

Chapter 13: Christ is the Bread of Life

Reading Outline:

- John 5-6
 - Mark 6:30-7:23
 - Luke 9:10-17
 - Matthew 14:13-15:20
1. Again Jesus Heals on the Sabbath Day
 2. Feeding the Five Thousand
 3. Jesus Walks on the Sea of Galilee
 4. Jesus Heals in the Land of Gennesaret
 5. Sermon on the Bread of Life
 6. Conclusions

1. Again Jesus Heals on the Sabbath Day

Jesus continued His ministry as He had done since its beginning, as He testified to John's disciples, teaching the principles of the gospel and blessing the lives of the people.

Matthew 11:5

5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

The religious leaders of the people were unwilling to consider that the authority of Jesus came by divine power. They stated, therefore, that He acted instead through the power of the devil himself. We have discussed Jesus' previous encounter with the leaders regarding His healing on the Sabbath (see NT#11; Matthew 12:11-13). We should not assume this was the first time Jesus performed healings on the Sabbath as He was subject to the direction of His Father and used His healing power as faith was manifested rather than the day of the week. However, when His healings occurred on the Sabbath day, the rage of the religious leaders increased.

Jesus traveled to Jerusalem in order that He might attend His second recorded Passover feast. While He was in Jerusalem, He went by a pool called Bethesda. (see John 5:2). The scene is portrayed in Carl Bloch's painting, "Miracle at the Pool of Bethesda (1884)." Here a number of people were gathered to take advantage of the healing power of the water.

John 5:3

3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

It was the folklore tradition of the people who were gathered, that when the water was periodically disturbed, it occurred as the result of the actions of an angel. The belief was that the “first after the troubling of the water (who) stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had” (John 5:4).

While visiting at the site, Jesus began to converse with one of the individuals who are at the side of the pool. He learned that this man had been infirmed for thirty-eight years (see John 5:5). Jesus spoke to him and said, “Wilt thou be made whole?” (John 5:6).

The man replied,

John 5:7

7 ...Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

Jesus responded to him, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath.” (John 5:8-9).

For thirty-eight years this man had been infirmed, and at Jesus’ direction, he was made whole! The action occurred immediately and the man who previously had laid on his bed by the pool, now walked. There was no hesitation or discussion on his part. He, who had been infirmed, was now whole and able to move about freely under his own power. His faith and trust in Jesus had been instrumental in the restoration of strength to his previously useless limbs.

John 5:10

10 The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.

James E. Talmage states in response to the term, “The Jews,”

“...some of the rulers—Pharisees, scribes, rabbis—and these designated collectively as the Jews.”¹

The Jews--a term to collectively designate some of the rulers: Pharisees, scribes and rabbis—upon seeing the man carrying his mat or bed confronted the man regarding his violation of the Sabbath law. The law prohibited any labor to be done on the Sabbath, including carrying your mat. When confronted by the leaders, the only defense the man could offer was, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk." (John 5:11). Under further questioning, the man was unable to identify the one who had healed him by name, as Jesus had left the pool area.

Later Jesus did see him and gave him a warning regarding his healing.

John 5:14

14 Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

In this instance, Jesus drew the man's attention to the relationship between his moral behavior and his infirmity. We should not make further generalizations other than to note in this instance, the cause of his infirmity was not due to only a physical impairment.

It is noteworthy that following the discussion with Jesus at the temple, the man felt compelled to go to the Jews and identify Jesus as his benefactor. (see John 5:15).

The response of the Jewish leaders is immediate.

John 5:16

16 And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

The Jewish leader now confronted Jesus and accused Him of breaking the Sabbath.

