

# The Gospel of John: *Know Jesus and Live*

Part 15  
John 6:1-15

## I. The Setting

- ❖ John 6:1--*After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.*
  - So sometime after the healing at the pool of Bethesda (Chapter 5), Jesus and his disciples have returned to Galilee. They are apparently not in Cana again since they are on “the other side of the Sea.”
- ❖ John 6:2--*And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.*
  - Jesus has gained great notoriety among the Galileans. They have seen him turn water into wine (John 2:1-11), Heal an official's son (John 4:46-54), and many had seen him perform signs at a feast in Jerusalem (John 4:45).
  - Thus their responses have been increasingly enthusiastic. In Chapter 4, they welcomed him with enthusiasm (John 4:45). Here in Chapter 6, he has a large crowd of people following him wherever he goes. He has become quite a celebrity and now must deal with the Galilean Paparazzi.
- ❖ John 6:3--*Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples.*
  - Life had gotten pretty difficult for Jesus and his disciples. In Jerusalem, they want to kill him because he has claimed to be the Son of God. In Galilee, no one wants to kill him but no one will give him a moment's peace either. Everywhere he goes he is surrounded by a huge crowd. Thus, this moment away with the fellas was probably a welcomed oasis for Jesus and his disciples.
- ❖ John 6:4--*Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.*
  - It would be easy to simply read this and move on as if John is simply giving us the date to ensure chronological accuracy. However, this little statement is very important. This little statement connects the whole chapter. “The Passover was a time when Jewish people recalled their deliverance from Egypt through Moses and were looking for the prophet like him who was to come. They expected the Prophet to bring deliverance and provide ‘mana’ from heaven as Moses had done.<sup>1</sup>”
- ❖ John 6:5-6--*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.*
  - John 6:2 makes it clear that this is not the first time Jesus encountered this mob. They had been following him every where he went and now where returning again. Thus we can know Jesus wasn't panicking and asking “Oh no! Look at all those people! How will we ever feed them all!?” It seems much more likely that Jesus was saying to Philip, “Hey Phil, the paparazzi is coming back and I have a CRAZY idea! What if we fed all of them!? Pretty cool eh? You know any place where we could buy enough bread to feed all of them?” This is likely what Philip would have been hearing.
  - However, Verse 6 tells us that he already knew exactly what he would do. He was only acting like he didn't know what he would do to see what Philip would say. Would Philip answer well and say,

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<sup>1</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *John: Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series*, p.161.

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“Buy bread!? Who needs to buy bread when you are with the Lord of the universe? Jesus you just say the word and the will have all the bread their stomachs can handle!”

- ❖ John 6:7-8--*Philip answered him, Two hundred denarii 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 loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?*
  - Apparently Philip would not answer well. Instead of bask in Jesus’s infinite ability to provide, he scolds Jesus for wanting to attempt something so foolishly impossible. He more or less says, “Look Jesus that’s really thoughtful of you, but you’re obviously not so gifted in basic economics. If we had 8 months worth of wages burning a whole in our pockets (which we don’t) we’re still not even close to feeding this mob!”
  - Andrews response wasn’t much better. He didn’t say, “Remember that time you turned water into wine? Got any more tricks like that?” Rather, he searched the crowd to see if there was enough food among the people to get by on and he came back to report that it was hopeless. Only 5 barley loaves and 2 fish.
  - The amount was even more meager that it might appear. These loaves are not big beautiful artisan loaves from Panera. These are small Twinkie sized<sup>2</sup> cakes of bread. The fish are not giant yellow fin tuna. The fish were likely small salted fish similar to anchovies or sardines. This was truly a small meal.
  - Not only were the portions meager, but the fact that they were barley loaves tells us that the available food was of the poorest quality. “The boy was carrying the lowest quality of bread available to people at the time. Only those who lived in poverty, for the most part, ate bread made from barley.”

## 2. The Sign

- ❖ John 6:10--*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.*
  - There is a sense in which this is a rather unspectacular verse. Jesus is simply saying have every one sit down on the grass and eat. Yet there is also a sense in which John might be intentionally bringing Psalm 23 to mind...
    - ❖ Psalm 23--*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 forever.*
- In doing so, John is demonstrating that Jesus is exactly who he says he is in Chapter 10...
  - ❖ John 10:11--*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*

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<sup>2</sup> R.C. Sproul, John, *St Andrews Expository Commentary*



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### John 6:1-15

- ❖ John 10:14-15--*I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.*
- ❖ John 6:11--*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.*
  - Two things we need to see...
    1. Notice that absolutely NOTHING is said about how this was done. Don't we all want to know? Did he speak and bread and fish appeared in multiple baskets all over the place? Did they simply pass around one small basket that never ceased having 5 loaves and 2 fish no matter how many people took from it? Nothing is said about this. Why? Because what Jesus does isn't the emphasis of this story. What is really important is that we see who Jesus is, not what he does! We need to see that he is the God of creation who speaks and things exist. We need to see that he himself is the bread from heaven. We will examine more about this in the coming weeks but for now, we must recognize that seeing Jesus for who he is is infinitely more important than knowing how he did what he did.
    2. Don't underestimate a small thing in the hands of God. God purposes to do massive things through minuscule things.

