

SESSION NINE

The Bread of Life: *Finding Provisions for Life (John 6:1-27)*

"To wait on God means to pause and soberly consider our own inadequacy and the Lord's all-sufficiency, and to seek counsel and help from the Lord, and to hope in Him (Ps 33:20-22; Isa 8:17)... The folly of not waiting for God is that we forfeit the blessing of having God work for us. The evil of not waiting on God is that we oppose God's will to exalt Himself in mercy."

- John Piper

I. The Multiplication of Bread (6:1-15)

6:4 . . . *Passover was near*. Considerable time has elapsed since the feast of 5:1. This time of year also explains the flourishing grass in verse 10.

6:6 . . . *to test him* . . . This Greek term for "test" normally conveys a negative notion. However, John seems to utilize the term as seen in Hebrews 11:17 (Abraham's faith was tested in the offering up of Isaac; also, see 2 Cor 13:5).

6:7 . . . *two hundred denarii* . . . This sum would equate from anywhere of approximately two hundred days of work to a year's salary.

6:13 . . . *twelve baskets with broken pieces* . . . Many have tried to allegorize the baskets (e.g., twelve tribes of Israel). However, as warned by Craig Keener, "That the disciples filled twelve baskets (6:13) simply underlines afresh the abundance of the miracle . . . Twelve is the maximum number that these disciples could reasonably carry. Guests who slipped out with leftover food in their baskets could be thought to be greedy, stealing the host's food, or at best ill-mannered; remains belonged to the host." (*John*, 1:669).

6:16 Jesus' kingship will become an issue again in the Fourth Gospel (i.e., 18:33-38). The crowd's misunderstanding of this sign foreshadows 6:22-71.

II. Walking on Water (6:16-21)

John's recounting of this event is the "shortest and simplest" of the gospel accounts. This scene depicts Jesus as the one true deity, for it was God who walked on the waters (see Job 9:8). In addition, the Old Testament repeatedly depicts God as the one who commands the seas and parts the waters (see Isa 63:11-16).

6:19 The Sea of Galilee is approximately 7 miles by 12 miles. Thus, the distance of 3 to 3.5 miles indicates that they were probably traveling the north side of the lake and close to the middle when the storm occurred. During the winter, an easterly wind can take place suddenly with waves of 6 to 7 feet. In the summer, a very strongly westerly wind can arise rapidly creating a similar effect.

6:20 This is the only miracle in John that involves solely the twelve disciples. Note the disciples' fear (also, see 9:22; 19:8). Later in John 12:15, the crowds will be told not to fear for the Lord is coming. The use of "I am" also foreshadows the various "I am" statements that will appear later in this chapter and elsewhere in the Gospel.

III. The Crowd's Confusion (6:22-27)

6.27 . . . *do not work for food that disappears* . . . This wordplay on "work" should be noted. Later, "work" will be explained as believing in the one whom the Father has sent (6:29). John will shift the work of man to the work of God—the Father took the initiative to send His Son into the world.

The account of Jesus walking on water seems a rather awkward insertion in this chapter. Some scholars simply argue that John incorporated this passage in order to explain merely how Jesus reached Capernaum (6:24, 59). However, upon closer observation, these six verses could function much like the Transfiguration account in the Synoptic Gospels. The revelation of Jesus' identity is reserved for the disciples. The crowd looked for a royal king who could meet their physical needs—failing to realize that Jesus was the King of Kings who could meet their spiritual needs!

In addition, since this passage refers to the coming Passover (v. 4), there could be an Exodus motif woven into this event. Certainly the connections with John 6 and Psalm 107, a psalm that praises God for His kindness to His exiled people, is most striking. Note the parallels between John 6:1-27 and Psalm 107:

Psalm 107	John 6
people were hungry (vv. 4-5)	people needed to eat (v. 5)
hunger satisfied by the Lord (v. 9)	provision through Jesus (vv. 11-13)
some go down to the sea in ships (v. 23)	got into a boat (vv. 16-17)
storm raised by the Lord (v. 25)	storm arises (v. 18)
people cry out to the Lord (vv. 27-28)	disciples frightened (v. 19)
the Lord delivers them, calms the sea, and brings them safely to the shore (vv. 28-30).	Jesus delivers them, calms the sea, and brings them safely to land (vv. 20-21)
actions call for the godly to respond to the Lord's loyal love (v. 43)	actions call for the godly to respond to the Lord's loyal love (v. 27)

IV. Intersect

A. His provisions rest upon His identity and power.

Psalm 139:7-10 –

B. His provisions are accordance with what He knows is best for us.

Isaiah 46:9-11 -

C. His provisions grant peace and true satisfaction.

Psalm 73:25-26 –

“In the midst of the awesomeness, a touch comes, and you know it is the right hand of Jesus Christ. You know it is not the hand of restraint, correction, nor chastisement, but the right hand of the Everlasting Father. Whenever His hand is laid upon you, it gives inexpressible peace and comfort, and the sense that ‘underneath are the everlasting arms,’ (Deuteronomy 33:27) full of support, provision, comfort and strength.”
- Oswald Chambers

“More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the LORD!”
~ Psalm 93:4