Joseph Fielding McConkie notes,

"...we are left to wonder at the nature of his offense. He of himself lifted no burden, he had administered no medicine, he had walked no more than the requisite number of steps the rabbis had decreed appropriate, he had done no work save that of the Spirit, he had done nothing save utter the healing words."²

John 5:17-18

**17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.
18 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.**

Joseph Fielding McConkie states,

"[Jesus] responded to their charges, saying (John 5:17), "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. The implication of the statement was lost on none. If God, who is his Father, chose to do works of righteousness on the Sabbath, can he as the Son choose to do less?... [H]is announcement that he was God's Son was perverted to be an announcement that he was equal with God. Christ said no such thing. He did say he was God's Son."³

Jesus responds to His accusers with a further declaration regarding His relationship with the Father. He confirmed that He is the Son of God, the Promised Messiah.

John 5:23-24

23 That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, 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.

Joseph Fielding McConkie clarifies,

“...If, indeed, he was the Messiah, and if the acceptance of him was the central point of salvation, what becomes of the innumerable host who had died without a knowledge of him?”⁴

Jesus told those gathered,

John 5:25, 28-29

25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice.

29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto to the resurrection of damnation.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"With the exception of the statement in James (Jas.1:5) which led to the appearance of the Father and the Son to the Prophet, thus ushering in the dispensation of the fulness of times, this one verse [John 5:25] has probably done more to open the door to the mysteries of salvation than any other single verse of scripture. It is the verse that paid off a thousand-fold for all the struggle that ever went into the preparation of the Inspired Version of the Bible, for it was meditation upon this verse that caused the Prophet [Joseph Smith] to receive the vision of the degrees of glory [D&C 76]."⁵

It is important to note that on October 3, 1918, Joseph F. Smith, then the prophet of the Lord upon the earth, received the following revelation regarding the Savior's visit to the spirits of the dead during the three days His body was in the tomb prior to His resurrection.

Doctrine and Covenants 138:18-20, 30, 33-35

18 While this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful;

19 And there he preached to them the everlasting gospel, the doctrine of the resurrection and the redemption of mankind from the fall, and from individual sins on conditions of repentance.

20 But unto the wicked he did not go, and among the ungodly and the unrepentant who had defiled themselves while in the flesh, his voice was not raised;

30 But behold, from the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead.

33 These were taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands,

34 And all other principles of the gospel that were necessary for them to know in order to qualify themselves that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

35 And so it was made known among the dead, both small and great, the unrighteous as well as the faithful, that redemption had been wrought through the sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross.

The words of scripture, revealed to a living prophet, confirmed the words of Jesus recorded in the book of John. The work that would be done in the spirit world would enable “the dead... [to] hear the voice of the Son of God” (John 6:25).

The Savior continued His witness to the leaders.

John 5:30, 36, 39

30 I can of mine self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

36 ...for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Jesus has born witness to the Jews of the work that will be done in the Spirit world, that He is the Son of God and that He can only do the work which God the Father sent Him to do. Their response to His words, as previously noted, is to continue to persecute Him, not only for breaking the Sabbath day, but for “making himself equal with God” (John 6:18). Under Jewish law, this constitutes blasphemy which carries the penalty of death.

2. Feeding the Five Thousand

According to Matthew's account, following the death of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:12-13), Jesus and His disciples leave Capernaum to go “into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida” (Luke 9:10).

Bruce R. McConkie states,

Jesus and his disciples depart for at least five good and sufficient reasons: "1) Both he and the twelve are greatly in need of physical rest; 2) Their departure will have a much-needed quieting effect upon the people...Galilee is in turmoil because of the murder of the Baptist; 3) It seemed wise for Jesus and the Twelve to withdraw from the domains and power of Herod;...Bethsaida-Julias, near the eastern border of Galilee was subject to the more peaceful Philip; 4) The feeding of the hungry thousands could only take place in a solitary place, in the deserts and hills where no food was available; otherwise the need for divine intervention would not be compelling. And Jesus must work this miracle, not alone to fulfill the Messianic tradition had among them, but to bear witness in a way none others can that he is indeed the One of whom Moses and the prophets spoke; and 5) The multitude must be fed, at the appointed place, so that Jesus, back again in Capernaum, can preach his incomparable sermon on the bread of life."⁶

Matthew 14:14

14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"Jesus was doing what he had done before. It was his age-old pattern; as he always did, he preached the gospel, summarized the plan of salvation, told the people in whom they must believe and what they must do to be saved. He told them who he was and who the Twelve were...Jesus preached the gospel first and healed afterwards; the healings came to those who believed his words and accepted him as God's son." (*The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 346-347).

