

## JOHN 6 | Bread of Life

### *Fourth Sign: Jesus Feeds the 5000<sup>1</sup>*

1 After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.<sup>2</sup> 2 And a large crowd was following him,<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.<sup>5</sup>

5 Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip,<sup>6</sup> Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?<sup>7</sup> 6 He said this to test<sup>8</sup> him, for he himself knew what he would do.<sup>9</sup> 7 Philip answered him, Two hundred denarii<sup>10</sup> worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little. 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 There is a boy here who has five barley

---

<sup>1</sup> All four gospels mention this event (Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:32-44; Lk 9:10-17). The feeding of the 5000 was an important sign, and the disciples never forgot it. Reading the gospel accounts together, we learn: (1) Jesus retreated here when he learned John the Baptist had been beheaded (Mt 14:10-13); (2) the apostles had returned to Jesus after their mission to Israel and needed rest (Mk 6:30-31; Lk 9:10); (3) it was a desolate place (Mt 14:13; Lk 9:12) near Bethsaida (Lk 9:10); (4) the crowd followed Jesus on foot from the towns (Mt 14:13); (5) Jesus had compassion on the crowd and healed their sick (Mt 14:14; Lk 9:11); (6) the crowd was made of people who were like sheep without a shepherd (Mk 6:34); (7) Jesus taught them many things (Mk 6:34), welcoming them and speaking to them of the kingdom of God (Lk 9:11); (8) there were 5000 men (v. 10), plus women and children (Mt 14:21); (9) all ate and were satisfied (Mt 14:20); (10) this crowd was mainly Jewish (Mt 14:20); (11) the crowd recognised Jesus as the Prophet (Jn 6:14) and wanted him to be king (Jn 6:15), but Jesus withdrew (Jn 6:15); and (12) Jesus later fed 4000 Gentiles (Mt 15:32-38).

<sup>2</sup> Jesus goes from Jerusalem (ch. 5) to a remote location on the Sea of Galilee (ch. 6). It was mainly a Gentile area where few Jews lived. John mentions two names for the same sea because his audience is both Jew and Gentile. This is the only section in *John* that narrates Jesus' later Galilean ministry, which occupies so much of the other gospels. **Mt 4:12** 12 Now when [Jesus] heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. **Jn 21:1** 1 After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way.

<sup>3</sup> See Mt 14:13-23; Mk 6:30-46; and Lk 9:10-17. All four gospels contain an account of this miracle, making it very important. The crowd contains seekers (3s) and believers (4s).

<sup>4</sup> This may have been the occasion of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus wanted to be alone with his disciples (Mk 6:30-32; Lk 9:10). Jesus has just learned John the Baptist has been beheaded (Mt 14:12-13). **Mt 5:1** 1 Seeing the crowds, [Jesus] went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

<sup>5</sup> This is third of four Passovers in *John*. It is around March, ad 32. John continues to use the feasts as time markers. It is two years before the first Passover (Jn 2:13) and one year before Jesus' final Passover.

<sup>6</sup> Jesus asks Philip specifically because he is from the closest nearby town, Bethsaida. Andrew and Peter were also from there (Jn 1:44).

<sup>7</sup> Notice Jesus' sense of responsibility for the crowds.

<sup>8</sup> Jesus' question is a test in Philip's discipleship training.

<sup>9</sup> Jesus is in complete command of the situation. He knows what he is doing. Problem solving with Jesus differs greatly from problem solving without him.

<sup>10</sup> This represented about eight months' wages for the average working man.

loaves<sup>11</sup> and two fish,<sup>12</sup> but what are they for so many?<sup>13</sup> 10 Jesus said, Have the people sit down.<sup>14</sup> Now there was much grass in the place.<sup>15</sup> So the men sat down, about five thousand in number.<sup>16</sup> 11 Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated.<sup>17</sup> So also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12 And when they had eaten their fill,<sup>18</sup> he told his disciples, Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost. 13 So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets (κόφινος)<sup>19</sup> with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.<sup>20</sup> 14 When the people saw the sign

---

<sup>11</sup> This was the food of the poor.

