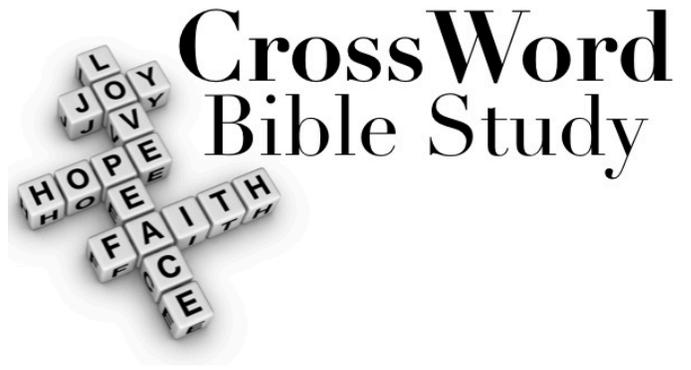




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Cross Word Bible Study

St. John's Gospel

Packet #8

Review of: John 6:1-21

Preparation for: John 6:22-71

Lecture Date: Nov. 28, 2018

REVIEW OF LECTURE ON JOHN 6:1-21

Introduction

Chapter 6 is the longest chapter in John's Gospel so we've broken it down into two sections, with this section being focused primarily on two events. Here in the first 21 verses of chapter 6 we read about Jesus' fourth and fifth signs (miracles): the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes and Jesus Walking on Water.

In this section, John continues to emphasize Jesus' authority over the natural world and His role as the new Moses, with lots of imagery reflecting the actions and leadership of Moses.

Passover Time

A big crowd gathers around Jesus as chapter 6 opens and we are told that it is near Passover time. Passover was the greatest celebration of the year for the Jewish people, where they celebrated the Exodus and their liberation from bondage in Egypt. They celebrated with an elaborate meal that recalled God's miraculous intervention in their lives, bringing them out of slavery and leading them to their new land.

Here in John 6, Jesus is about to feed the people with a Passover-type meal that itself will be miraculous and a sign of God's continued blessing upon them. The connection of this meal of barley loaves and fish to the Passover is critical. God continues to provide for His people. God continues to be present with them and to care for them. It's also significant that the last supper is a celebration of the Passover meal. There at the last supper, Jesus institutes the Eucharist and promises to be present always with His followers, feeding us the bread of life. The feeding of God's people at Jesus's hand is a reminder that we are continually nourished by Christ.

The Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes: The Only Miracle in All Four Gospels

Jesus looks out on the huge crowd and decides that He wants to feed them. St. Andrew points out that there is a boy with five barley loaves and two fish. Jesus takes these scarce resources and provides an abundance for the people gathered that day. This miracle of Jesus is the only one recorded in all four gospels which invites us to reflect on the reason why. Jesus works many memorable miracles but the 5000 being miraculously fed points us to a very specific reality: that we are fed at the hand of Jesus.

Reclining on the Grass

In John 6:10, Jesus asks the people to recline, to be seated and get ready to eat the meal that He will provide. St. John includes a little note that there was "a great deal of grass in that place." Of all of the things to point out, it seems strange to point that one out. However, the words of Psalm 23 make clear what St. John is getting at. Remember Psalm 23 says "He taketh me to lie down in green pastures." When Jesus invites the people to recline in the the green grass, He is manifesting that He is the shepherd spoken about in Psalm 23.

Jesus the Great Prophet

The prophet Elisha, in 2 Kings ch. 4, had multiplied loaves, and they too were barley loaves. Elisha was the successor of Elijah, the greatest of all the prophets. Elijah had also multiplied flour and oil to save a widow and her son from starvation. Elisha did a bit better than his master, multiplying 20 barley loaves so as to feed 100, with some even left over. But here, Jesus multiplies 5 barley loaves and feeds 5,000, leaving 12 baskets left over. So here's one clear message: Jesus is a prophet greater than even Elijah and Elisha.

Take, Bless, Break, Give

In every description of the feeding of the 5000, the terminology used by the Gospel writers is incredibly similar. The gospel writers note that Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to the people. This is also the same terminology used when they describe the Last Supper and Jesus' institution of the Eucharist. With the descriptions of two different events being so close, we see a connection between them. The feeding of the 5000 is connected to the Institution of the Eucharist. In both events, we see Jesus' desire to feed His people miraculously and with abundance.

In Luke 24, with the Emmaus Road story, the disciples do not recognize the risen Jesus until they sit down at the table and He breaks the bread. Then their eyes are opened and they recognize the Lord Jesus. In the feeding of the 5000, Jesus feeds them and they recognize Him

as a prophet and a king. These events of feeding and recognition that are repeated again and again in the New Testament are important for Eucharistic Christians like us. We are invited to receive Holy Communion every Sunday, to be fed by Jesus, and to recognize His presence among us, that He is our Risen Lord, that He is the Prophet of all prophets, and He is our King, the King of Kings.