Kent P. Jackson states,

"The feeding of the five thousand was one of the most stunning of the miracles of Jesus, so impressive, in fact, that it is one of the rare events of which all four Gospel writers give accounts."⁷

As the day passed, Jesus tested Philip by asking him how the multitude would be fed?

John 6:5-6

5 ...Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

Philip's response as well as that of Andrew was that they themselves had neither the necessary funds or sufficient food (five barley loaves and two small fishes) to feed such a large number of people. Without money or sufficient food, the disciples concluded.

Mark 6:36

36 Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy for themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

Jesus' response to the options offered by His disciples must have left them speechless.

Matthew 14:16

16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.

As if to repeat themselves, they again stated.

Matthew 14:17

17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

Jesus' response to His disciples was based upon information not known to them, but will soon be revealed.

Mark 6:39-40

**39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.
40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.**

There was only one solution available in order to meet the need for nourishment for the five thousand. Three of the gospel writers state simply, "looking up to heaven" (Matthew 14:19; Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16). John notes, "Jesus took the loaves and when he had given thanks" (John 6:11).

Jesus in a prayer unto His Father, uttering words too sacred to be recorded, asked Him to increase their limited offering to be sufficient and more in order that food may be provided to meet the temporal needs of the multitude!

The food was then distributed to the multitude and they ate. So, nothing is wasted, the disciples gather that which remains after all have eaten their fill.

Matthew 14:20-21

20 And they did all eat and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

In a manner unknown and not understandable with our current knowledge, Jesus fed five thousand with nothing more than five loaves and two fishes!

Bruce R. McConkie offers an explanation as to why Jesus may have performed this miracle,

1. "He acted out of love and compassion for his fellowmen...because men were hungry and there was no food available to them;
2. He tested the faith of his disciples;
3. The miracle came as a crowning proof of his Messiahship acclaiming him as the bread of the world;
4. He manifest his own creative powers,...
5. The supplying of bread from heaven, as it were, formed the basis for the not-far distant sermon on the bread of life."⁸

Bruce R. McConkie continues,

"Those in attendance were so impressed with the powers of Jesus that they now wanted him to be their king and free them from the power of the Romans. Jesus sends his disciples away, who, by boat, depart for Capernaum. Jesus alone remained to address the multitude. They must return to their homes so that they might 'ponder', in less excitable circumstances, the true meaning and significance of the doings of that day."⁹

It was a special day. Not since the feeding of the children in Israel with manna had such a miracle occurred. The multitude had been so impressed with His power that they wanted Him to be their king and to overthrow the Romans. But that was not why He had come. As He will later tell Pilate in answer to his query, "Art thou the King of the Jews?", Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:33, 36). It was not for worldly honor or glory that Jesus had come to earth; His purpose was much greater and its benefits would affect all of mankind.

3. Jesus Walks on the Sea of Galilee

The apostles have left Bethsaida-Julias to return by boat to Capernaum. The multitude had returned to their homes.

Matthew 14:23

23 And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Jesus was alone. Now He had the opportunity to commune with His Father. Here He could express His profound gratitude to His Father for answering His prayer regarding the multitude and for the strength and support He receives from Him.

Meanwhile as the Apostles made their way across the Sea of Galilee toward Capernaum, a sudden storm came up. All of a sudden, their journey became very hazardous and dangerous. Due to the severe conditions, it was extremely difficult to row, and the small group was not able to make much progress. By the fourth watch (3:00-6:00 A.M), the disciples were still on the lake unable to reach the

shore. At this moment of crisis, Jesus suddenly appeared and they were frightened. Initially they did not recognize Him nor expect to see Him on the water.