<sup>12</sup> The boy gave everything he had.

<sup>13</sup> Philip should have said something like, “It’s a lot of people Lord. We can’t possibly feed them in any natural way. You’re going to have to feed them in some miraculous way. And we believe you can do it.” It is all about having faith the infinite power and perfect character of God the Son. Jesus can do more with less. He only needs a boy willing to give up five barley loaves and two fish. He is able to suspend the normal laws of physics. The detail involved in this account shows the author must have been an eyewitness.

<sup>14</sup> “Sitting down” is emphasised. It is an action that indicates faith. When we have a real need that seems impossible, we are not to scramble around but to sit down on the grass. Don’t scramble, sit.

<sup>15</sup> Jesus is the Good Shepherd. **Ps 23:2** 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

<sup>16</sup> This is a mainly Jewish crowd (cf. Mt 14:13-21 to Mt 15:32-39).

<sup>17</sup> The job of Jesus’ disciples is to distribute his food to the crowd of seekers and believers. Discipleship (D) groups are a way of distributing Jesus’ bread.

<sup>18</sup> Jesus, the Son of God, is more than able to satisfy our needs and makes us “full.” **Jn 1:14-16** 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ... 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

<sup>19</sup> These are Jewish baskets, not Greco-Roman baskets. The twelve baskets represent sustenance for the twelve disciples or for the twelve tribes of Israel.

<sup>20</sup> The disciples have more at the end than they did at the beginning. This is a promise that disciples and disciple makers who work at feeding seekers and believers will be provided for. In satisfying the needs of the people, Jesus used what someone made available to him. He did not create food out of thin air, though he of course could have. When there is a need, give what you have to Jesus and let him do all the rest. With Jesus, there is always just enough: not too much, nor too little. **2 Ki 4:42-44** 42 A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing the man of God [Elisha] 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 Yahweh, 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 Yahweh.

that he had done, they said, This is indeed the Prophet<sup>21</sup> who is to come into the world!<sup>22</sup> 15 Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king,<sup>23</sup> Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.<sup>24</sup>

*Fifth Sign: Jesus Walks on Water<sup>25</sup>*

16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum.<sup>26</sup> It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.<sup>27</sup> 19 When they had rowed about three

---

<sup>21</sup> **Dt 18:15-19** 15 Yahweh your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— 16 just as you desired of Yahweh your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, Let me not hear again the voice of Yahweh my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die. 17 And Yahweh said to me, They are right in what they have spoken. 18 I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. **Jn 1:21** 21 And they asked [John the Baptist], What then? Are you Elijah? He said, I am not. Are you the Prophet? And he answered, No. **Jn 7:40** 40 When they heard these words, some of the people said, This really is the Prophet.

<sup>22</sup> Jesus fulfils prophecy by providing abundant food in the wilderness, with leftovers, just like Joseph and his brothers in Egypt (Ge 42-47), Moses and Israel in the wilderness (Ex 16), and Elisha and the sons of the prophets at Gilgal (2 Ki 4:42-44). To its credit, the crowd recognises Jesus is fulfilling a prophetic type (Mt 16:14). Jesus is the greater-than-Moses figure Moses himself talked about! **Jn 1:17** 17 For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Messiah. **Jn 5:46** 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me.

<sup>23</sup> The crowd is correct in their desire to make Jesus king, but it isn't time yet. A little over a year later, at Passover, another crowd will announce in Jerusalem that the king has come (Jn 12:12-15). At that time, Jesus does not withdraw but rides a donkey's colt straight into the eastern gate of Jerusalem. **Jn 1:49** 49 Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel! **Jn 12:12-15** 12 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel! 14 And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, 15 Fear not, daughter of Zion. Behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!

