the kingdom of God on earth.

John 6:15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

They are convinced that He is the Christ, and sought to proclaim Him king. Here to before, His acts had been of individual miracles, but here was a public act performed in the sight of thousands, who had shared in the benefit. This must be their king who would banish want and labor, and revive the good old days, when their fathers were fed manna or bread from heaven.

John 6:16 And when even was *now* come, his disciples went down unto the sea,

Matthew and Mark say that they were sent down.

John 6:17 And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.

This was a boat large enough to carry a dozen persons.

John 6:18 And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.

Sudden gusts are common on the Sea of Galilee.

John 6:19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.

They were about 3 1/2 miles, or in the middle of the lake. “walking on the sea” are words common to all the evangelists and can have no other meaning than Jesus was bodily walking on the surface of the water.

John 6:20 But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.

The gospel message is a message of peace, literally “it is, I AM,” cf:

Exodus 3:14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

It is “I AM” who is coming to you, The Almighty Eternal Self Existent One, who rules the winds and waves.

John 6:21 Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

He can calm the tempests around us and carry us safely to the heavenly shore.

John 6:22 The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but *that* his disciples were gone away alone;

The people remained awhile because there were no other vessels.

John 6:23 (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:)

Tiberius is a place the Lord never entered.

John 6:24 When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.

These seekers were deeply impressed by the miracle of the day before, and were among those who would have made Him king.

John 6:25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?

They were astonished to find Him there. He had not crossed the sea with His disciples in the boat, and, He had not come with them, so, how did He get there?

John 6:26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

Jesus reveals their true motives; they followed Him not because He was the Prophet who should come into the world, but because He supplied their physical needs. Not because He taught them, but because He fed them. They came not for love, but for loaves.

John 6:27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

Jesus prohibits making the acquisition of food and worldly things the leading object of life. The chief anxiety of life should not be for bodily food, but for food of the soul, the bread of life. Just as Jesus taught the woman at the well, and used the similitude of water, here He speaks of the same thing under the similitude of food. Sealing is the mark of approval of authority. A legal document must bear the seal of the state to give it force. The Father has put His seal upon the work of the Son. His miracles were a Divine seal. In the ancient Holy Land a seal was used as we use a signature today.

John 6:28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

The seekers are eager for more information. They were told to work for the food of eternal life. The word 'work' was impressed in their minds. They painfully kept the law and rabbinical precepts in the hope that they were working the works of God. Their question shows they are teachable.

John 6:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

It is not works but rather one work that is required. A real trusting belief or faith, which will enable us to lay hold upon and follow all things related to a Christ-like life. Pharisees, Romanists, Muslims and Pagans have always sought to "do the works of God" by: pilgrimages, penances, vows and self-mortifications. So Martin Luther sought to do as he climbed on his knees up a "Pilate's staircase" in Rome and the words kept coming into his mind: "The just shall live by faith" Hebrews 10:38

John 6:30 They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

Jesus had pointed to Himself as the object of faith, such a claim had never been made by any mortal man. They now ask for a sign.

John 6:31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

He may have fed 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 little fishes the day before but what was that compared to feeding the whole host of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness. Therefore the sign they now suggest shows Christ had indeed read their hearts when He said they sought Him because of the loaves and fishes.

John 6:32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

The "true bread" is not the manna, that spoils and perishes, but the true bread that is for the soul food, and not food for the body.

John 6:33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

True bread comes from heaven; it gives life to the soul and sustains it. It is for the world not a single race like the Jews. The manna lasted only one day, all who ate it died and it was for one race of people. This food is different.

John 6:34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

Notice the resemblance to the words of the woman at the well found in John 4:15. Like Ponce de Leon, who sought the fountain of immortal youth in Florida, they thought this food would literally make them immortal and eagerly clamored for it.

John 6:35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

They asked for this bread. He answers, it is here right before you, I am that bread. Coming and believing in are equivalent to eating and drinking.

John 6:36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

They had asked for a sign in order that they might believe, which was a confession of their unbelief. They ask for the bread of life, but they can only partake of it by believing in Him.

John 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

The Jews may reject Him, but all whom the Father gives, of every race; will come to Him. The whole body of believers, Gentiles as well as Jews, are given to the Son by the Father. God promotes a state of heart in which they are induced to listen to the voice of Jesus. Everyone that cometh is sure of a hearty welcome. No repentant sinner, no matter how despised, is rejected.