Matthew 14:26-27

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

They recognized His voice and immediately their fear turned to calm. He, who was both their Master and Friend, had come to rescue them.

Peter seeking yet further assurance it was truly the voice of the Master made an impetuous request.

Matthew 14:28

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

What impelled Peter to make his request under such conditions is not known, but the response of Jesus was immediate and without reservation or rebuke.

Matthew 14:29-30

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

Like Peter, we sometimes act without considering either the circumstances of our actions or even what unseen dangers may follow. We simply step out of the safety of our moorings. Peter acted in faith and trust in his Master, but then he took his eyes off of his Savior. Left to his own devices, he began to sink.

Matthew 14:31

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

Kent P. Jackson notes,

“[This event] ...attests to the powerful faith of Peter, to whom soon would be entrusted the keys of the kingdom and the leadership of the Lord’s work on earth. This was no ordinary man who sought to have enough faith to defy the power of gravity. Aside from the case of the Lord himself, scripture records no other example of a person walking on water. Although Peter’s faith did not allow him to

walk as far as he might have desired, those who would make light of it should duplicate his accomplishment before they chide him. Only Jesus--who constantly challenges us to progress beyond the artificial limits of our faith--could say, 'O, thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt' (Matthew 14:31)."¹⁰

Matthew 14:32-33

32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

Walking on the stormy sea and then able to calm the raging storm had served to renew their witness. He truly was, who He testified to be, the Son of the Living God!

It is important to also address this account as recorded by Mark as his account differs.

Mark 6:51-52

51 And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

52 For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

How is it possible the disciples were not able to see the "feeding of the five thousand" as a miracle when such a large number were fed with just a bare minimum of available food?

Bruce R. McConkie offers an explanation,

"The answer is found in the fact that the chosen disciples had not yet received the gift of the Holy Ghost...Until the natural man becomes a new creature of the Holy Ghost, until man is born again, until his stony heart is touched by the Spirit of the living God, he cannot, by any power of his own, stand sure and steadfast in the cause of the truth."¹¹

I believe that we tend to underestimate the power of the Holy Ghost to change our hearts and the importance of having burnt into our sinew, a witness of the spirit. The witness of the Holy Ghost stands independent of any other source to strengthen our testimony of the truth as born by the spirit. I believe we sometimes underestimate the importance of the witness of the Holy Ghost. We also underestimate how important our continuing to keep the commandments is in strengthen our testimony. If we are not vigilant and steadfast in keeping the commandments and seeking to strengthen our testimony, we too will falter and sink into the water.

4. Jesus Heals in the Land of Gennesaret

Matthew 14:34

34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.

William Smith states in his Dictionary of the Bible,

“Gennesaret, Land of. It is generally believed that this term was applied to the fertile crescent-shaped plain on the western shore of the lake, extending from Khan Minyeh (two or three miles south of Capernaum (Tel-Hum) on the north to the steep hill behind Mejdal (Magdala) on the south and called by the Arabs el-Ghuweir, ‘the little Ghor’ ...its scenery suggested the parable of the sower.”¹²

Once on the other side, Jesus continued to preach and testify of His Sonship and those whose faith was sufficient are then healed. Both Matthew (14:35-36) and Mark (6:56), record the receptivity of the people.

Matthew 14:35-36	Mark 6:54-56
<p>35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;</p> <p>36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.</p>	<p>54 And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him.</p> <p>55 And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.</p> <p>56 And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.</p>

It appears in this specific region that following the teaching of Jesus, the faith of those in attendance were sufficient that the sick amongst them could be healed. It is important for us to remember the miracles Jesus performed always followed the exercise of faith by the people, not preceded it.