<sup>24</sup> The crowd's instinct is correct, but their timing is wrong. For Jesus, timing is everything. He was following his Father's script. Up on the mountain, he could reconnect with his Father in private. **Jn 2:24-25** 24 But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people 25 and needed no one to testify about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

<sup>25</sup> Reading the gospel accounts together we learn: (1) Jesus made the disciples get into the boat without him (Mt 14:22) and go to Bethsaida (Mk 6:45); (2) Jesus dismissed the crowds (Mt 14:22), taking leave of them (Mk 6:45); (3) Jesus went up on the mountain by himself to pray (Mt 14:23; Mk 6:46); (4) The disciple's boat was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves (Mt 14:24). The wind was against them (Mk 6:48); (5) Jesus came to the disciples, walking on the sea, in the fourth watch of the night (3-6 am)(Mt 14:25; Mk 6:48) and meant to pass by them (Mk 6:48); (6) the disciples thought they were seeing a ghost (Mt 14:26; Mk 6:49) and cried out (Mk 6:49-50); (7) Jesus said, "Take heart. I Am. Don't be afraid" (Mt 14:27; Mk 6:50); (8) Peter asked Jesus to command him to come to him on the water (Mt 14:28); (9) Peter got out of the boat, walked on the water, and came to Jesus (Mt 14:29); (10) Peter became afraid, began to sink, and cried out to Jesus (Mt 14:30); (11) Jesus took hold of him and asked him why he doubted (Mt 14:31); (12) when they got into the boat, the wind ceased (Mt 14:32; Mk 6:51); (13) Those in the boat worshipped Jesus and said, "Truly you are the Son of God" (Mt 14:33); and (14) the disciples were utterly astounded and did not understand about the loaves, because their hearts were hardened (Mk 6:52).

<sup>26</sup> The disciples' destination was Bethsaida, but because of the storm they ended up at Gennesaret, near Capernaum (Mk 6:45, 53).

<sup>27</sup> Sometimes the storm comes because we have disobeyed God (Jonah). Other times, it comes because we have obeyed him (here).

or four miles,<sup>28</sup> they saw Jesus walking on the sea<sup>29</sup> and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. 20 But he said to them, I Am (Ἐγώ εἰμι). Do not be afraid. 21 Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.<sup>30</sup>

### *Jesus and the Crowds<sup>31</sup>*

22 On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. 23 Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.<sup>32</sup> 24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.<sup>33</sup>

25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? 26 Jesus answered them,

Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.<sup>34</sup> 27 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.<sup>35</sup> For on him God the Father has set his seal.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Lit. 25 or 30 stadia.

<sup>29</sup> Jesus met the disciples between 3am and 6am (Mt 14:25; Mk 6:48).

<sup>30</sup> Only a few people, the disciples, witnessed this sign. It was a lesson in faith for them. **Ps 107:23-30** 23 Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters. 24 They saw the deeds of Yahweh, his wondrous works in the deep. 25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. 26 They mounted up to heaven. They went down to the depths. Their courage melted away in their evil plight. 27 They reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end. 28 Then they cried to Yahweh in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 29 He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. 30 Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven.

<sup>31</sup> Reading the gospel accounts together, we learn: (1) Jesus and the disciples landed at Gennesaret (Mt 14:34; Mk 6:53); (2) the people immediately recognised Jesus, and they brought their sick to him (Mt 14:35; Mk 6:54-55); (3) as many as touched the fringe of Jesus' garment were healed (Mt 14:36; Mk 6:56); (4) meanwhile, the crowd that remained on the other side of sea, saw that Jesus' disciples had gone away alone (Jn 6:22); (5) boats from Tiberias came (Jn 6:23), and the crowd got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus (Jn 6:24); and (6) the crowd finally found Jesus and asked when he had come (Jn 6:25)(this could have been a few days later).

<sup>32</sup> Had they heard about the miracle Jesus performed?

<sup>33</sup> The crowd seeking Jesus consists of mostly 3s (seekers).

