



"The Pool of Bethesda" from *The Life of Christ* by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-90)

## 22. John 5-6

Jesus and the Feasts of the Jews 1: the Sabbath; at Passover; at Tabernacles

### Jewish Feasts and Their Replacements by Christ (5:1–10:42)

- **Jesus on the Sabbath (Shabbat, 5:1–47 this lecture)**
  - Does chapter 5 belong after chapter 6?
    - Chapters 4 and 6 are in Galilee
    - *But John is not concerned about chronology or geography, has selected events that illustrate who Christ is*
- **Jesus at Passover (Pesach, 6:1–71, this lecture)**
  - 2, perhaps 3, Passovers in John (see also 2:13 and 11:55; also the unnamed "feast" in 5:1); contrast with the Synoptics that only have one)
    - Here a Passover somewhere in Galilee is the context for two miracles (**bread** and **walking on water**) and an important discourse (**Bread of Life**)
  - Christ is the Lamb of God for the final Passover
- [Jesus at Tabernacles (Sukkot, 7:1–10:21; next lecture)]
- [Jesus at Dedication (Chanukah, 10:22–42; next lecture)]

## Structure of 5:1–10:42

- Jesus on the **Sabbath** (Shabbat, 5:1–47)
  - **Third Sign: Healing of the Lame Man at the Pool of Bethesda** (5:1–16)
  - **Discourse on the Divine Son** (5:17–47)
- Jesus at **Passover** (Pesach, 6:1–71)
  - **Fourth Sign: Feeding of the 5,000** (6:1–15)
  - **Fifth Sign: Walking on Water** (6:16–21)
  - **Discourse on the Bread of Life** (6:22–58)
  - Reactions to the Bread of Life discourse (6:59–71)
- [Jesus at **Tabernacles** (Sukkot, 7:1–10:21), lecture 23]
- [Jesus at **Dedication** (Chanukah, 10:22–42), lecture 23]

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## Healing at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1–16)

- Healing the Nobleman's Son in Cana (4:46–54): **Jehovah creates, Jesus re-creates/heals**
  - **Healing Power of the Incarnate Word provides segue to the healing of the lame man**
- “Now there **is** in Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, . . . **waiting for the moving of the water.**” (5:2–3)
  - Perhaps the present tense “there **is** a pool” suggests that John was written, at least in its earliest form was written before Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70
  - Bethesda = “House of Mercy/Grace”
  - **moving of the water** (cf. Genesis 1:2)
- “Rise, take up thy bed and walk . . . And **on the same day was the Sabbath.**” (5:9)



Above: Remains of the Pool of Bethesda south of the temple mount

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## Discourse on the Divine Son 1 (5:17–47)

- Emphasis in this Johannine equivalent of a controversy narrative is on **who Jesus is**, not what he has done
- **Christ and the Father (5:17–21)**
  - “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, **but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.**” (5:18)
  - “. . . the Son can do nothing of himself, **but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.** For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth . . .” (5:19b-20)
    - In particular, consider this from Joseph Smith’s *King Follett Discourse*: “he scriptures inform us that Jesus said, as the Father hath power in himself, even so hath the Son power—to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner to lay down his body and take it up again. Jesus, what are you going to do? **To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again.**”
- **Christ as Judge (5:22–24)**
  - “For the Father judgeth no man, but **hath committed all judgment unto the Son . . .**” (5:22)

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## Discourse on the Divine Son 2 (5:17–47)

- **Christ and Life (5:25–29)**
  - “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, **hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.**” (5:24)
    - “hath” and “is” are present tense . . . **Believers already have this life** <“realized” as opposed to future eschatology>
    - **Reference to spiritual death, that is separation from God?**
  - Stature of Johannine Jesus: “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath **he given to the Son to have life in himself.**” (5:26)
- Witnesses of Christ (5:30–38)
- **“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. . . .”** (5:39–47)
  - In addition to the usual application of this verse, be aware that the original is ambiguous . . .
  - Unclear in Greek whether “search” is imperative or indicative
    - “You **are searching** the scriptures because you **think** you have eternal life in them . . . **But they testify that eternal life is in me!**”

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## Jesus at Passover

- Narrative Introduction: a Multitude Gathers at the Time of Passover (6:1–4)
- Miracles Preceding the Discourse (6:5–21)
  - **Fourth Sign: Feeding of the 5,000** (6:5–15)
  - **Fifth Sign: Walking on Water** (6:16–21)
- Narrative Transition: the People, or *ho ochlos*, Follow Jesus (6:22–25)
- **Discourse on the Bread of Life** (6:26–59)
  - Words to the crowd and words to “the Jews [hoi Ioudaioi]”
- **Reaction to the Bread of Life Discourse: Words to His Followers** (disciples and then Twelve, 6:60–71; presumably after leaving the synagogue)
- *The Crowd, “the Jews,” and even Jesus’ followers are exhibit Christological misunderstanding—that is, they do not understand, or accept, who Jesus actually is and/or what he came to do*

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## Miracles Preceding the Discourse (6:5–21)

- **Fourth Sign: Feeding of the 5,000** (6:1–15)
  - Only miracle, other than the resurrection, in all four gospels
  - **Unintended consequence/misunderstanding:** “Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth **that prophet that should come into the world**. When Jesus therefore perceived that **they would come and take him by force, to make him a king**, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.” (6:14-15)
    - *They see the Messiah as a political, temporal figure like the Hasmoneans*
- **Fifth Sign: Walking on Water** (6:16–21)
  - “. . . they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, **It is I**; be not afraid.” (6:19b-20)
  - Cf. John’s use of **the divine “I Am”** (Ex. 3:13-15; Is. 41:4)
    - *He picks up on this identification of Christ with Jehovah more than any other Gospel author*
    - This instance looks forward to **7 important “I AM” sayings** (see handout)