B/M, Ether 12:12

12 For if there is no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith.

5. Sermon on the Bread of Life

Jesus and his disciples now returned to Capernaum. He would soon go to the synagogue and preach one of His most important sermons. When He initially arrived at Capernaum a group of people were there to meet Him. They wanted to know how He had arrived. Jesus recognized that they were among those whom He had fed only yesterday with the loaves and fishes. He deduces these individuals had not come seeking the message of eternal life. They are again hungry and want to be fed again. The Joseph Smith translation, John 6:26-27, gives us further insight.

John 6:26-27	JST, John 6:26-27
<p>26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.</p> <p>27 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: for him hath God the Father sealed.</p>	<p>26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye desire to keep my sayings, neither because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.</p> <p>27 Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, <u>which the Son of Man hath power to give unto you</u>; for him hath God the Father sealed.</p>

Once inside the synagogue in Capernaum, Jesus began to teach the people who are assembled there.

John 6:36

35 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.

Bruce R. McConkie offers the following clarification,

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; I am the living manna sent down by the Father; I am come to feed you spiritually; yea, he shall never hunger more; and he that believeth that I am the Son of God, sent down from the Father, shall find in my gospel rivers of living water from which to drink and quench his spiritual thirst; yea, he shall drink and never thirst more."¹³

Contrast now the scripture from John with that found in the Joseph Smith Translation.

John 6:44-45	JST, John 6:44-45
<p>44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and</p> <p>I will raise him up at the last day.</p> <p>45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me.</p>	<p>44 No man can come unto me, except <u>he doeth the will of my Father who hath sent me. And this is the will of him who hath sent me, that ye receive the Son; for the Father beareth record of him; and he who receiveth the testimony, and doeth the will of him who sent me</u>, I will raise up in the resurrection of the just.</p> <p>45 <u>For</u> it is written in the prophets, And <u>these</u> shall <u>all be</u> taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me.</p>

Bruce R. McConkie offers further clarification regarding the above scripture,

"But rather know this: No man can come unto me, and receive me as the Son of God, except he doeth the will of my Father who hath sent me; and ye do not the will of the Father for ye neither keep his commandments nor believe my sayings. And this is the will of the Father who hath sent me, that ye receive the Son as the living bread which came down from heaven, that ye believe his gospel, join his Church, and abide in the truths which he teacheth. And the Father beareth record of the Son, by his own voice out of heaven, and by the Comforter who shall dwell in the hearts of the faithful; and he who receiveth the testimony, and doeth the will of the Father who sent me, I will raise up in the resurrection of the just, and he shall have eternal life in that kingdom which my Father and I reign."¹⁴

John 6:53-54, 56

53 ...Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink of his blood, ye have no life in you.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

Bruce R. McConkie states regarding these verses,

"Since he [Jesus] is the Bread of Life (meaning the Son of God), which came down from the Father, and since men must eat this spiritual bread in order to gain salvation, it follows that eternal life is gained only by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God, or in other words, eternal life is gained only by accepting Jesus as the Christ and keeping his commandments...To keep his saints in constant remembrance of their obligation to accept and obey him--or in other words, to eat his flesh and drink his blood--the Lord has given them the sacramental ordinance."¹⁵

The scriptures record the response of those who were privileged to hear the words of the Savior with their own ears.

John 6:60, 66

60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

Unlike the Samaritan woman at the well whom Jesus had taught regarding living water, those in Capernaum twisted his words. They assumed Jesus was asking them to literally "eat flesh and drink blood." They did not understand that partaking of His flesh and drinking His blood was symbolic, not literal.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“[For those who] pretended not to know that eating the flesh of Jesus meant accepting him as the Son of God and obeying his words could only mean that they were willfully closing their eyes to the truth.”¹⁶

As we learned from the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:4), these were among the seeds who had fallen in the soil by the wayside.