<sup>34</sup> They are focused more on being fed than on the one who is feeding them.

<sup>35</sup> **Is 55:2** 2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

<sup>36</sup> The crowd is to place their focus on Jesus himself, not the satisfaction of their own desires and needs.

28 Then they said to him, What must we do, to be doing the works of God? 29 Jesus answered them, This is the work of God (τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ), that you may believe into the one whom he has sent (ἵνα πιστεύητε εἰς ὃν ἀπέστειλεν ἐκεῖνος).<sup>37</sup> 30 So they said to him,

Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?<sup>38</sup> 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.<sup>39</sup>

32 Jesus then said to them,

Amen, amen, 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. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.<sup>40</sup>

34 They said to him, Sir, give us this bread always.<sup>41</sup> 35 Jesus said to them,

I am the Bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.<sup>42</sup>

36 But I said to you (pl.)<sup>43</sup> that you have seen me and yet do not believe.<sup>44</sup> 37 All whom the Father gives me will come to me (πᾶν ὃ δίδωσίν (pres.) μοι ὁ πατήρ πρὸς ἐμὲ ἔξει (fut.)), and the one who comes to me I will never cast out (καὶ τὸν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς ἐμὲ

---

<sup>37</sup> **1 Jn 3:23** 23 ... This is [God's] commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Messiah [in phase one] and love one another [in phase two], just as he has commanded us.

<sup>38</sup> **Mt 12:38** 38 ... Some of the scribes and Pharisees answered [Jesus] saying, Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.

<sup>39</sup> It seems the crowd is not satisfied with being fed once. They want continually feeding. If Jesus can do it once, why can't he keep on doing it, as Moses did for forty years?

<sup>40</sup> Jesus wants the crowd to eat him, not the physical bread he can easily produce.

<sup>41</sup> This statement is exactly what Jesus was looking for and indicates many in the crowd were seekers or believers, as opposed to the Jewish leaders in Capernaum, who are not. **Jn 4:15** 15 The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.

<sup>42</sup> The crowd is talking about physical hunger and bread, but Jesus is talking about spiritual hunger and bread. Jesus seems to be saying satisfying our spiritual needs is more important than satisfying our physical needs.

<sup>43</sup> Is this the crowd Jesus has been speaking to, the Jewish leaders (v. 41), or both?

<sup>44</sup> They are 3s (seekers), not 4s (believers), at least not yet.

οὐ μὴ ἐκβάλω ἔξω).<sup>45</sup> 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own desire but the desire of him who sent me.<sup>46</sup> 39 And this is the desire of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the desire of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes into him may have eternal life (ἵνα πᾶς ὁ θεωρῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον), and I will raise him up on the last day (καὶ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν ἐγὼ [ἐν] τῇ ἑσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ).<sup>47</sup>

### *Jesus and the Jewish Leaders*

41 So the Jews<sup>48</sup> were grumbling (γογγύζω, imperf.)<sup>49</sup> about him, because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. 42 They said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?<sup>50</sup> How does he now say, I have come down from heaven?<sup>51</sup>

43 Jesus answered them,

---

<sup>45</sup> Every believer is a gift from the Father to the Son. The Son won't lose a single one. **Jn 10:28-29** 28 I [Jesus] give [my sheep] eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. **Jn 17:2** 2 ... You [the Father] have given him [the Son] authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. **Jn 17:6** 6 I [Jesus] have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. **Jn 17:9** 9 I [Jesus] am praying for [the disciples]. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you [the Father] have given me, for they are yours. **Jn 17:12** 12 While I [Jesus] was with [the disciples], 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. **Jn 17:24** 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

<sup>46</sup> See *Father and Son*.

<sup>47</sup> Jesus is the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25). He gives life to whom he desires (Jn 5:21). An hour is coming when all in the tombs will hear Jesus' voice and come out (Jn 5:25, 28-29). Some will go to the resurrection of life; others will go to the resurrection of judgment (Jn 5:29). Jesus will raise up every believer on the last day (Jn 6:39-40, 44, 54). Though believers die, yet they shall live (Jn 11:25).

