

John 6:1 – 21

^{6:1} After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). ² A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs which he was performing on those who were sick. ³ Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. ⁵ Therefore Jesus, lifting up his eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to him, said to Philip, ‘Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?’ ⁶ This he was saying to test him, for he himself knew what he was intending to do. ⁷ Philip answered him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.’ ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ⁹ ‘There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?’ ¹⁰ Jesus said, ‘Have the people sit down.’ Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, he distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. ¹² When they were filled, he said to his disciples, ‘Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.’ ¹³ So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. ¹⁴ Therefore when the people saw the sign which he had performed, they said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.’ ¹⁵ So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take him by force to make him king, withdrew again to the mountain by himself alone. ¹⁶ Now when evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷ and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸ The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹ Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened. ²⁰ But he said to them, ‘It is I; do not be afraid.’ ²¹ So they were willing to receive him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

Cultural Background: Passover as Israel’s ‘Independence Day’

First Passover / Exodus	Passover / Exodus Symbolism
God delivered Israel through water (Exodus 14)	Jesus comes over water, helps disciples through water (John 6:16 – 21)
God gave manna to Israel for them to eat (Exodus 16)	Jesus gives himself to Israel for them to ‘eat’ (John 6:22 – 51)
God was bringing them out of slavery and into the Promised Land	Jesus is bringing them out of what and into what?

Perhaps because of the motif of manna following the Exodus, or because of the motif of fruit in the garden, the Prophets wrote that when the Messiah comes, there will be a banquet (Isa.25:6; 55:1 – 3).

Questions

1. Let's get the big picture first.
 - a. Remember that in 5:31 – 47, Jesus' last claim was that the Scriptures of the Old Testament testify to him. This passage demonstrates one of the ways in which the Scriptures do that.
 - b. Note that it is near Passover (6:4). Jesus is doing something to remind people of the first Passover/Exodus from Egypt. But he's taking it deeper. Read through 6:1 – 21 and look at the comparison between the first Passover/Exodus and the new one that Jesus is bringing about.
 - c. Who is the equivalent enemy for the Jews at the time? (The Romans)
 - d. What is the equivalent of the Promised Land? (not being occupied in their own land)
 - e. So this is why they expect a military messiah. They are tired of the irony of celebrating their Independence Day when they are not independent.
2. What do you think of Jesus 'testing' the disciples by asking where they would get the food?
 - a. This is not a 'moral' test. It is a test of their vision and understanding of his power and role.
3. What do you think of Philip's response? Andrew's response?
 - a. Philip is more stunned, perhaps reacts in a knee-jerk kind of way. He just sees the impossibility of the situation. The purchasing power of the denari in the first century has been estimated at US \$21, from 2005, though it is very difficult to estimate because of the debasement of the silver and the difficulty in calculating purchasing power parity. Nevertheless, $200 \times \$21 = \4200 .
 - b. Andrew's response seems naïve, almost humorous. But he desires to participate in whatever Jesus' compassion for the crowd. It's touching that he involves a little boy and his lunch. Or maybe we could see him as desperately grabbing some boy nearby!
4. What can we learn about ministry from the way Jesus handles the crowd?
 - a. Where does his sense of provision come from?
 - b. Where does his sense of compassion come from?
 - c. What is the 'bread' we are giving to others? 'Word' about Jesus. A taste of Jesus...
 - i. Leader illustrate how ministry multiplies because it is based on verbally spreading Jesus' word
5. What was it like for the disciples during the miracle of the feeding, as it unfolded?
6. Each disciple got a basket full of bread at the end. What's the significance of that?
 - a. Jesus takes care of each disciple, even as they serve others. We are not cogs in Jesus' ministry machine. Jesus cares for us, and fills us as well.
 - i. Leader illustrate this
 - b. Jesus is exerting a claim on Israel, claiming to feed Israel, by the 12 baskets
 - c. Jesus is claiming to be king of Israel, since 5 and 12 are the numbers of loaves of bread involved in the King David story; see 1 Sam.21.
 - i. Illus: Jesus retelling David's story is like Aragorn retelling Isildur's story. Centuries ago, Isildur had betrayed humanity by snatching the One Ring, rather than throwing it into Mount Doom to be destroyed. Centuries went by, and the race of humanity was fractured. This is the situation that Aragorn steps into. In the first book, he protects Frodo and withstands the greatest of temptations. He doesn't snatch the Ring of Power and shows himself worthy of being the heir to the throne, even superior to his ancestors. He shows himself worthy again when he and Theoden King of Rohan and only a few men are trapped by orcs at Helm's Deep. Theoden asks the question, 'What do you against such hate?' Aragorn says his now famous, 'Ride out to meet them.' In the third book, he will go to Gondor, bring hope there, heal those wounded in battle, and lead the forces against Sauron's army. Slowly you start to see Aragorn regather the race of humanity around himself. He unites them. Aragorn's story redeems and retells Isildur's story.
 - ii. Adam betrayed humanity by snatching what was forbidden. The race of humanity fractured. David was supposed to be a 'second Adam,' but he also took what was forbidden and his house fractured. Jesus came and did not snatch power. He withstands the temptations all his ancestors fell into. He is the true David, the true Adam. In his own physical body, he heals human nature and shares with us his new humanity, to heal the thing in us that went wrong. He will retell our stories too.
7. Why does Jesus send the crowd away quickly, separating the disciples from them?
 - a. If the disciples discussed the 'king' significance of this miracle, the crowds would go nuts.
 - b. The disciples needed some rest, the crowds did need to go home?
8. Why does Jesus walk on water to them?

- a. It was the fastest route to them
- b. Does it symbolize something? Passing through the seas – Exodus deliverance! Jesus is saying that he is indeed the new Moses, ready to lead a new Israel through the sea.