Bruce R. McConkie continues,

“Only yesterday Jesus was at the height of his popularity. Great multitudes of the common people followed him gladly; more than five thousand sympathizers had just sought to take him by force and make him king... [Today] unable to believe and accept his strong and plain assertions about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, even many classified as disciples fell away.”¹⁷

We might ask, “Why would Jesus preach this sermon knowing there would be many who would choose not to follow Him?”

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“One purpose of the Sermon on the Bread of Life was by the simple expedient of teaching strong doctrine to the hosts who followed him, Jesus was able to separate the chaff from the wheat and choose out those who were worthy of membership in his earthly kingdom.”¹⁸

Obviously noting the departure of many of his previous disciples, Jesus now inquired of the Twelve regarding their response to His sermon.

John 6:67

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Simon Peter, speaking not only for himself, but for the twelve, responded to the Lord’s query with words that have in their simplicity echoed throughout the centuries.

John 6:68-69

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Jesus must have been pleased His teaching had not fallen on deaf ears and hardened hearts. Those whom He had chosen and loved had felt the witness of the spirit regarding His divinity. But then, almost as if to remind Himself that even within the chosen Twelve there was one who would betray him, He shared this insight with them.

John 6:70-71

**70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?
71 He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him,
being one of the twelve.**

At least a full year before His death, Jesus knew and taught that He would be betrayed to those who thirsted for His blood and sought His life by one of His own chosen Apostles.

In just twelve short months Jesus would again attend the Feast of the Passover. It would be His final time.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"From this hour our Lord's life was charted in the course leading to the cross. Heretofore the common people had heard him gladly, however much their teachers and rulers had assailed his teachings and ridiculed his miracles. Now he was sifting out the hearts of men--believers and unbelievers alike--and most were failing the test. Edersheim states, 'The greater the popular expectancy and disappointment had been, the greater the reaction and the enmity that followed. The hour of decision was past, and the hand on the dial pointed to the hour of His Death.'¹⁹

6. Conclusions

In this chapter, our insight into the life and teachings of Jesus Christ has increased. We listened to His defense to the religious leaders regarding His healing on the Sabbath day and heard again His witness to them of His Sonship. We revisited the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand or more and noted His prayer to His Father that those who had come to hear His message would be fed. We were in the ship when the storm came up on the sea and noted that, in spite of the experience of those aboard, the elements were so strong their energy was failing them and the storm had not abated. We witnessed the faith of Peter as he did what only one other had done; he had faith sufficient to walk on water because of his faith in Jesus. We also noted only after Jesus joined them, did the winds stop.

We journeyed with Him to the land of Gennesart and witnessed the faith of many whose faith was so strong they were healed even by touching His garment. Finally, we heard the sermon of the Bread of Life and listened to the spirit whisper the truthfulness of the message veiled in symbolism. Because our hearts and minds were open to spiritual truths, our testimony grew stronger regarding both His message and divinity as the Son of God. We echoed the words spoken by Peter. How grateful I am for the scriptures and the messages they provide regarding the life and teachings of Jesus that I can experience them in my life today.

In conclusion, I wish to provide the following excerpt written by a college student who was attending a religion class on the New Testament. He recorded his thoughts in response to a question from his instructor. The question: "Do you understand the Atonement and do you know what it cost Him to make such an Atonement?" I believe his experience is valuable for each of us who wants to understand sacred truths. The instructor then told him about the Savior's suffering and how at any time He could have withdrawn. He could have saved Himself, but He did not.

Our college friend writes, "I was impressed; who wouldn't be?" But when the teacher said my own sins and his were among those which gave the Savior pain, I looked within and (I) did not like what I saw. And I began to weep--at my angry thoughts, my unholy thoughts, my backbiting, my greed. I wept because of them, not only because I was sorry—but because I knew for the first time--I had been partly to blame for the Savior's terrible suffering.

