

Gospel of John - episode 12

Chapter 5 part 3 & chapter 6

Welcome to our sharing on St John's Gospel. We are now going to look at the last section of chapter five in which Jesus has been challenged to produce some witnesses. This means, of course, that Jesus is on trial before the chosen people of God with the Judean leadership as his judges. But of course, if you know John's gospel, the truth is actually the other way around. Nevertheless, since he **is** on trial, he has to produce his witnesses. So, depending on whether you are at the level of below or at the level of above will depend on whether you join the prosecution or the defence, because the people on the level of below all will see Jesus merely as committing the sin of blasphemy and of making claims that only God can claim, so, you will join the prosecution. But if you have risen to the level of above and the Holy Spirit is enlightening you, and you have penetrated the mystery of Jesus' Person, then of course, you will join the defence. So, you can see that John is saying to each one of us that we are part of this drama, and the life that we live determines whether we are part of the prosecution or of the defence.

Jesus is on trial before the chosen people and they judge him, first of all on his claims, secondly on his teachings, and third on his works. Jesus is standing before them as the light of the world, and like a huge x-ray machine he can see right through them. He knows exactly what is going on inside each of them. He knows their motivation and he knows their commitment or lack of it to God.

So, while they are accusing him he in actual fact shows them their situation. John wants you to see that in actual fact, Jesus is the Covenant Prosecutor and he is showing them how they have failed God on all counts, so, everything that they accuse **him** of, they are in complete failure themselves. Jesus is going to show that their claim to be the people of God - their claim to be the apple of God's eye - their obedience to the Mosaic Law and their works, are going to accuse them of the very things that they are accusing him of! He can show them that they have failed in all of this; he will say to them - but he won't say it until chapter eight - that none of them can find any sin in him.

When he looks at them, he can see a lot of sin in them because I've already pointed out in chapter two the corruption that was in the priesthood at the time. So, he can judge them on all counts, but they can actually find nothing in him except that if they absolutely refuse his claims, they can accuse him of blasphemy, as I said, so this is actually a double trial. They are on trial before the Word of God, who is Jesus, and he is on trial before them, so, the depth of the text that John is showing to us comes out when you begin to see this double thing that's going on.

In this trial, Jesus is going to show them that they have failed miserably with regard to being the chosen people of God. They are going to fail again and they will face the judgement of God after the death of Jesus. They will face it in the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. That will happen in 70 AD and in the expulsion of all the people from the land between 70 ad and approximately 130 AD. In other Words, as a result of their behaviour and their decisions, the people will actually be deported.

Yet they are going to kill Jesus on the excuse that the nation could be saved by him dying. As we listen to these programmes, as we read and pray the Word of God, the choice of life and death is also before us. I don't want any of you to make the mistake of the man on the mat, that you would be passive, that you would either just like or dislike these programmes. That is not the reason why they are being given. They are being given to give you the opportunity **to also** make the decision for or against the Christ, and therefore to make a decision about your eternal salvation.

As far as the Judean leadership are concerned, the crime that Jesus has committed, the big one is that he has claimed to be the Son of God; He has claimed to be equal with God. And on top of that, he is a Sabbath breaker! So, they have a good bit against him, and this is punishable by death - and they will kill him.

But Deuteronomy 19:15 says that a man could not be convicted on the testimony of one witness. Deuteronomy 17:6 says that if you are dealing with the death penalty, there must be at least two or three witnesses. So, since Jesus is being accused of a crime that carries the death penalty, what John does here in his Gospel is that he provides four witnesses for Jesus. Here in chapter five, and later on in the Gospel, he gives you three more. That is the sevenfold witness that I mentioned to you before.

The very first witness, comes up in verse 32: "there is another witness who can speak on my behalf. I know that his testimony is valid. You sent messengers to John" – that is John the Baptist – "not that I depend on his testimony. It is for your salvation that I speak of this John was a lamp, a light and shining, and for a time, you were content to enjoy the light that he gave. But my testimony is greater than John's". So, the very first testimony that is offered in this Gospel is the testimony of John the Baptist. Now, we have dealt with the testimony of John the Baptist in chapter 1:6-8 and 19-34. John's final witness was given in chapter 3:29-36.

