

## John 6, Bread of LIFE

Both last week's passage (John 5), and this week's passage have strong similarities. In both cases Jesus performs a miraculous sign, then he goes on to explain the meaning of it. This is the way Jesus shows what he is on about. And again, Jesus is showing that he's on about giving LIFE. But whereas last week, the Jewish people hated Jesus for what he said, this time we'll see that the people think what Jesus is just plain crazy! The question is ever before us, how will we respond to Jesus.



### Read John 6:1-15: Jesus and Giving Bread, Part 1

If you were there as a reporter from the 'Jerusalem Tribune' what would be your story headline to express what happened?



How would you describe the crowds in this situation?

How would you describe the disciples?

How would you describe Jesus?

In the midst of a potential catering disaster (!) John shows that Jesus is cool, calm and totally in control. He knows what he's about to do, and he does something truly amazing. A few loaves of bread and a couple of fish are turned into a banquet for over 5000 people. But in v14, in response to this feeding miracle, we're told that the people insist that Jesus must be 'the prophet'. This expectation of 'the prophet' comes from a promise given by God to the Jews over a thousand years beforehand that one day a prophet in the mold of Moses would come again. Have a read of Deuteronomy 18:15. We see that this expectation pops up a few times in John's gospel – 1:21 and 7:40.

We can see why the Jews would think this promise has come to be fulfilled with the coming of Jesus - there are some similarities between Moses and Jesus. Have a read of Exodus 16:1-18 which records what happened as the Israelites were traveling to the promised land after being rescued from Egypt. What similarities are there between what happened in Moses' time and with Jesus?

It's as if Jesus is re-enacting what happened all those years ago. Jesus does seem to be like another Moses figure, but then something happens in v15. Why do you think Jesus reacts the way he does?

### **Read 6:16-21: Jesus on the Lake**

If we thought feeding over 5000 people was impressive, Jesus backs it up with this! We're not going to spend much time on it and John does not spend much time describing it himself, but with what has just taken place, what might Jesus be trying to show his disciples by appearing to them in the way that he does?

It's worthwhile noticing that the disciples are not afraid because of the boating conditions. In fact some of them were fishermen and this lake and its weather would have been very familiar to them. They are afraid because they see Jesus walking on water. And can you blame them, how would have you felt in that situation? But in appearing as he does it seems that Jesus wants to show that he is wholly different to the person the crowds wanted him to be. He is not going to be used as a tool for other people's purposes. He's not going to be made a king at the whim of an excitable crowd. Read Psalm 107:28-30. He is the one who has power of the natural elements. He is even greater than 'the prophet' like Moses they expected. He is the Lord God. And he is going to show his kingship according to his own agenda.



Sea of Galilee was also known as Sea of Tiberius because the Jewish King Herod founded a city on the shore and named it after the Roman Emperor. The lake is 13 miles long wide and 7 miles wide, and in some parts is rimmed by mountains. Strong winds are known to sweep across the lake causing dangerous conditions. In 1992 a storm sent 10 feet high waves crashing into downtown Tiberius causing significant damage.

### **Read John 6:22-59: Jesus and Giving Bread, Part 2**

Jesus is now back in Capernaum on the other side of the lake and the crowd has followed him there. And the very last verse, v59, gives us the particular setting. Jesus is in the synagogue. And there in the synagogue this teacher is explaining the *sign*-ificance of the miraculous sign of the giving of the bread.

The crowds are chasing after Jesus, but according to Jesus in v26, what is their problem?

Jesus explains the meaning of the sign by way of comparing it to the event of the manna (ie. the bread – 'manna' comes from the Hebrew, 'what is it?' Exodus 16:15) given to the people in Moses' time. There may be similarities, but according to Jesus what is the big difference between what happened back then, and what Jesus is doing now? (v32, v49-50, v58)

It's like the crowd just isn't getting it. Firstly, they are simply chasing after Jesus because he can fill their stomachs. They aren't really seeing the sign for what it means. And secondly, even as Jesus tries to explain what the sign points to, it seems they think that Jesus is promising a bread that will fill their stomachs forever v34. But what or who is this bread?

Here we get to the first of Jesus' great 'I am' statements in John. They are claims that use important phrases (bread, light, shepherd, vine) from the Jewish scriptures, our Old Testament. We'll get to some of these statements in this series, but they really are statements without any qualification. Jesus is putting himself in the ultimate position. Jesus is saying he is essential for life.

**I am the bread of life - 6:35.**

I am the light of the world - 8:12.

I am - 8:58.

I am the gate - 10:7.

I am the good shepherd - 10:11.

I am the resurrection and the life - 11:25

I am the way, and the truth, and the life - 14:6

I am the true vine - 15:1

As with the other terms that Jesus uses to refer to himself, 'bread of life' conveys certain imagery. What do you think it means for Jesus to say, 'I am *the bread of life*'?

Bread might sound a little boring to us today. But back then bread was the essential food that sustained, nourished and satisfied. Bread was needed to live. When Jesus is saying I am the 'bread of life', he is saying he is the one who meets our deepest need. He is the one who fulfills the yearning of our heart for life. When we come to know Jesus, he satisfies our soul.

Where do people go to find satisfaction and fulfillment today?

As the bread that gives life, what perspective does Jesus give to our future v39, 40, v44, 54?

Right through John's gospel, we see how Jesus keeps talking about how there will be a future resurrection day. How is this perspective on the future reality a challenge for us?

In v41 and v60-61, the people react to what Jesus has said in a certain way. What is their reaction and in each case, what are they reacting to:

v41 (look ahead in the next verse)-

v60-61 (look back in the previous verses) -

Their first grumble is about how can Jesus claim he is the bread from heaven when they think they know where he comes from – he is the son of Joseph v41. But right through John we are constantly being shown who Jesus really is and where Jesus is from – he is the Son of God, the one sent from the heavenly Father (what we looked at it in chapter 5). The second grumble is about the hard teaching of *'I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you'* v53. That's gory weird stuff! Perhaps they have good reason to grumble. But if you trace Jesus' words back – v47, v40, v35, v29-30 what does Jesus mean?

By speaking of his flesh and blood, Jesus is saying that they must believe in him even as something takes place. What is it?

### **Read John 6:60-71: Responses to Jesus**

What are the various responses to Jesus?

The disciples - v66

Peter & the other 10 disciples - v67-70

Judas v64 - v70-71

Even some of those who closely followed Jesus turn away. And Judas is the tragic one who not only turns away, but will also betray Jesus. But in the midst of this, there are those who stick with Jesus. These are the ones who come to Jesus because the Father enabled them (v65) and these are the one who Jesus will not drive away and will certainly not lose (v37-39).

For those that are Christian, what perspective does that give to your salvation?

As we think about telling others about the need to believe in Jesus, what encouragement is here for us, even when some people will treat the message as strange?