<sup>48</sup> "The Jews" (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι) in *John* are *always* Jewish leaders, not the general populace. Vv. 22-40 focus on Jesus and the crowds in the open air. Vv. 41-59 focus on Jesus and the Jewish leaders, many from Jerusalem (Mt 15:1), in the Capernaum synagogue. Vv. 60-70 focus on Jesus and the disciples, some of whom now abandon Jesus. The Jewish leaders of vv. 41-59 must have heard what Jesus said to the crowds in vv. 41-59.

<sup>49</sup> "[T]o express oneself in low tones of disapprobation, *grumble, murmur...speak complainingly about someone*" (BDAG, 204). The Israelites grumbled at Moses and Yahweh (Ex 16:7; 17:3; Nu 14:2, 23, 36); now the Jewish leaders are grumbling at Jesus.

<sup>50</sup> There was a rumour circulated in the first century ad that Jesus' father was a Roman soldier. This verse rebuts that claim. Everyone knew who Jesus' human "father" was. **Mt 13:55** 55 Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? **Jn 7:27-28** 27 ... We know where this man comes from, and when the Messiah appears, no one will know where he comes from. 28 So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know.

<sup>51</sup> The conflict is over Jesus' origin.

Do not grumble (γογγύζω, pres.) among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws/attracts (ἐλκύω, aor.)<sup>52</sup> him. And I will raise him up on the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets,

And they will all be taught by God (καὶ ἔσονται πάντες διδασκτοὶ θεοῦ).<sup>53</sup>

Everyone who has heard from the Father and learned comes to me (παῖς ὁ ἀκούσας (aor.) παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μαθὼν (aor.) ἔρχεται (pres.) πρὸς ἐμέ)— 46 not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God. This one has seen (ὀράω, perf.) the Father.

47 Amen, amen, I say to you, the one who believes has eternal life (Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὁ πιστεύων ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον). 48 I am the Bread of life (Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς). 49 Your fathers ate the manna (τὸ μάννα) in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβαίνων (pres.)), in order that one may eat from it and not die (ἵνα τις ἐξ αὐτοῦ φάγη (aor.) καὶ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ (aor.)). 51 I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven (ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς (aor.)).<sup>54</sup> If anyone may eat of this bread, he will live into the ages (ἐάν τις φάγη (aor.) ἐκ τούτου τοῦ ἄρτου ζήσκει

---

<sup>52</sup> “[T]o move an object from one area to another in a pulling motion, *draw*, with implication that the object being moved is incapable of propelling itself or in the case of pers. is unwilling to do so voluntarily, in either case with implication of exertion on the part of the mover τὶ *some*th. a sword...J 18:10; *haul* a net 21:6, 11... *drag someone out of the temple* Ac 21:30; ...*hale into court* Js 2:6.... Of stones ἐκ τοῦ βυθοῦ ἐλκομένους *which were dragged out of the deep*...to draw a pers. in the direction of values for inner life, *draw*, *attract*, an extended fig. use of mng. 1...to appear to be pulled in a certain direction, *flow* an ext. fig. use intr. *flow along* of a river...” (BDAG, 318). **Jn 12:32** 32 And I [Jesus], when I am lifted up from the earth, will *draw* (ἐλκύω) all people to myself. “Hard Calvinists say this word [ἐλκύω] means ‘he drags.’ In their view total depravity means not only that man is incapable of coming to God on his own, but also that God must drag the unbeliever kicking and screaming into the kingdom. God forces the unbeliever against his will. ...More moderate Calvinists correctly interpret Jn 6:44 to say that the Father draws the unbeliever to Christ. It is more the idea of wooing or persuading. Jn 6:44 is very important to include with our other passages dealing with man’s ability or lack thereof. Without the aid of the Father and the Holy Spirit in the wooing process, it would be accurate to say that man, on his own, cannot come to Christ. But it would also be inaccurate to say that the Father forces or drags...” (D. R. Anderson, *Free Grace Soteriology*, Kindle Locations 845-859).