So, we know the first person who steps up onto the witness stand, and we know that he was a man sent by God. We know he was a prophet. We know that he produced the life and the works of a prophet. And the Judean leadership know the same thing as well, but Jesus doesn't actually need the testimony, but they do, because they are the ones putting him on trial. They are the ones who need this. The problem is that if they had accepted John as the precursor, they would know that Jesus was the Messiah, which you know from the Synoptic Gospels that they skirted that; they refused to deal with it at all. They were very irresponsible in their way of responding to Jesus on that one. Of course, if they had accepted John the Baptist, there would be no trial for Jesus! They would have celebrated the arrival of the Messiah.

Jesus tells them that they were prepared to bask in John's light for a while. Oh, it had been a long time since they had had a prophet - a long time. Then all of a sudden this man turns up and they were so pleased that God had sent them another prophet, but they just refused to accept his message.... but that was no different to the reaction of the people of God in the earlier centuries either. They gave Isaiah and Jeremiah and Hosea and all of them a terrible time, and they would celebrate them after their deaths, though.

So, they were prepared to bask in John's light for a while, but if they had listened to John, he had told them in chapter 3:27, 31-36 that Jesus's testimony was greater than his. John had told them very clearly that he was not worthy to undo Jesus's sandal strap....and that Jesus was the Lamb of God, that he was the Passover Lamb, that he was the one who came from heaven. Producing John, the Baptist as a witness here in this trial, unmasks their duplicity and their pretence, because they simply refuse God's messengers no matter who they are. So, the next thing that Jesus produces is the testimony of his works [vs 36]. "the works that the Father has asked me to carry out, these same works testify to the one who sent me". So, the works point to the workman. If we see a great piece of architecture, we praise the person who actually produced this. If we see a great painting, we praise the person who produced this. If we see anything that is wonderful and great, we praise the person who actually did it.... the work points to the workman. So, if the works are great, if the works are divine, then it points to a great and divine person.

Jesus says that his miracles actually **prove** who he is. In this gospel we get 7 signs. Notice that seven is John's favourite number; we get seven signs given that prove who Jesus is. It proves his claim to give life, and he can give life to anyone he wants - that he can raise the dead. They have already witnessed miracles of Jesus in Jerusalem, in Galilee and in Samaria, and they have probably heard of a lot more, which John doesn't actually talk about in his Gospel. When you look back at chapter 3 for a moment, Nicodemus told Jesus, 'we know' **we** is the Judean leadership, the Sanhedrin. "We know that you are a teacher that comes from God, for no one could perform the works that you do unless God were with him". So, the very fact that they are accusing Jesus means that they are literally working in duplicity and hypocrisy, because Jesus knows **that they know the truth**.

We have already been told at the end of chapter 2 that Jesus could read anybody, so this unmasks them because they look at the miracles while refusing to accept the message of the miracles. They saw the man healed on the Sabbath, but they refused to at **the message** that in that. What Jesus did when he went through his ministry was that he left his Gospel written in the lives of the people that he cleansed and healed and raised and delivered and all the rest of it. His Gospel was literally written in their lives and nobody could cancel that. It was the experience of these people that nobody could refute. The problem with the Jewish people in general and the leadership in particular, was that they enjoyed the spectacular aspect of the miracle but they didn't want the teaching that was in the sign. This is a deliberate blindness on their part. Each sign was meant to be a revelation to them **as to who Jesus was**. So, Jesus wins on this witness as well.

The third witness is verse 37: "Besides, the Father who sent me bears witness to me himself. You have never heard his voice; you have never seen his shape". We know from chapter one that Jesus has been with the Father for all eternity, and his Word finds no home in you". Now, to listen to the Word of God is to receive it in your heart; to accept it, and to act on it. He said, 'his Word finds no home in you because you do not believe in the one that he has sent'. So here Jesus reminds these people who are accusing him, that they have never seen God; they have never heard God's voice! Only very few people in the Old Testament times, people like Moses and some of the great prophets, actually heard the voice of God. Yet

Jesus has been with the Father for all eternity. He has been on the heart of the Father for all eternity. He has been listening to the Father. He knows the Father's Will.