#### **The Jews**

- ❖ Deuteronomy 7:6-7--*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,*
- ❖ Genesis 22:17--*in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,*
  - The people who were fewest in number were chosen by God to be the vessel through which he will save the world. He would send Jesus to and through these people.

#### **The Barley Loaves and Fish**

- The amount was even more meager than it might appear. These loaves are not big beautiful artisan loaves from Panera. These are small Twinkie sized<sup>3</sup> cakes of bread. The fish are not giant yellow fin tuna. The fish were likely small salted fish similar to anchovies or sardines. This was truly a small meal.
- Not only were the portions meager, but the fact that they were barley loaves tells us that the available food was of the poorest quality. "The boy was carrying the lowest quality of bread available to people at the time. Only those who lived in poverty, for the most part, ate bread made from barley."

#### **The 12 Apostles**

- Jesus didn't recruit an army. Jesus didn't enlist countless thousands. He spent the majority of his time raising up 12 guys. As he was leaving this world, he said to these 12 guys...

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<sup>3</sup> R.C. Sproul, John, *St Andrews Expository Commentary*



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❖ Acts 1:8--*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

- Shortly after this, these 12 guys were filled with the Holy Spirit and began praising God in various languages (Acts 2) and one of them (Peter) preached a sermon (Acts 2:14-40) and that day 3000 people were saved.

#### **Reformation Christian Fellowship?**

- Because it is so very like our God to do massive things through minuscule things, we should be ready any moment for God to take this tiny little church called Reformation Christian Fellowship and use it to bring life to a potentially countless number of souls. We must not underestimate this small thing in the hands of our big God.

❖ John 6:11-13--*he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. 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.*

- There are three significant things to see here...

#### **1. Jesus's provision is thoroughly satisfying**

- Human beings are constantly on a misguided quest to satisfy their souls. We feed ourselves entertainment, success, wealth, possessions, relationships, and yet the quest continues because the emptiness remains. The prophet Isaiah speaks of this when he says..

❖ Isaiah 55:2--*Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?*

- Here in John 6, we discover that to receive the bread of life is to have your soul infinitely and eternally satisfied. This was prophesied by the prophet Jeremiah...

❖ Jeremiah 21:14--*I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, declares the Lord.*

#### **2. What Jesus gives is never wasted.**

- Jesus didn't just make gobs of food to show off. Jesus had a purpose. Jesus is going to feed people. He is going to make sure people get fed.
- The spiritual application of this reality is very important. Jesus is the bread of life and he isn't sitting up in heaven crossing his fingers hoping that people eat. He will make sure that his sheep get fed.

❖ John 6:37-39--*All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will 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.*

❖ John 10:14--*I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,*

#### **3. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise**



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- We shouldn't miss the significance of the fact that there were 12 FULL baskets of leftovers. Jesus is obviously sending the Jewish people a message. He is letting them know that he is the Messiah. He is the fulfillment of everything ever promised to the 12 tribes of Israel.

## III. The Response

- ❖ John 6:14-15--*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.*



### The people

- **They were RIGHT!** Jesus is indeed the Prophet! In John 2, John the baptist denied that he was the prophet. Here in John six, we discover why. It is because Jesus is the one whom Deuteronomy speaks of...
  - ❖ 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—*
  - ❖ Deuteronomy 18:18--*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.*
- **They were WRONG!** They were right to identify Jesus as the prophet, but they were wrong as to what that actually meant. In their minds, "If the first prophet, Moses, had led the people out of slavery to Egypt, surely the second would help them escape servitude to Rome." They wanted the prophet to be a king who would fill their bellies and beat up their foes. Their focus was on this temporary world. Jesus did not come to be a king of a temporary earthly kingdom. Jesus's kingdom is everlasting! Jesus is a king who satisfies their souls and defeats the enemy Satan and the power of sin over their lives.



### Jesus

- The motives of the people are clear to Jesus. He knew what they were up to and he wanted no part of it. The crown that they were offering was not the crown he came to wear. Jesus came wear a crown of thorns (John 19:2-3) upon his coronation as "King of the Jews" (John 19:3, 19). Jesus was resurrected from the dead and ascended into heaven were he shall ever more be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Jesus's kingship is so amazing that the 24 elders cast down their crowns before him. In the presence of the risen King they feel utterly unworthy to of their crowns. This is the kind of king Jesus is.