"I now realized how irreverent I had been in remembering the emblems of his death. I had gone my merry way, basking in His love; I had sinned and was flippantly sorry, and then I sinned again. And at none of these times did I realize that I, even in my slightest evils, was helping to crucify my Lord.

"How many times had I prayed during the sacrament...And never once did I truly thank Him for His gift to me nor ask His forgiveness for my sins. Or how many times had I come to the sacrament table and asked forgiveness for my own transgressions, still holding a grudge against those who had transgressed against me.

"All these things and many, many others stood bright and clear before me, and I was weak and sick with shame. How sad He must be for my hypocrisy! But even in my darkest moment I knew that He still loved me. Even then--in fact then more than ever--I could feel the warmth and peace of His love. Then suddenly, the light flashed on bright and perfect and clear as crystal. "This is it!" I exulted. "This is the love of God--the love of God which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men. This is that bread of life, that living water which, if a man will eat or drink of it, he shall never hunger or thirst again.

"My heart leaped with joy, and I wept again. This time it was not with sorrow or shame, but with joy, for I had tasted of His love and forgiveness, and I knew what it was. It was the same thing I had felt on many occasions before, but could not recognize. This time I knew that I knew. I had indeed felt of His Spirit and of the strength that comes through seeking a personal relationship with Him."²⁰

The magnificence of Jesus' sermon on the Bread of Life, will have deeper meaning for each of us if we too undergo a similar self-examination as did this young man. If we choose to do so then the meaning of this sermon will have greater meaning for us as we come to personally understand His sacrifice for us as an individual, rather than as a collective group. It is when we begin to internalize the teaching of Jesus that our testimonies will be strengthened and we will come to know personally His love for each of us.

In conclusion, I offer the following words from the New Testament Gospel Doctrine Teacher's supplement,

"Our deepest human needs are not the physical needs of the body, but the spiritual needs of the soul. All children of God have a hunger to know not only who they are and why they are here, but also whether they are living in harmony with God's will. Only by having these kinds of needs fed is their deep spiritual hunger satisfied. Christ alone provides the ultimate way to do this. Individuals may starve to death physically and still inherit eternal life, but they cannot starve spiritually and hope to do so. Christ's "bread of life" can nourish our spirits and only faithful observance of our covenants can make this nourishment possible.

“Even today many ‘walk no more’ with Jesus. But, like Peter, we, as [we become] members of the Lord's Church, have taken his name upon us. Thus, we have promised to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the only source of eternal life--as the ‘bread of life’. Let us [then] demonstrate our witness of Christ through our actions.”²¹

Footnotes

-
- ¹ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 341.
- ² “The Divine Sonship and Law of Witnesses” in *Studies in Scripture*, Vol. 5. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1986, 282.
- ³ “The Divine Sonship and Law of Witnesses” in *Studies in Scripture*, Vol. 5. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1986, 282.
- ⁴ “The Divine Sonship and Law of Witnesses” in *Studies in Scripture*, Vol. 5. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1986, 283.
- ⁵ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 195.
- ⁶ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 343-344.
- ⁷ “The Bread of Life” in *Studies in Scripture*, Vol. 5. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1986, 288.
- ⁸ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 349-351, numbered and altered for emphasis.
- ⁹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 352.
- ¹⁰ “The Bread of Life” in *Studies in Scripture*, Vol. 5. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1986, 291.
- ¹¹ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 348-349.
- ¹² **Gennesaret, Land of.** *Smith’s Bible Dictionary*. Revised and Edited by F.N. and M.A. Peloubet. Nelson Reference and Electronic, 1986, 211-212.
- ¹³ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 355.
- ¹⁴ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 355-356.
- ¹⁵ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 358.
- ¹⁶ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 359.
- ¹⁷ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 361.
- ¹⁸ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 361.
- ¹⁹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 388; see also Alfred Edersheim. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book 2:36.
- ²⁰ *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Student Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, [Second Edition, Revised, 1979], 92.
- ²¹ *The New Testament: Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Supplement*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982, 51-52.