He knows the Father's heart. And the law which God gave through Moses - on Sinai with all the noise and the fuss, the thunder and the lightning that was given there. Jesus says that this law of Moses testifies to me. Now, how does the law testify to him? I've already given it to you several times that Jesus was the Moses figure; He was the prophet-like-Moses. That is Deuteronomy 18:15-18: "I will raise up a prophet like myself for you, and you must listen to him". So, the law testifies to Jesus.

The unnamed feast in chapter five if it was Pentecost - we don't know whether it was or not. **If it was** Pentecost, then they would have been celebrating the giving of the law on Sinai. Again, Jesus is pointing out the fact that they have deliberate blindness. They are deliberately shutting themselves off from this new revelation of God that is coming through Jesus. But since they refuse to believe, then the Word of God is not alive in their hearts. Faith means that you open up to God, that you open up your inner being. It is not an intellectual exercise. It is not a case of knowing a whole lot of stuff. It is the fact that you open up your interior being to the revelation of God and you allow that revelation to change and transform you completely. That is what **believing** is.

Because they are not allowing this to happen to themselves, they cannot hear the internal testimony of the Father which is coming through all of Jesus' life, through his Words, his teaching, his actions, everything.

Listen to this from the first letter of St. John, written many years after the Resurrection of Jesus. "We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God". In other words, Jesus' testimony is greater. It is the testimony of God which he has given through his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. And further he says, "and this is the testimony God has given us - eternal life, and that life comes to us through his Son. He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life". You can see it is the same author speaking about the same subject.

The witness of the scriptures is the next one. This is the fourth one, and this is verse 39. Jesus said, "you study the scriptures, believing in them that you have eternal life. But these same scriptures speak about me". Now, if I had a lot more time to stay with this, I could open this up for you; because when Jesus met the two disciples on the road to Emmaus on the Resurrection, he opened up the scriptures to them step by step, telling them all that the scriptures had said about him. I just wish they had written it down! "These same scriptures testify to me, Jesus said, yet you refuse to come to me for life". As Jesus said to Nicodemus, 'you are a teacher of the law. You know this stuff. So, if they know and understand what the scriptures taught - everything was pointing to the Messiah. Everything was pointing to Jesus. And yet he said, 'you refuse to come to me for life'. He then tells them what the problem is. The sad thing is they have all the prophecies about the Messiah, but they refuse to have the fulfilment. It's really sad.

From verse 41, John gives us the reasons **why** they have this unbelief. The reasons, very sadly, are very ordinary. The amazing thing is that when people walk away from God and they give up their faith, the reasons are usually very ordinary. They are not profound; they are not great. This is what Jesus said, “as for human approval, this means nothing to me. Besides, I know you too well. You have no love of God in you”. Oh, dear. He goes for bull's eye. I have already pointed out that in their reaction to the man who had been healed in chapter five. They had no love for Jesus. They had no appreciation of the gift that had been given to him at all. I call this Jesus' x-ray vision working on them, showing them what is wrong. One of the big things that was wrong with them is the fact that Jesus never went to their rabbinical schools! In their rabbinical schools they had to study all the commentaries of the great rabbis. Up to the time of Jesus, there had been three very notable rabbis. Hillel, Shammai, and Gamaliel who was alive during the life of Jesus and even after Jesus' death. Since these were the great rabbis those who wanted to become rabbis would listen to their teachings. They would learn by debating with them and they would have to quote the rabbis. Because they wanted to become rabbis themselves they looked for the approval of their teachers. They also sought the approval of their students and the crowds. They would expect the crowds to applaud them and say they were great. Jesus says, ‘you are looking **to one another** for approval; you are not looking to God for approval’. Jesus never looked **to them** for approval. And that is one of the reasons why they hate him. They were at the level of the unbelieving world; the proof was that they had no love of God in them.

