



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

Jesus and the Feasts of the Jews 1 (John 5–6)

Jewish Feasts and Their Replacements by Christ; The Sabbath—Healing at the Pool of Bethesda and the Discourse on the Divine Son. At Passover—Feeding of the 5,000, Walking on Water, and the Bread of Life Discourse; Words to the Crowd and to the "Jews." Flesh, Blood, and Accepting Jesus' Saving Death. Words to His Followers; Many Disciples Turn Away, but "Lord . . . thou hast the words of eternal life."

Jewish Feasts and Their Replacement by Christ

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)]
 - Discourse on the Life-Giving Spirit (7:16–52)
 - Discourse on the Light of the World (8:12–59)
 - **Sixth Sign: Healing of the Man Born Blind** (9:1–41)
 - Discourse on the Good Shepherd (10:1–18)
- [Jesus at **Dedication** (Chanukah, 10:22–42)]

Jesus on the Sabbath (Shabbat, 5:1–47)

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*HEALING OF THE MAN AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA: THE DIVINE WORD
 CREATED, THE INCARNATE WORD RE-CREATES.*

*THE DISCOURSE ON THE DIVINE SON: JESUS WORKS AS THE FATHER WORKS,
 HE WILL JUDGE, AND HE IS WITNESSED BY THE SCRIPTURES*

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Jesus at the Pool of Bethesda

- Jesus goes to Jerusalem for a feast, which is not named (and the emphasis will be on the weekly festival of Sabbath rather than a particular annual festival)
- “Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market **a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches**” (5:2)
 - *bêt ḥeseda*’ or “**House of Mercy**”
- “In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, **waiting for the moving of the water**. (5:3)
 - “. . . darkness was upon the face of the deep. And **the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters**” (Genesis 1:2)



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Jesus Heals the Infirm Man at Bethesda

Anticipated by the Healing the Nobleman's Son in Cana: Jehovah creates, Jesus re-creates/heals



Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *Christ at the Pool of Bethesda*

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- 5:4 with its story of the angel troubling the water is missing from the earliest and best Greek mss.
- “And a certain man was there, **which had an infirmity thirty and eight years**” (5:5)
 - **38 years**: the period of time that Israel wandered between Kadesh-barnea and Wadi Zereb (Deuteronomy 2:14)
 - 40 years is symbolic of the time of our mortal probation
 - **For most of that time we are in a state of rebellion and sin**
- Jesus comes to him: “**Rise [egeire], take up thy bed, and walk**” (5:8)
 - **egeire, the word used for “rise” is also used for resurrect!**

“The Jews” and Breaking the Sabbath

- The important following discourse on the Divine Son set up by anger of “**the Jews**” over the healed man’s and Jesus’ **seeming breaking of the Sabbath**
- “**The Jews**” (*hoi Ioudaioi*), a difficult term in John that is usually, but not always, negative
 - **Clearly not all Jewish people, because Jesus and his disciples are, of course, Jewish**
 - Judeans as opposed to Galileans?
 - Some theories of Johannine composition think the term refers to later Jews who did not become Christian at the time the Gospel was being written
 - **Often, but not always, used of the opponents of Jesus**
 - Some translate as “the Jewish authorities”
 - A more neutral term, at least at first, in John 8:31 (those Jews which believed on him) and in John 11:19 and 33 (when they come to comfort Martha and Mary over Lazarus’ death)
 - **Intriguing suggestion is that they are the descendants of those who returned from exile (‘am HaGola), the majority of which would have been Sadducees and leading Pharisees, most, but not all of which, were opposed to Jesus**
- **Breaking the Sabbath**
 - “The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, **It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.**” (5:10)
 - “And therefore did **the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.**” (5:16)

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Discourse on the Divine Son (5:17-47)

- **First extended discourse in John** (previously we have seen dialogues), *this time spoken to opponents*
- **Christ and the Father (5:17-21)**
 - “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (5:17), *equating the earlier work of creation with his current work of healing and salvation*
 - “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” (5:19); cf. King Follett Discourse
- **Christ as Judge (5:22-23)**
- **Christ and Life (5:24-29)**
 - **Realized eschatology:** “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)
 - **Future eschatology:** “. . . for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves *shall hear his voice*, and *shall come forth*; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (5:28-29; cf. revelation of D&C 76)

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Witnesses of Christ

- **Witnesses of Christ (5:30-38)**
 - John the Baptist
 - **The “works” (*erga*) Jesus does**
 - **The Father himself**
- **Written witnesses of Christ: “Search the scriptures” (5:39-47)**
 - “Search [*eraunate*] the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (5:39 KJV)
 - *eraunate* can be either imperative (a command) or indicative (a statement). What does the context suggest?
 - **The original audience consists of “the Jews” who were hostile to Jesus and who were dedicated to the Torah or books of Moses**
 - **Exegesis:** “You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life (5:39 NRSV)”
 - **Exposition:** we ought to study the scriptures . . . *if in them we find Christ!*

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Jesus at Passover (Pesach, 6:1–71)

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JESUS FEEDS 5,000 EVEN AS YHWH FED THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS THEN WALKS ON THE SEA OF GALILEE EVEN AS YHWH HAD PARTED THE RED SEA

IN THE DISCOURSE ON THE BREAD OF LIFE, JESUS POINTS TO THE NECESSITY OF ACCEPTING AND INTERNALIZING HIS SALVIFIC DEATH

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Structure of 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)
 - Cf. John's use of **the divine "I Am"** (Ex. 3:13-15; Is. 41:4)
- 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**

Feeding of the 5,000 (6:5–15)

- Because John is independent of Mark, these two counts provide “multiple attestation of sources” (since presumably Matthew and Luke were drawing upon Mark)
- John’s detail that there were 5 **barley** loaves
 - connects Jesus’ miracle with that of Elisha, who fed 100 men with 20 barley loaves (2 Kings 4:42–44)
- “Then those men, when they had seen the miracle (*sēmeion*) that Jesus did, said, ***This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world***” (6:14)
- “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 (6:15)



Feeding The Five Thousand by Harold Copping

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Walking on Water (6:16–21)



- “***It is I [egō eimi]***” (6:20)
 - ***egō eimi*** = the Hebrew ‘***ehyeh ‘asher ‘ehyeh***, or “I Am that I Am,” by which YHWH revealed himself to Moses (see Exodus 3:14)
- **Jesus’ epiphany on the Sea of Galilee resonates with other powerful Old Testament revelations of Jehovah** (see Job 9:8, 38:16; Habakkuk 3:15)
- As Bertil Gärtner writes, “Just as the Lord ploughed a path for Israel through the sea, leading them to freedom from bondage, so Jesus, when he walks on the water, shows that as Messiah he has power over the seas.”

Ivan Aivazovsky, *Christ Walks on Water* (although this is clearly depicting the Matthean miracle, because it has Peter walking out to meet Jesus!)

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

- **Words to the Crowd** (*ho ochlos*, 6:26–40; presumably at the dock or outside in Capernaum)
 - Bread Come Down from Heaven (6:26–34)
 - **The Crowd's Incorrect Expectation of Who the Messiah Would Be** (6:26–34, this time a lawgiver like Moses)
 - 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 (6:41–50)
 - *focuses largely on the issue of who Jesus is*
 - Jesus' Flesh and Blood Give Life (6:51–59)
 - **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)

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

- Reaction to the Bread of Life Discourse: to his disciples and then Twelve in particular, presumably after leaving the synagogue)
- "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)

Accepting Christ's Saving Death

- 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**
- 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*
- "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)