<sup>53</sup> Jesus is speaking of the New covenant. The teaching of the Pharisees will be obsolete and no longer necessary. **Is 54:13** 13 All your children shall be taught by Yahweh, and great shall be the shalom of your children. **Jer 31:34** 34 ...No longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother saying, Know Yahweh, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares Yahweh. **Heb 8:10** 10 This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 11 And they shall not teach, each one his neighbour and each one his brother saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

<sup>54</sup> **Jn 3:13** 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

(fut.) εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα). And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh (καὶ ὁ ἄρτος δὲ ὃν ἐγὼ δώσω (fut.) ἡ σὰρξ<sup>55</sup> μου ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς).<sup>56</sup>

52 The Jews then were quarrelling (μάχομαι, imperf.)<sup>57</sup> among themselves saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? 53 So Jesus said to them,<sup>58</sup>

Amen, Amen, I say to you, unless you may eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood (ἐὰν μὴ φάγητε (aor.) τὴν σάρκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πίνητε (aor.) αὐτοῦ τὸ αἶμα), you have no life in yourselves (οὐκ ἔχετε (pres.) ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς).<sup>59</sup> 54 The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has (pres.) eternal life (ὁ τρώγων (pres.) μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων (pres.) μου τὸ αἶμα ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον), and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true/real food (ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ μου ἀληθὴς ἐστὶν βρῶσις), and my blood is true/real drink (καὶ τὸ αἶμά μου ἀληθὴς ἐστὶν πόσις). 56 The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him (ὁ τρώγων (pres.) μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων (pres.) μου τὸ αἶμα ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει (pres.) κἀγὼ ἐν αὐτῷ). 57 Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father,<sup>60</sup> so the one who eats 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. The one who eats this bread will live into the ages.<sup>61</sup>

59 Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught (διδάσκω, pres.) at Capernaum.

---

<sup>55</sup> **Jn 1:14** 14 And the Word became *flesh* and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. **Ro 8:3-4** 3 For God has done what the Torah, weakened by the *flesh*, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful *flesh* and for sin, he condemned sin in the *flesh*, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the *flesh* but according to the Spirit.

<sup>56</sup> **Jn 1:14** 14 ...The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. **Lk 22:19** 19 ...[Jesus] took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. **Ro 8:3-4** 3 ...God has done what the Torah, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the Torah might be fulfilled in us....

<sup>57</sup> “[T]o engage in heated dispute, without use of weapons, *fight, quarrel, dispute*” (BDAG, 622).

<sup>58</sup> Jesus doubles down here. Not only must a person eat his flesh, he or she also has to drink his blood. Eating bread is of course allowed by the Torah, but drinking blood certainly isn’t.

<sup>59</sup> **Jn 20:31** 31 ...These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

<sup>60</sup> Jesus lives as the eternally generated/begotten Son. His life comes from his Father, but there never was a time when he was not.

<sup>61</sup> In summary, Jesus is the bread of God (v. 33) and of life (v. 48, 51) who came down from heaven (vv. 33, 50-51, 58). The living Father sent him (v. 57). He is the true bread the Father gives us from heaven (v. 32). This bread is Jesus’ flesh, which he gave for the life of the world (vv. 33, 51). Our job is to eat this bread (v. 50-51). We are to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, Jesus (v. 53, 56). Jesus’ flesh is true food (v. 55), and his blood is true drink (v. 55). We are to feed on him (v. 57-58). If we eat it, we won’t die (v. 50). We will live forever (v. 51, 58) because of Jesus (v. 57). We will have eternal life in us (v. 53-54), and Jesus will raise us up on the last day (v. 54). We will abide in Jesus, and he will abide in us (v. 56).