I think it's a terrible thing to be involved in religion and have no love for God. The essence of religion is a relationship with God, and it is a relationship is love and trust, but they were full of religion with no love. That is a complete failure of religion. Jesus goes on to tell them in verse 44: “How can you believe, since you look to one another for approval, and you are not concerned with the approval that comes from the one God?” The frightening thing is that the Lord was standing there talking to them! Then he says, “do not imagine that I am going to accuse you before the Father. You place your trust in Moses. Moses will be your accuser. If you had really believed in him, you would believe in me also. Since I was the one he was writing about”. If you refuse to believe what he wrote, how can you believe what I say?”

Do you remember the story of Divas and Lazarus when dives landed in hell? This story is in Luke's Gospel. He was told that the people had Moses and the prophets read in their synagogues every single sabbath, and they didn't need anybody coming back from the dead. Here Jesus is saying, you put your trust in Moses, and you will hear them saying to him in chapter eight, ‘we are disciples of Moses’. We don't know who you are, but we are disciples of Moses. Jesus said, if you are a disciple of Moses, you have got to put what he taught into practice. Religion is not about getting a PhD; it is not about becoming a scholar; it is not about being someone who knows more than other people. Religion is about a personal relationship with God, and that is the essence of it. We have to listen to God, and respond to him. They were claiming that the teaching that **they had** was authentic because it was the teaching of Moses, and they had a tradition. It is very interesting. They had a tradition that said that Moses would intercede for them before God. Jesus said, NO! Moses will hold up the covenant and say, ‘you signed this in blood, but you didn't keep it. When we go to the second half of this gospel we will find that Christians won't have to be judged by Jesus. The gospel will be held before us, and the Word of God will be our judge; it is the same thing. God is the same with everybody. So, if we don't accept the testimony of the scriptures, we

don't accept the testimony of God at all. One final point before I finish, and that is you are probably saying, 'oh, but where are the other three witnesses?' They are not in chapter five, so I will just name them for you because we won't be dealing with them at this point.

We had four witnesses given here. The fifth one is the witness of the Holy Spirit, which is given in John 15:26. The 6th one is the witness of Christians as they go out and they testify to Jesus in the world. That is John 15:27. Finally, Jesus witnesses to all that he has seen and heard from above.

If you go to Luke's gospel, it begins with those who have witnessed the birth of Jesus going out and proclaiming all that they have seen and heard. At the end of that gospel, the disciples who have witnessed all that Jesus has done for them, go out into the whole world proclaiming all that they have seen and heard. John tells us that Jesus came proclaiming to us all that he had seen and heard in the kingdom of God in the presence of his Father. Thank you for listening. God bless you.

INTERVAL

Chapter 6: Welcome to our sharing on St. John's Gospel. We now go into chapter six where we come to the Passover of 29 AD. It is the second and last Passover before the terrifying experience of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. As we come into chapter six, it is good to keep in mind that Jesus has only one year to live and he is such a young person! In chapter six John wants to tell us that Jesus is the prophet like Moses, and he will give us many connexions between Jesus and Moses in this particular chapter. I told you when I was introducing the gospel that I would come to this subject eventually. So here we are. Here is a reminder. In Deuteronomy 18:15 Moses said, "the Lord, your God will raise up for you a prophet like myself, and he will come from among yourselves, from your own brothers. To him you must listen". Then in verse 18, he says that God said, "I will raise up a prophet like yourself from among your own brothers. I will put my Words in his mouth and he shall tell them all that I command". We have been watching this ever since the beginning of this gospel. "The man who does not listen to the Words that he speaks in my name will be answerable to Me for it".

This text is terribly important for us when we come into the huge controversy that comes in this particular chapter after Jesus gives two amazing signs. So, let's give ourselves a little reminder of what the Passover was actually celebrating, because John puts the actions in the context of the great feasts. If we understand the feast and what they were celebrating you will realise that John is presenting Jesus as the fulfilment of everything. So, in the Passover, they celebrated their liberation from Egypt, or could I say salvation from slavery?

