

I AM...the Bread of Life**Read John, chapter 6, especially verses 26-40****I / INTRODUCTION: SOME SIGNIFICANCES OF THIS SIGN**

1 / There are actually two miracles that John will record in this narrative. These are the fourth and fifth signs that John will record in this Gospel to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that by believing in Him we may have life through His Name / **see ch 20.30-31**. For a list of those seven sign-miracles that John records, [see Lesson 5](#).

2 / The two miracles John will record here are: [1] The feeding of the five thousand by multiplying the five barley loaves and two fish ... this miracle is an act and work of His creative power as God / **vv 1-14**; and [2] His walking on the water / **vv 15-21**. Both of these miracle works required the suspension of what we call 'the laws of nature,' but are actually only the Creator of those very laws acting by different laws that superseded them to show His authority as God.

3 / The feeding of the five thousand is only miracle that Jesus worked that is recorded by all four Gospel writers. If you want to flesh out this occasion and fill in many other details, you can do so by comparing these other Gospel accounts: **Matthew 14.1-32; Mark 6.14-52; and Luke 9.7-17**.

4 / There is no way we can fully and adequately treat this whole chapter of 71 verses in this lesson. So all we want to do here is to summarize the miracle-sign that sets up the message Jesus will deliver the next day in the synagogue at Capernaum / **vv 22-59**. **In this message, Jesus will give His own Divine commentary on why He fed them physical bread the previous day, and what He was doing to show them His Glory [Deity], and to press on them their need to believe on Him as The True Bread the Father was giving them from Heaven.**

5 / Sadly – they didn't see Him as such...as we shall see. **Do you?**

II / vv 1-15 / JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND

1 / This occasion comes some time after the events of **chapter 5**. The Jewish leadership had initiated their fierce opposition against Jesus and were conspiring to kill Him / **ch 5.18**

2 / **v 1** / Also, Jesus has retreated from Jerusalem and Judea to seek refuge in Galilee after Herod had beheaded John the Baptist. When Herod heard about Jesus' works, he wondered whether John the Baptist had been raised from the dead / **see the references in 3/ above**. Herod was also seeking a more personal meeting and audience with Jesus himself / **Luke 9.9**.

3 / This is one of the occasions when Jesus sought a time of rest, respite, retirement to have more time to commune with His Father and gain some physical and spiritual refreshment / **Mark 6.30-31 ff**. This locality that Jesus chose was a small grassy plain at the foot of a mountain outside of Bethsaida where He thought they might find some seclusion. It was not to be...

4 / **vv 2-4** / **And a large crowd was following Him because they saw the signs that He was doing on the sick...Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand**. These crowds were not only locals from the surrounding regions, but many were also pilgrims on the roads to Jerusalem to attend the Passover. They had heard about Jesus, and now they find out He is right there in the vicinity! They began to gather in droves to see Him and perhaps witness a miracle for themselves.

5 / Jesus had gone up into the mountain from 'alone time' with His disciples so He could teach and counsel them. These disciples were not only the twelve, but also other disciples who were 'following' Jesus. As it would turn out, many of these 'fringe' disciples would walk away and desert Jesus when He required that they surrender to and serve His Lordship / **see vv 66-71**.

6 / **v 5a** / When Jesus saw the multitudes coming to Him, He had compassion on them – mostly because He knew they were lost and without a shepherd / **Mark 6.33-34**.

7 / vv 5b-7 / **This is NOT ONLY a test – but it IS a TEST!** Jesus asked Philip where they could buy enough food to feed the crowd. Philip should know – he was from Bethsaida / **see ch 1.44. He said this to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.** The test was to see whether Philip and His other disciples would learn to trust Him to be the All-Sufficient Provider for all their needs. Jesus also knew what He would do because He had told them back in **chapter 5.20** that the Father was constantly showing Him, the Son, what He, the Father, is doing. The Father is going to do this ... and the Son is going to do it also. The Son is always revealing the heart of the Father.

8 / vv 8-10 / Andrew must have inquired and discovered a ‘young lad’ there who had brought a meager lunch with him. **There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?** Little is much when God is in it. Jesus took the scant food and instructed the disciples to have the crowd sit down in orderly groups.

9 / vv 11-13 / Jesus took the loaves and fish and gave thanks for them ... much like He would later do when He blessed and distributed the Passover meal at the Last Supper before His death / **see Matthew 26.26.** Here also, the broken and multiplied loaves were emblematic of His own death for our life when He will give Himself for us as our “Bread of Life.”

