

Heaven's Bread John 6:1-15

First: Preparing for the Miracle 1-4

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. ² And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. ³ Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

1. Jesus and the Crowds
 - a) The “*after these things*” is the Bethesda healing and confrontation with the Jews
 - b) The great multitude is mentioned in the Synoptics.
 - c) Luke says Jesus went to a deserted place to be alone (Lk 9:10).
 - d) The Sea of Galilee has had different names over the centuries, but most seem to think it was called the Sea of Galilee during Jesus time. The city of Tiberias is believed to have been established around 20AD.
 - e) They saw the signs.
 - f) Luke 9:11 tells us that Jesus also taught the multitudes, something that John doesn't mention

John 6:2 – “*was following*” = *kept on coming & continually saw*

- g) The Passover – We can date Jesus's ministry by following the Passovers
- h) Passover is associated with the Exodus. Jesus is the new Moses and preaching in Exodus.
- i) Mountain = Golan heights

Second: Jesus's Question. 5-7

Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” ⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. ⁷ Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.”

- a) Jesus asked Philip because Philip was from Bethsaida (John 1:4) and this is where this miracle takes place (Lk 9:10)
- b) V 4 - Jesus asked this question to test Philip because he knew what he was going to do.
- c) Throughout his ministry, Jesus is preparing the disciples for ministry after he is gone. He is always teaching them. (Collateral conversations)
- d) There are two parts to their problem:
 - They don't have enough food to feed the multitude

- They don't have enough money either (6 months wages)

"he [Philip] left out one small element in his calculation, and that was Jesus Christ"

- Andrew McClaren

Third: Andrew's Help. 8-9

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹ "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?"

- Andrew first introduced Peter to Jesus (John 1:40-42). Now he introduces a young man to Jesus. Introducing people to Jesus is a great ministry.
- "boy" = double diminutive = little boy
- Barley is a simple food speaking to the poverty of the boy. It was only of 1/3 value of wheat.

Ezekiel 13:19 – You have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, putting to death souls who should not die and keeping alive souls who should not live, by your lying to my people, who listen to lies.

Israel profaned God with barley and bread. Jesus is about to honor God with the same.

- Two small fish – Other writers = *ichthys*. John calls them *osparia*, salted fish, more like relish
- The boy, the barley and the fish all speak to the 'smallness' in this moment.

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 - The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

2 Corinthians 4:7 - But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 - My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The Greek word for fish is "ichthys." As early as the first century, Christians made an acrostic from this word: *Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter*, i.e. *Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior*.

I	X	Θ	Υ	Σ
Ιησους	Χριστος	Θεου	Υιος	Σωτηρ
Jesus	Christ	of God	Son	Savior

- Greeks, Romans, and many other pagans used the fish symbol before Christians. Hence the fish, unlike, say, the cross, attracted little suspicion, making it a perfect secret symbol for persecuted believers.
- When threatened by Romans in the first centuries after Christ, Christians used the fish mark meeting places and tombs, or to distinguish friends from foes.
- According to one ancient story, when a Christian met a stranger in the road, the Christian sometimes drew one arc of the simple fish outline in the dirt. If the stranger drew the other arc, both believers knew they were in good company.



f) "What are they among so many?" – How many times have we seen this?

Fourth: Feeding the Five Thousand 10-11

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.

a) Sitting them all down – Jesus is in no hurry

"Our blessed Master has glorious leisure, because he is always punctual. Late people are in a hurry; but he, being never late, never hurries.

- Charles Spurgeon

b) Jesus fulfils the role of the Shepherd

Psalm 23:1-6 – *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with*

oil; my cup overflows. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD

c) This is foreshadowed in Elisha –

2 Kings 4:38-44 - *And Elisha came again to Gilgal when there was a famine in the land. And as the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, "Set on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets." ³⁹ One of them went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds, and came and cut them up into the pot of stew, not knowing what they were. ⁴⁰ And they poured out some for the men to eat. But while they were eating of the stew, they cried out, "O man of God, there is death in the pot!" And they could not eat it. ⁴¹ He said, "Then bring flour." And he threw it into the pot and said, "Pour some out for the men, that they may eat." And there was no harm in the pot. ⁴² A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And Elisha said, "Give to the men, that they may eat." ⁴³ But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred men?" So he repeated, "Give them to the men, that they may eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have some left.'" ⁴⁴ So he set it before them. And they ate and had some left, according to the word of the LORD.*

d) It answers the question asked in the Exodus -

Psalm 78: 18-19 - *They tested God in their heart by demanding the food they craved. They spoke against God, saying, "Can God spread a table in the wilderness?"*

e) He is also demonstrating his character and teaching *them*

Proverbs 11:24-25 - One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. ²⁵ Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.

f) There are 5,000 men, meaning there are more than 5,000 people.

g) "He gave thanks" – Jesus gave thanks for the small meal but also for what the meal would become. We should never minimize God's blessings or be less thankful for what appears to be something small

h) *Jesus took the loaves...distributed them to the disciples*

- Jesus, without need, employs us for our gain.
- Given to Jesus, what belongs to us is multiplied.

Bread comes from grain which has inherent multiplication power. But, when bread is made, the grain is crushed to make wheat, it effectively dies. You can't multiply wheat by planting flour. But God...But Jesus...multiplies dead grain, bringing life from death.

Think about God's arithmetic. These five loaves were multiplied by subtraction and division.

- In the wilderness, Jesus refused to feed himself bread from stones. But what he refused to do for himself, he does for us.
 - i) *"when they had eaten their fill"* – What extravagance! Not what they needed, but what they wanted.

Jesus was accused of "eating and drinking" (Mt 11:19) and while it was meant negatively, it is true. Jesus turned blindness to sight, brokenness to wholeness, segregation to reconciliation, death to life. What is there not to party about? And even this meal looks forward to a grander event

Revelation 19:6-9 - *Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹ And the angel said^[a] to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God.*

Fifth: Left-Over is More. 12-13

¹² *And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost."* ¹³ *So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.*

- j) Twelve baskets – It has been over 1400 years since Moses led Israel through the wilderness and God miraculously fed them. These twelve baskets remind us of Moses's 12 tribes and Jesus's 12 disciples.

Deuteronomy 18:15 - *The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen..."*

The little boy ended up with more than he started. He had what was sufficient for himself or his family but ended up with more than enough for a city

k) "Nothing is lost"

Luke 15:4 - *What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?*

John 17:9-12 - *I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*

One chapter later - - - John 18:1-11 - *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron...*

The Kidron Valley separates the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem. When David fled Absalom, he crossed the valley to escape (1 Sam 15). Jesus now crosses the valley to enter the Garden of Gethsemane. David escaped. Jesus is not intending to escape.

...where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. ² Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴ Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" ⁵ They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶ When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷ So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." ⁹ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one." ¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) ¹¹ So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

l) "Fragments" are not half-eaten morsels. We know this because....

m) "Basket" = kophinos = a large basket

Sixth: Acceptance & Rejection 14-15

¹⁴ *When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" ¹⁵ Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.*

Why did John write this gospel?

John 20:30-31 - *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

- a) Seeing this sign reminded them of Israel in the wilderness
- b) The people loved him for his signs, but we can't criticize them
- c) "King" is a political title. Jesus has no interest. This was just another satanic temptation. His kingdom is beyond and above this.
- d) Just as Moses delivered Israel from Egypt, the crowd wanted Jesus to deliver them from Herod Antipas and Roman rule

He who is already King has come to open His kingdom to men; but in their blindness men try to force Him to be the kind of king they want; thus they fail to get the king they want, and also lose the Kingdom He offered.

-William Morris