This is recounted in the book of Exodus, and this event was central to their history. God saved them from slavery in Egypt. Moses was given a great miracle ministry, and he won over their ancestors through these great signs and through preaching the Word of God to them. Then Moses presented them with the Passover lamb, and it was the blood of the Passover lamb that actually saved them from the terrifying plague of death. Now, all of this is absolutely essential for us in coming to understand the message that

John is giving to us here. The more you understand the book of Exodus, the more we will understand chapter six of John's Gospel! After presenting the people with the Passover lamb, Moses met God face to face on Mount Sinai. He had extraordinary communion with God on the mountain. It was there he received from God directly what we unfortunately call the ten Commandments, but what they call the ten Words. A sentence is 'a Word'. A Word for them is **a message**. In those ten Words, God gave them the whole of the Divine Will for the Mosaic covenant; He gave them everything. In giving those ten Words, what he was doing was he was saying that 'if you behave like this, you will be able to live as a nation. You will be able to live with each other. You give God his due in the first three, and you give your neighbour their due in the other seven, so the whole thing was balanced. After this experience, Moses had to lead them into the new life. They had a life of slavery before, so they call that the old life. Then they had to be baptised onto Moses in the Red Sea, as St. Paul says in 1 Cor 10:1-4. They had to be brought into a completely new way of life which passed through the wilderness on their way to the promised land.

This journey through the wilderness is a prophetic forecast of the journey that we have in our exile on our way to heaven. That is why I say the Book of Exodus is actually important for understanding the Gospel. The Promised Land was their destiny but they experienced lots of problems on the way. Now, on their journey, God gave them bread from heaven to feed them. And he gave them this bread after Moses' intercession. The Church has a very interesting name on this bread. 'Via-te-kum', the bread you need for your journey. The people at the time were the same as the people whom Jesus is dealing with here. They did not penetrate the mystery of this bread. So, they called it Mana, which means, 'what is it?' And not having penetrated the mystery of the bread from heaven, they had 'what is it?' for breakfast, dinner and supper for 40 years! It is very sad; so, they get the gift, and they never, ever find out what it is. I think it is very sad.

Now, if you are going to live in a desert, one of the things you need most is water. But where are you going to get water in a desert? God provided them with water through an extraordinary experience, in which God asked Moses to go to a particular rock which he was told to strike. Now, rocks do not produce water, yet when Moses struck the rock, water flowed abundantly from it, which is an extraordinary miracle. God provided bread and water, but he also provided meat as well. This is the background that we must have in trying to understand what John is saying to us here. I know you know the story of the miracle of the loaves, but I wonder if you know the miracle! You see, we can read the scriptures superficially as they read the manna superficially, and we can come up with the stories of the gospel instead of the extraordinary thing that is being told to us.

When John presents the miracle of the loaves to us in chapter six, he does it in parallel with the book of Exodus, continuously comparing Jesus with Moses. It is totally fascinating. For example, in verse five, you have Jesus putting a question to Philip, "where can we buy bread for all of these people?" That is parallel to numbers 11:13, where Moses asked God, where on earth would he find food to feed all of these people, as the people grumbled against Moses and the manna. You will find towards the end of this chapter that people will grumble against Jesus. In numbers 11:13, they told Moses, "we are sick of this unsatisfying food". And at the end of **this** chapter, we are going to hear them saying to Jesus, "this is

intolerable language”. And they walked off. In Numbers 11:7-9, and John 6:31, both Moses and Jesus describe what they gave to the people as ‘bread from heaven’. Both of them use the same language.

But here in chapter six of John, Jesus says that Moses's miracle **merely pointed to his** because, after all, the manna was physical food, and the people needed more every single day. Eventually the manna disappeared. Both Moses and Jesus claim to give the people flesh to eat. The flesh, in the case of Moses, was the birds. Numbers 11:13. John 6:51: “You have to eat my flesh and drink my blood”. In Numbers 11:23 Moses wondered if all the fish in the sea would be enough to feed the people. This echoes the query of the apostles in chapter 6:9 “What is that among so many?” Moses opened the sea for the people to cross and go over safely onto dry land. But what you are going to find here in chapter six is that Jesus **has control of** the sea. I am going to combine this miracle with the miracles of Jesus in the Synoptics as well. Jesus calmed the storm. He walks on water, and he reveals his true nature to his disciples.