5, 2, and 12

The numbers are significant not just because they are description of a miracle that occurred, but there is a spiritual significance to the numbers that some readers have noted. The five barley loaves are symbolic of the first five books of the Bible that contain the law and are called the Torah. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law. As He Himself says in Matthew 5:17, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill." The two fish are said to symbolize the two testaments, the Old and New Testaments. The Old and New Testaments together make up the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. Jesus Himself is the Word (John 1:1) who all the scriptures point to.

When the meal is over, 12 baskets of bread fragments are gathered up. The 12 baskets are said to represent the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 Apostles. The Old Israel and the new Israel are fed and there is enough for even more people to have eaten.

"One Does Not Live by Bread Alone"

The connection between bread and the Word of God is an important connection. You'll remember that in the wilderness, God fed the people manna, which was a bread-like substance. "He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." (Deut 8:3)

St. John already indicated in the very first verse of his Gospel that Jesus Himself is the Word of God who proceeds from the mouth of God. Jesus now works a miracle that recalls the first time God miraculously fed the Israelites in the wilderness and St. John connects this sign of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes to the Word of God as well.

A Tedious Misreading of Scripture Debunked

Sadly, many 21st century Bible readers interpret the feeding of the 5000 in a way that goes something like this: "the miracle of the loaves and fishes is not some supposed multiplication of a few barley loaves and a couple of fish into hundreds of pounds of food required to feed a crowd of 5000 men, plus women and children. The true miracle is that, inspired by the

preaching of Jesus, selfish people who were carrying more than enough food for themselves, opened their hearts to one another in a beautiful moment of caring and sharing. As they shared, they found they had more than enough. All because the love of Jesus touched their cold hearts with warm words of niceness.”

This is a very common and sad reading of this miracle of Jesus recorded in all four Gospels. It reveals an irrational prejudice against miracles and a viewpoint that considers the Gospel a humanistic message of caring and sharing that has nothing to do with God’s miraculous intervention in our world.

A look at John 6:11-13 flatly denies this “caring and sharing” explanation. It’s Jesus who distributes the loaves and fish to the crowd, not the sharing of the crowd members themselves. John intends for the reader to understand that an actual miracle took place and that many were fed by Jesus. Serious torque has to be applied to the Gospel text in order to come up with any other explanation.

The miraculous character of the event is confirmed by the reaction of the crowd, who didn’t respond that Jesus sure is a nice guy who just inspired thousands of people to share their lunches. Instead, the crowd proclaims that Jesus is a “prophet” (John 6:14) and they seek to crown Him as king. (John 6:15)

Walking on Water

After He has fed the 5000, Jesus demonstrates His powers over nature again by walking on water. The disciples had already pushed out to sea and a strong wind had come up. When they were several miles out, and in distress, Jesus came to them with comforting words, “It is I. Do not be afraid.”

The New Moses

St. John, in these two miracle stories, wants us to see Jesus as the new Moses. As we highlighted earlier, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament law. Moses has given that law, and Christ has come to fulfill it. It’s also no mistake that Jesus’ power over the waters of nature are demonstrated here. Remember that God had given Moses power over water at several points during his time as the leader of God’s people: he turned the Nile river into blood (Exodus 7:14-24), he parted the Red Sea (Exodus 14:13-31), and Moses brought forth water from the rock (Exodus 17:2-6). The story of Jesus walking on water reminds us that He is even greater than Moses.

Questions on John 6:1-21

Read Notes and References again and answer questions 1-3.

1. Why is it important that the feeding of the 5000 took place at Passover time?
2. In John 6:13 there are 12 baskets full of bread fragments left over. What does this symbolize?
3. What is the connection between bread and the Word of God?

Preparation for John 6:22-71.

Also Read: Exodus 16:2-8

Memory verse for the week ahead

"So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.'" (John 6:53)

The Bread of God

John 6:22-40

1. When the crowds found Jesus on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, what did He say to them?
2. In John 6:27, Jesus says that the "Father has set His seal" on Him. What does this mean?

3. What is the difference between the manna that God sent down in Moses' day and the bread that Jesus describes at this time?

Jesus the Living Bread

John 6:41-50

4. How does the Jews' complaining about Jesus in John 6:41 relate to the complaining of their ancestors in the desert in Exodus 16:2-8?
5. In John 6:44, Jesus says that "No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day." What is Jesus talking about?

My Flesh is Food Indeed and My Blood is Drink Indeed

John 6:51-59

6. Jesus tells the crowd in John 6:51 that the bread of life He can give them to live forever is actually His flesh. What is their reaction? How does Jesus respond?

Do You Take Offense at this?

John 6:60-71

7. In John 6:66 we read that many of Jesus' disciples did not continue to follow him as a result of what He has said. Why do they do this? What does this say about Jesus' teaching?

8. In John 6:64 and John 6:70, Jesus says that there are some who don't believe, and that one of the 12 disciples is a devil. Who does He say this about? Why does He liken one of His disciples to a devil?

9. Jesus asks His 12 disciples if they too, will leave Him. Who speaks for the disciples? What does he say?

10. In this section, Jesus' teaching is obviously hard and many decide to stop following Him. Has there ever been a time in your life when you found a teaching of Jesus so difficult that you thought about walking away from Him?