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## Discourse on the Bread of Life (6:26–59)

- Structure
  - **Words to the Crowd** (*ho ochlos*, 6:26–40; presumably at the dock or outside in Capernum)
    - Bread Come Down from Heaven (6:26–34)
    - Jesus, the Bread of Life (6:35–40)
  - **Words to “the Jews”** (*hoi Ioudaioi*, 6:41–59; in the synagogue at Capernaum)
    - Murmuring of “the Jews” and Jesus’ Response (6:40–50)
    - Jesus’ Flesh and Blood Give Life (6:51–59)
- Approaches to Interpreting the Discourse
  - **Sacramental**, using the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to interpret it
  - **Metaphoric**, seeing in the sermon a description of Jesus’ role and the believer’s response to Him
  - **Primarily symbolic while acknowledging that Jesus and John could well have intended the imagery to be applied to the sacrament as well**

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## Words to the Crowd (*ho ochlos*, 6:26–40)

- **The Crowd’s Incorrect Expectation of Who the Messiah Would Be** (6:26–34, this time a lawgiver like Moses)
  - “. . . ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but **because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled**. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you . . .” (6:26–27)
  - Manna could represent the Torah in this context: the multitude no doubt expected their question regarding “**working the works of God**” to be answered in terms of **keeping the injunctions and ceremonies of the law**
  - “. . . Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; **but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.**” (6:32–33)
    - Moses, the exodus, bread . . . All picking up on the timing of this discourse with Passover and Christ’s fulfillment of it
- **Jesus Himself Is the Bread of Life, Explaining Why Jesus Came into the World** (6:35–40, to do the will of the Father and lose none given him)
  - “And Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.**” (6:35)
  - “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that **of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.** This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, **may have everlasting life**” (6:39–40)

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## Words to “the Jews” (*hoi Ioudaioi*, 6:41–59)

- The sudden change of tone and markedly sharper rhetoric in 6:41-59 strongly suggest that Jesus was focusing His attention on a new, more hostile audience
- **The Murmuring of “The Jews” and Jesus’ Response to Them** (6:41–50, focuses largely on the issue of *who* Jesus is)
  - “The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, **I am the bread which came down from heaven**. And they said, **Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?** how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?” (6:41–42)
    - Compare with the reaction of the *Ioudaioi* in Jerusalem who had reacted so vehemently to the Discourse on the Divine Son (5:17–18)
    - Both deny Jesus’ paternity
  - “The Jews” were resistant to changing their idea of who Jesus was, clinging more tenaciously to Moses and the old law
  - “**I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.**” (6:48–50)
- **Jesus’ Jarring Image of Flesh and Blood, Concentrating on the Central Act of His Work—his Salvific Death—and How Believers Appropriate it** (6:51–59, focuses on *what* Jesus came to do)
  - “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: **if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.**” (6:51)

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## Flesh and Blood

- **“How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”** (6:52)
  - This complaint seems to have been disingenuous
    - Even the broader crowd had been able to see bread as a symbol for the law
    - Those educated in religious discussions and imagery should have been able to see that Jesus was using a metaphor
  - In response to their reaction, Jesus extended the metaphor, solemnly declaring, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day**” (6:53–54)
- **Imagery: Incarnation as Well as Sacramental?**
  - NT sacramental references consistently use “body” (*sōma*: Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24, 27, 29)
  - Jesus here uses (*sarx/sarka*: John 6:51, 53-55), consistent with Johannine references to the “Word become flesh”
    - **But it was flesh and blood because that flesh could and would die**
  - Tension between **water** and **blood, divinity** and **mortality**
    - Alma 34:10, 14, “For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice . . . but it must be **an infinite and eternal sacrifice** . . . every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and **that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal.**”
    - D&C 130:22 and *Teachings of Joseph Smith* on bodies of **flesh and bone** versus **flesh and blood**

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## Accepting Christ's Saving Death

- The broader symbolism of the sacrament
  - **Commemorative**, looking back to Jesus' atoning death
  - **Proleptic**, pointing forward to the resurrection and emphasizes the possibility of current and future communion with Him
    - 3 Nephi 18:7: "my [resurrected] body, which I have shown unto you"
    - 1 Cor 11:26: "shew the Lord's death *until he come*"
    - D&C 27:5: Messianic feast at Jesus' return
- **The specific symbolism of flesh and blood in the final section of the Bread of Life Discourse**
  - Has particular reference to the fact that **Jesus has really come in the flesh and that He, the Lamb of God, would sacrifice that flesh for His people**
  - Hence the last portion of the Bread of Life Sermon illustrates a particular Christological point about the work of Jesus, specifically the salvific nature of His death
  - Eternal life can be found only in Jesus as the Son of God who came down from heaven specifically to die for the world, a fact that "the Jews," placing their trust in Moses and the law, could not accept.
- "This is that bread which came down from heaven: **not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.**" (6:58)

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## Words to His Followers (disciples and then Twelve, 6:60–71)

- "Many therefore **of his disciples**, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" (6:60)
  - Many of Jesus' followers **may have accepted him as the Son of God**, but **they were not prepared to accept that he must suffer and die**
    - Parallel to the reaction of the Twelve in the synoptics when Jesus began to teach them more directly that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer there, and die (the three "Passion Predictions)
  - "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." (6:66)
- "Then said Jesus unto **the twelve**, 'Will ye also go away?' Then Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? **thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.**'" (6:67-68)
- **"The lesson taught by 'the Jews' and the faithless disciples: part of accepting Jesus as the Son of God includes accepting—indeed, focusing on—the salvific necessity of His suffering, death, and resurrection"** (Huntsman, "The Bread of Life Sermon," packet)

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