All of this is background. If you know it is the background, then you will come to this text with a new reverence and a new respect. Let us read a little: “Sometime after this Jesus went off to the other side of the lake of Galilee or of Tiberius and a large crowd followed him, impressed by the signs that he gave by curing the sick”. Now there's your warning signal that the crowds are coming in on the level of below. They are not going to understand Jesus. He is operating on the level of above. “It was shortly before the feast of Passover. Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and he said to Philip, where can we buy some bread for these people to eat? He only said this to test Philip. He himself knew exactly what he was going to do. Philip answered 200 denarii – that is 200 days wages - would only buy a little for them. He said, one of the disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said there is a small boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what's that among so many?”

I'm going to stop there. You see the text is very familiar but the problem is we do not dig deep enough. Let us start at the very beginning. It is very important to read this sign from above. The crowds are down here and they are going to read it from below so they won't understand at all! The place that we are gathering in is either called the Sea of Galilee or Tiberius. Now that is interesting. At the time of Christ, it was called the Sea of Galilee. But at a later stage when John is writing the gospel, it was called Tiberius in memory of the Caesar. But for the gospels it is Galilee. The old name for Galilee was Gennesaret, the Garden Lake because it had such an abundance of fish that it even fed the Caesar in Rome. All around the lake there were little villages dotted where all the poor people were able to get their livelihood from the lake. Because the lake was so abundant with life, the land all around the lake was very fertile so, the people who lived there really understood the abundance of life.

It is to these people Jesus is going to talk about the real abundance of bread from heaven. John says that Jesus climbed the hillside and sat down there with his disciples. Now the hillside is not actually named but we don't need a name for it because the revelation that Jesus is going to give to them means that this little hillside becomes the Christian Sinai where God is going to reveal himself, where God is going to give his Word, where God is going to feed his people. So, they are going to meet God face to face in Jesus just as the woman in chapter four did. Now the crowds we have here who **are** following Jesus. We met them before. We met them in chapter four, and we discovered back there that they were miracle hungry.

Like the Judeans. They loved the drama, they loved the spectacular, but they were not really willing to penetrate the deeper meaning of anything. Therefore, they refuse to see beyond the material thing that Jesus does for them. At the end of chapter six, we are going to discover that Jesus is rejected, not just by the Judean leadership, **but by the whole of Israel**. And it is absolutely extraordinary that they spent so many centuries waiting for Messiah, and when he comes, they reject him completely. It is an extraordinary mystery. What you find not only in the gospel, but in the history of the church, all down the centuries as well, is that the most unlikely people accept the Lord, and the most unlikely people reject him. It is amazing. In verse five, when Jesus approaches Philip, we know from chapter 1:44 that Philip is from Bethsaida, one of the little villages around the lake. He was asked the very important question that you and I should appreciate, because we have taken a long journey to get here. 'Where will you get bread from heaven?' Do you remember in chapter four, 'where is this living water going to come from?' Do you remember chapter three? Where is this new life? How can you be born again? Nobody has the answers to these very vital questions. The answer, of course, is that you are born from above!

The living water comes from the side of Christ, and this living bread **is Christ himself**. It will take them a long time to discover that. But we have seen before in chapter four that the disciples are not in the same place as Jesus at this particular point in their history, so, Philip answers from below and he does a mental calculation and he says, 'no, it cannot be done'. We do not have the money. How many times, all down the centuries, have people said that in the church, we can't do such and such a thing? We don't have the money; we don't have the resources. We don't have the people. We don't have, we don't have.... and they don't open up to let God be God, and to let God manifest himself in that situation in such a way that it would transform their own lives.

What we have to remember is this, that at this below level, the level of the cosmos, the egocentric, unbelieving world cannot feed the deep spiritual hunger of the human race. It cannot. The unbelieving world leaves the hungry to starve, the sick to die, and the sinner to perish. And it does not care because there is no love, therefore no solution down here at this lower level. At this lower level, people take care of themselves and they walk over others in order to try and get to the top. It is only when you come to the kingdom that Jesus is offering, the kingdom of above, where love reigns - and where love reigns the hungry are fed, the sick are healed or taken care of. The sinner is helped to find life, and so the sinner is converted. Here everybody does care about where you are going because they want you to receive the fullness of life. So, it is a completely different reality altogether to be at the below level or at the high, above level.