John 6:38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

The Father's will is that He should save the world. Everything was to be subordinated to this purpose.

John 6:39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

The Son will lose none of those given, but will raise every soul at the last day. We must "abide in Him" if we are to continue to live.

John 6:40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

The Father's will is paramount. There is not any secret decree of election. The will of the Father applies to everyone who believes on the Son.

John 6:41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

The Jewish rulers and authorities found fault and tried to raise discontent among those who had listened willingly to Christ.

John 6:42 And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?

If He is Joseph's son, how could He have come down from Heaven? Their argument is that He was human-born and hence, only a man. They no doubt were ignorant of His miraculous conception and virgin birth.

Christ never refers to it, for He did not bear witness of Himself.

John 6:43 Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

These men are not honest inquirers but cavaliers.

John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

There are two elements; the human will, and the Divine drawing, a man can refuse to come, cf:

Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

The ball I hold in my hand is “drawn” to the earth by attraction, but can be kept away by another force, if the sinner refuses by his own free will, to let the ball go. The Father draws the soul to Christ, and the Son takes up the work and will raise him from the dead.

John 6:45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

Isa 54:13 And all thy children *shall be* taught of the LORD; and great *shall be* the peace of thy children.

Christ shows how the Father draws, it is by teaching men. What they learn from the Father makes them willing to come.

John 6:46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

Men do not learn from the Father by seeing and hearing Him personally but from His Old Testament words, and the New Testament words of the Son, cf:

Hebrews 1:1-2 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

John 6:47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

Here Jesus returns to His former subject, and affirms that belief in He Himself is the Source of Life.

John 6:48 I am that bread of life.

The multitude had spoken of the manna given to their fathers.

John 6:49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

They had all perished, for it was not the “bread of life”.

John 6:50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

Only the true bread from heaven can give life.

John 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

He now goes one step further and declares that bread is His flesh.

John 6:52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us *his* flesh to eat?

They could not comprehend what He had just said.

John 6:53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

The Jews had already stumbled over His statement that His flesh must be eaten, but, as was His custom, He now reiterates His statement in still stronger language. Not only must His flesh be eaten, but they must also drink His blood. While Catholics suppose this is literal, others think the language is a parable. Plainly, it is teaching we must be a partaker of the benefits of His death; His slain body and shed blood.

John 6:54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

By His death, He has given His flesh for the life of the world. We should therefore be planted or buried in the likeness of His death and raised in the likeness of His resurrection. cf: Rom 6:3-6

John 6:55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

Our souls hunger and thirst is satisfied, the body does not feed upon it but the soul.

John 6:56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

By this eating one enters into and partakes of Christ's life.

John 6:57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

It was the meat of Jesus to do the will of the Father. We eat Christ, our meat, by making His will the will of our lives.

John 6:58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

Manna sustained life for a day, but it could not impart it, for it was dead food. The spiritual bread from heaven is endued with life, hence, gives eternal life.

John 6:59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

This ends the discourse in the Synagogue and is followed by a third discourse to His disciples.

John 6:60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

John 6:61 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?

They murmured because they expected an earthly king; not a crucified Savior.

John 6:62 *What* and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

Now, He points out even greater marvels than eating His flesh and drinking His blood. He came from heaven and will return there. While Jesus often speaks of His return to the Father, this is the only passage in the New Testament in which the Lord speaks of His ascension.

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

My words are spirit and life. He who feeds upon them, making them his soul food, and governs his life by them, will be made alive.

John 6:64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

They had no living, appropriating, trusting faith.

John 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Jesus explained this in verses 44 and 45.

John 6:66 From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

They were unbelieving. Their faith was not strong enough to accept the great doctrine of eating His flesh.

John 6:67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Christ was sad that these had turned away.

John 6:68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

Peter is always prompt in his answer.

John 6:69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

The same confession that Peter made at Cesarea Philippi, cf: Matt 16:13ff

John 6:70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

I choose you and one has already fallen away. Literally: Diabolical from the Greek *diabolos* (dee-ab'-ol-os), not *daimonion* (dahee-mon'-ee-on).

John 6:71 He spake of Judas Iscariot *the son* of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

The words were well calculated to cause each one to examine himself.