10 / **This was nothing less than an act of creation. The bread and fish were created in abundance in His hands as He broke and gave it to His disciples to be distributed among the hungry multitude.** Not only was everyone fed to the full and satisfied, but they also gathered up the leftovers and filled twelve ‘baskets’ or ‘ruck-sacks’ that everyone carried with them. They had much more ‘left over’ than they started with ... even after feeding the more than five thousand hungry bellies!

11 / vv 14-15 / The responses from the crowds exposed the superficiality of their hearts. In one word, they exclaimed when they saw this ‘sign’ that **This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!** referring to the Prophet like Moses that Yahweh had promised would come to tell them about Him / **see Deuteronomy 18.15-19.** Then their next response was to make a move to coerce Jesus or **take Him by force to make Him king.** Their intention was to ‘draft’ Jesus, take Him to Jerusalem, and enthrone Him as their king and deliverer to overthrow the Romans and take their ‘kingdom’ back to themselves.

12 / **This is NOT the Glory that Jesus was manifesting by this ‘sign.’ This is NOT the kingdom He had come to establish and reign over.** He had NOT come to set up and reign over a political, nationalistic kingdom. / **see ch 18.33-38.**

III / vv 16-21 / JESUS WALKS ON THE WATER

1 / vv 16-17 / What had transpired here is that Jesus knew He had to dismiss this crowd. They had seen His Deity in this miracle, but they had completely missed the message of it. Also, He didn’t want His disciples to be caught up in this moment and movement. So, He dispatched His disciples to get into the boat they were using and head for another shore / **see Matthew 14.22-23 & Mark 6.45-46.** After dismissing the crowd and sending them away, He retreated up into the mountain to be alone and to pray to the Father.

2 / vv 18-19 / This was another intentional follow-up miracle/lesson to what they had just witnessed. Had the disciples themselves learned that they could trust Jesus implicitly ... regardless of the seeming ‘impossibility’ of the circumstances they were facing? **This was another test to see how they would respond ... Jesus knew also this time what He would do.** A fierce storm broke out on the Sea of Galilee. This happened frequently. The Sea of Galilee is 600 feet below sea level, and the winds would cascade down the mountain slopes on the Sea and turn it into a raging cauldron. So it did here. When they had exhausted their efforts to row the ship to shore and had given up all hope, **they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat.** Mark 6.48 says, **And He saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them.** Yes, He saw them, knew their distress and panic,

and made His way to them, **walking on the very sea and through the very storm that was threatening to capsize them, take them under, and drown them!** He sees you, too!

3 / vv 20-21 / Jesus called out to them in their fright, **It is I; do not be afraid!** He is constantly calling out to us the same way! **Then they were glad to take Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.**

4 / This was the same occasion when Peter also walked on the water to go to Jesus at His invitation – until his own faith and trust in Jesus failed him and he began to sink.

5 / **Mark 6.51-52** will tell us that, at least in this present moment, they had failed to learn the lesson from the feeding of the five thousand – that they could trust Jesus in every difficulty and confounding circumstance. That’s the lesson they should have learned. But, **And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.**

6 / Our sanctification and faith in Jesus is always an on-going school of learning. We will utterly fail many of the ‘pop quizzes’ Jesus gives us along the way. We should always be asking for the meaning of the trials and afflictions we experience to learn what He wants to teach us about Himself and His Glory!

IV / vv 22-59 / “I AM...THE BREAD OF LIFE”

1 / **Here is the message of the miracle. Every miracle had a message it was delivering. Every miracle was a message about Jesus’ Deity, manifesting His Glory.** But most often, those who witnessed the miracle saw only the physical act that was performed and failed to ‘see’ or ‘hear’ the message that it communicated. Jesus didn’t perform His miracles just to be spectacular or to show off. They were not merely humanitarian acts of kindness. They were performed to show the Father’s heart and will toward us in sending Jesus, the Son, to save us from our sins ... to redeem us back to God.

2 / vv 22-25 / The crowd gathered again the next day where Jesus had miraculously fed them the day before. When they didn’t find Jesus there, and saw that the boat Jesus’ disciples had left in was still missing, they came in droves to Capernaum looking for Him. When they found Him, they scolded Him for skipping out on their scheme to coronate/inaugurate Him as their king – and also for not being there to feed them again.