At this particular point, Philip is not the answer to anything, but he has to be transformed. Jesus is going to teach us here the value of heavenly bread. What Jesus is going to show the apostles is that no money can buy bread from heaven! The value of bread from heaven demonetizes all currencies, because the value is the death of the Lamb of God, who will give himself in sacrifice to save us. That is the price of the holy communion you have received today. It has absolutely no earthly value. It is everything on the level of the kingdom of God. This food that the Lord is offering to us is a gift from the realm of above, and it is the gift of Incarnate Love. It is so great; it can only be a gift. We could never deserve it. We could never do anything to buy it. You cannot buy bread from heaven.

John now tells us how do you access this bread from heaven One of the disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, "there's a small boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what's that?" Okay? There is a little boy willing to sacrifice his meal to Jesus. The five barley loaves and two fish are very interesting. Five breads. Five represents the Torah, and therefore it represents the food of the scriptures.

It represents the manna from heaven, The two fish, in the earliest times in the church, the crucifix or the cross, was not the sign of Christianity. The sign of Christianity was a fish. The reason is that the Greek Words for fish, ichthus, read, 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour'. So, what we are being told here is that the bread of God's Word and the gift of Jesus himself in the Eucharist is the solution. That is what we have at Mass. We are fed with the Word of God and with Jesus himself. That is the solution. That is the gift of Heaven. So, this little boy, in offering his lunch to Jesus is doing what we call the offertory at Mass.

Jesus is not going to do any magic for them. It is not an abracadabra thing, not at all - but a gift of love given by a child in innocent love to Incarnate Love is a very good basis for this miracle. And that is why we are always told to offer ourselves on the altar, make a gift of yourself to him who is love. We are going to watch this happening as we go along. As soon as Jesus receives **a gift of love, a sacrificial** gift of love, he says, oh, 'get the people to sit down, we can go now'. This is something where God can work. So here is the key to multiplying bread. A sacrificial gift. A sacrificial gift in love. Jesus said, "make the people sit down. There was plenty of grass there and as many as 5000 men sat down". How they counted them, I have no idea. Was it even necessary? No.

The five is the Torah and ten to the power of three represents a crowd. Therefore, this is the miracle offered to the people of the Book. It is offered to the chosen people. Now when you go to the Synoptic Gospels, they will give you a second miracle of the loaves, one for the chosen people and the other for the Gentiles.

It is very interesting to compare the two. The 5000 here does not mean that they actually counted the people, but that this was a miracle for the chosen people. Now in actual practice, if there was 5000 men here, the Jewish people never counted the women and children. St. Matthew tells you that, so there would have been a vast crowd. But the more important thing is the significance of the number five. Because the child gave five loaves to Jesus and this is a crowd in which five is the number. That means we are dealing with the chosen people. The miracle that Jesus gives on the surface level is that he will multiply bread.

But Jesus is the prophet like Moses and all prophets gave significant signs. They gave prophetic signs to the people. So, Jesus is giving them a prophetic sign that what he is going to offer to us in his Death and Resurrection is a gift of sacrificial love from God Incarnate, because this miracle is Jesus' way of introducing the Eucharist to the church and to the world. It is through the Eucharist that Jesus will satisfy the spiritual hunger of humanity. The Eucharist is a gift of sacrificial love that will cost Jesus his life. It is really a wonderful thing. So, the numbers involved and the significance of each thing is actually very important.

Now, unfortunately, at this particular stage in their lives, the apostles don't appreciate the gift of the child. But they did later; they understood everything once the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, and afterwards they put into our Eucharistic celebration how important it was to make an offertory if we wanted this miracle; to give something to God in order to release this abundance from God to us. But the apostles' inability to believe at this particular point actually echoes Moses' inability to believe that God could feed his people as well. Moses struggled with it as well, because, after all, he had a huge crowd to feed, and we all know how stressful it is to have a huge crowd to feed when you are the supplier. So, this crowd that represents the chosen people of God, we are going to discover, will also represent all the hungry people of all time, anybody who wants bread from heaven. We will continue this reflection in our next episode. Thank you for listening,