### Jesus and the Disciples

60 When many of his disciples heard it, they said, This is a hard saying (σκληρός<sup>62</sup> ἐστὶν ὁ λόγος οὗτος). Who can listen to it?<sup>63</sup> 61 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling (γογγύζω, pres.) about this, said to them,

Does this offend you (τοῦτο ὑμᾶς σκανδαλίζει (pres.))?<sup>64</sup> 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63 The Spirit is the Life-giver (τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ ζωοποιῶν).<sup>65</sup> The flesh is of no help/value/benefit/use at all (ἡ σὰρξ οὐκ ὠφελεῖ οὐδέν).<sup>66</sup> The words that I have spoken to you (pl.) are spirit and are life (τὰ ῥήματα ἃ ἐγὼ λελάληκα (perf.) ὑμῖν πνεῦμά ἐστιν καὶ ζωὴ ἐστίν). 64 But there are some from you (pl.) who do not believe (ἀλλ' εἰσὶν ἐξ ὑμῶν τινες οἱ οὐ πιστεύουσιν (pres.)).<sup>67</sup>

(For Jesus had known (οἶδα, pluperf.) from the beginning who those were who did not believe (πιστεύω, pres.), and who it was who would hand him over (παραδίδομι, fut.))<sup>68</sup> 65 And he said,

This is why I have said to you (pl.) that no one is able to come to me unless it has been granted him from the Father (διὰ τοῦτο εἶρηκα ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδεὶς δύναται (pres.) ἐλθεῖν (aor.) πρὸς με ἐὰν μὴ ἦ δεδομένον (perf. pass.) αὐτῷ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς).<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> “[P]ert. to causing an adverse reaction because of being hard or harsh, *hard, harsh, unpleasant*” (BDAG, 930).

<sup>63</sup> Jesus’ hard sayings (v. 60) distinguish believers from unbelievers (v. 64), even among apparent disciples (vv. 60, 66). It is the same today. Some want to follow Jesus’ example without believing what he believed and taught. This is a great mistake and will cost many eternal life.

<sup>64</sup> “[T]o shock through word or action, *give offense to, anger, shock*” (BDAG, 926).

<sup>65</sup> **2 Co 3:6** 6 ... Who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a New covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit *gives life*.

<sup>66</sup> **Jn 3:6** 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. See *Flesh*.

<sup>67</sup> A believer is to be distinguished from a disciple, or student-follower apprentices. Not all student-follower apprentices of Jesus are believers into him. We are not saved by being student-follower apprentices of Jesus. We are saved by believing into him.

<sup>68</sup> Jesus continues to show he is omniscient and knows the hearts of all people. He knows all the characters in the story and the parts they play (Jn 1:42, 48; 2:24-25; 6:6, 26, 61, 64, 70-71). Jesus knows our hearts and the parts we play in the story. He knows whether we believe or disbelieve. He knows our level of faithfulness, availability, and teachability. He knows the level of our convictions, character, and competence. He has jobs and tasks that must be done, and he selects who is to do them based on our hearts.

<sup>69</sup> This is an important truth. The Father grants one to come to Jesus based on one’s attitude toward Jesus: positive volition or negative volition, a humble heart or a proud heart.

66 After this many of his disciples turned back (ἀπέρχομαι, aor.)<sup>70</sup> and no longer walked (περιπατέω, imperf.) with him.<sup>71</sup> 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, Do you want to go away as well? 68 Simon Peter answered him,

Lord, to whom shall we go (πρὸς τίνα ἀπελευσόμεθα)? You have the words of eternal life (ῥήματα ζωῆς αἰωνίου ἔχεις),<sup>72</sup> 69 and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God (καὶ ἡμεῖς πεπιστεύκαμεν (perf.) καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν (perf.) ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ).<sup>73</sup>

70 Jesus answered them, Did I not choose (ἐκλέγομαι, aor.)<sup>74</sup> you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil (διάβολος).<sup>75</sup> 71 He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he was going to hand him over (ἔμελλεν (imperf.) παραδιδόναι (pres.)), one of the twelve.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> “[T]o abandon an association w. someone, *go off, go away, leave*” (BDAG, 102). These disciples abandoned their association with Jesus because they never believed into him. They had followed Jesus for reasons other than simple faith in him. Their mindset/worldview had not changed. They had not “repented.”