3 / vv 26-29 / Jesus soundly rebuked them back. He exposed the superficiality and carnality of their desires. **Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him God the Father has set His seal.** Meaning, *“I was showing you your real, greatest, deepest need – to see Me as the Savior the Father has sent you to save you from your sins. But all you saw was the physical meal I fed you. That physical bread was a sign to you of the spiritual Bread that I AM, and that the Father has sent to you to feed, fill, and satisfy your true need and longing.”*

4 / From here on, I can only record the statements Jesus made about Himself as **the true message of the miracle.** There will be numerous objections, deflections, and rebuttals they will throw back at Jesus. But He will repeatedly bring them back to **the message of the miracle ... all culminating in His Deity Declaration “I AM!”** When Jesus makes His “I AM!” declarations, He is identifying Himself with the “I AM!” Name that Yahweh revealed Himself by to Moses at the burning bush / see **Exodus 3.13-15.**

5 / We will put each of these statements in the contexts in which they are given as we read the exchanges Jesus had with these unbelievers. **We also cannot spiritually ‘hear,’ receive, or understand these life-giving truths unless the Father draws us by the Holy Spirit and gives us understanding [see vv 37-40, 44-46, 63-65]. We pray He will!**

1. v 32 / Jesus then said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from Heaven, **but my Father gives you the True Bread from Heaven.**
2. v 33 / For **the Bread of God is He who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world.**

3. v 35 / Jesus said to them, **I AM the Bread of Life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in my shall never thirst.**
4. vv 47-51 / Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ **I AM the Bread of Life.** ⁴⁹ **Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.** ⁵⁰ **This is the Bread that comes down from Heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.** ⁵¹ **I AM the Living Bread that came down from Heaven.** If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live forever. And **the Bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.**
5. vv 53-58 / So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ **Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.** ⁵⁵ **For my flesh is True Food, and my blood is True Drink.** ⁵⁶ **Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.** ⁵⁷ **As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.** ⁵⁸ **This is the Bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this Bread will live forever.**”

6 / The ONLY WAY we can have eternal life is by believing and trusting in the Person of Christ whom the Father has sent to save us from our sins. He gave us the True, Living Bread of Life by the perfect, sinless life He lived, and then by the death He died for us as our Substitute. When we believe and trust in Him by faith, we receive and ‘feed’ on His own eternal life which He gives to us. He gives us the Living Bread of His own Life.

7 / And not only must we receive and ‘feed’ on Him to begin living His eternal life, but we must continue to ‘feed’ on Him to sustain that life. That is especially the message in the constant references to the manna ‘bread from Heaven’ that Jesus repeatedly references. That ‘bread from Heaven’ was not only how they were saved from starvation to begin with, but it was also supplied to them daily as the ‘food’ by which their lives were sustained daily for forty years! So, too, we must ‘abide’ in Christ by daily ‘eating His flesh’ and ‘drinking His blood’ which is given to us in the Gospel of His death and resurrection and ‘fed’ to us through His Word and the Holy Spirit.

V / vv 60-71 / “DO YOU WANT TO GO AWAY AS WELL?”

1 / Sadly, many of Jesus’ ‘disciples’ were only ‘bandwagon’ followers. Faith requires that we surrender ourselves to Jesus’ Deity and Lordship. When He began explaining the message of the miracle, many of those who claimed to be His disciples complained and objected: **This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?** Meaning, “No, we want you for what we can get from you and what we can get you to do for us. We’re not willing to surrender our whole lives to you!”

2 / Not only did they verbally reject Jesus, but **After this many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him.** Did they lose their salvation? NO! They just exposed themselves as hypocritical unbelievers who were only along for the free stuff. They were willing to ‘follow’ Jesus if He would be a free ‘food truck’ to satisfy their human appetites and desires. But if being a disciple means living in total surrender to His Lordship, they are not willing to count that cost and pay that price.

3 / Salvation from our sins and the gift of eternal life is FREE for the receiving by faith – but we must confess that “Jesus Christ is LORD!” when we receive Him.

4 / That’s when Jesus turned to twelve ... after they had witnessed the feeding of the five thousand and His walking on the stormy sea later that night and after they had just seen this bitter rejection of many who were not willing to receive the message of the miracle ... and He said, **Do you want to go away as well?** Simon Peter responded as we all must, **Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that You are the Holy One of God!**

DO YOU BELIEVE?