<sup>71</sup> Not every “disciple” (vv. 60, 66) who “walks” (v. 66) with Jesus is a believer (v. 64). In vv. 60 and 66, John uses the term μαθητής in a non-technical sense for apprentices or pupils. Usually the term μαθητής is used for believers only. This is an exception. As disciple makers, we should not be surprised if some of our disciples turn back and no longer walk with us. It happened to Jesus (v. 66) and Paul (2 Ti 1:15).

<sup>72</sup> What are we to do with the hard sayings of Jesus? We are to accept them, remembering: (1) Jesus is the Word (Jn 1:1); (2) he speaks as the Father has told him (Jn 12:50); (3) he has given us the words the Father gave him (Jn 17:8); (4) he came from the Father (Jn 17:8); (5) his words are spirit and life (Jn 6:63); and (6) he has the words of eternal life (Jn 6:68).

<sup>73</sup> Often with the missional church movement, one sees the verb “follow” instead of the verb “believe.” Orthopraxy is often emphasised over orthodoxy. Doing is emphasised over believing. The danger is we are telling people to follow Jesus rather than to believe in him. But this is confusing phase one justification and phase two sanctification. The unbeliever’s job is to believe in Jesus, not to follow him as a disciple (v. 29).

<sup>74</sup> “[T]o make a choice in accordance with significant preference, *select someone/someth. for oneself* (BDAG, 305).

<sup>75</sup> “[O]ne who engages in slander” (BDAG, 226).

<sup>76</sup> See *Judas*.

## Commentary

### 1. Overview.

- a. Jesus is able to override the laws to provide for and protect his people. In doing so he authenticates who he is. The proper response is to eat his flesh and drink his blood, that is, to believe into him. He is life itself. So eat and drink him.

### 2. Life Lessons.

- a. Jesus sometimes allows his disciples to experience darkness, rough seas, and strong winds (vv. 17-18). He's apparently not there (v. 17). But he will show up, though it will probably be in a way we don't expect (v. 19). He wants us to trust in him, for he is the I Am (v. 20). When he does show up, he will take us supernaturally to the harbour to which he has directed us (v. 21).

### The Three Phases in John 6

Phase Zero Condemnation	Phase One Justification/Adoption	Phase Two Sanctification	Phase Three Glorification
See and do not believe Jesus (36, 64)	Recognise Jesus as Prophet (14) and King (15)	Abide in Jesus (56)	Will be raised up on the last day (39-40, 44, 54)
Grumble about Jesus (41, 43, 61)	Work for the food that endures to eternal life (27)	Jesus abides in them (56)	Won't die (50)
Have no life in them (53)	See and believe in Jesus (29, 30, 35, 40, 47, 69)		Will live forever (51, 57-58)
Can't listen to Jesus' hard sayings (60)	Come to Jesus (35, 37, 44-45, 65)		
Take offense at Jesus' hard sayings (60)	Given by the Father to the Son (37)		
Turn back and go away from Jesus (66-67)	Won't be lost (39)		
	Have eternal life (40, 54)		
	Drawn by the Father (44)		
	Taught by God (45)		
	Hear and learn from the Father (45)		
	Eat the bread from heaven (50-51)		
	Eat Jesus' flesh (53-54, 56-57)		
	Drink Jesus' blood (53-54, 56)		
	Granted by the Father to come to Jesus (65)		
	Come to know Jesus is the Holy One of God (69)		