

# The Gospel of John

## Part 8

Steve Thompson

UUCF

January 22, 2025

# Andrew and Philip

- Before telling the story of Jesus feeding the multitude (the 4th sign) and the story of Jesus walking on the water (the 5th sign), the gospel of John pauses to discuss Andrew and Philip, disciples who are little more than names in the Synoptic Gospels, but who are developed in John, and then used to connect the 4th and 5th signs
- Spong first explains the Synoptic treatment of Andrew and Philip: Mark introduces Andrew as the brother of Simon Peter, says both are fishermen, and they were the first disciples Jesus called. Nothing more is said about Andrew until the Gospel of John, the last gospel, written (60+ years after the crucifixion).
- Even less is stated about Philip, who is merely mentioned in each of the list of disciples in Mark 3:13-19, Matthew 10:1-6, and Luke 6:12-16 (he is always listed 5th). Spong says since nothing biographical is stated about Philip in the Synoptics, the author of John is free to use his imagination in characterizing him.
- The 4th and 5th signs (feeding multitude, walking on water) are associated around the observance of Passover; Spong says it is possible that the two disciples are featured in these two signs because they are the only disciples with Greek names. Andrew will have the larger role of the two.

# The Book of Signs

- The Book of Signs (John 2-11) include these stories
  - The turning of water into wine in Cana of Galilee (first sign, John 2)
  - The story of Nicodemus coming to Jesus and being told he must be “born again” (John 3)
  - The Samaritan woman at the well (John 4)
  - Healing the Gentile official’s son (second sign, John 4)
  - The man crippled for 38 years (third sign, John 5)
  - Andrew and Philip (John 6)
  - The feeding of the multitude (fourth sign, John 6)
  - Jesus walks on the water (fifth sign, John 6)
  - His brothers, arguments over who he is (John 7)
  - Adulterous woman, Abraham arguments (John 8)
  - The man born blind (sixth sign, John 9)
  - Lazarus is raised from the dead (seventh sign, John 11)

# Andrew and Philip

- John 6 opens with Jesus on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, a wilderness area, and has a crowd following him. Jesus and his disciples climb a hill, look down at the crowd, and Jesus asks Philip how they are to feed them. Philip misunderstands because he takes Jesus literally, and so he gives a literal reply: “200 denarii would not buy enough bread”; but Jesus is thinking of himself as the “bread of life”, so he will feed the people; Andrew then says a lad is there who has five barley loaves and two fish; Jesus invites the crowd to sit, gives thanks, begins to distribute the food and the people eat as much as they want; then 12 baskets of leftovers are collected; the people say Jesus is the prophet of whom Moses spoke; Jesus then withdraws, setting the stage to reappear when he walks on the water shortly later
- Spong says to read the story of the feeding of the multitude as a literal event is to totally misunderstand what John is saying (also true of the Synoptics, but less clear in them); the meaning of these two sign stories is revealed in interpreting Andrew and Philip and then the meaning of the Hebrew tradition that gave the followers of Jesus the ears to hear; ***John portrays both Andrew and Philip as missionaries who bring others to Jesus***; Andrew is happy to do what is needed, but not claim the credit or the spotlight

# Jesus is Portrayed as Moses

- Moses lurks behind these two sign stories because Moses is the greatest Jewish hero and the one who forecast the coming of a prophet, whom John assumes is Jesus; how does John connect Jesus to Moses? Moses *fed* the Hebrews during the Exodus with manna in the wilderness, and Moses *split* the Red Sea so the people could escape from Pharaoh's chariots chasing them, so John portrays Jesus as *feeding* the crowd and *walking* on the water; John portrays Jesus as having the power Moses possessed
- In other stories, John portrays Jesus as *the prophet of whom Moses spoke*. John has Jesus describe himself as the "bread of life", which satisfies the deepest hunger of the human soul. John casts this story near Passover, suggesting the idea that Jesus is the Paschal Lamb which was sacrificed to save the Hebrew slaves from the angel of death (the last of the Ten Plagues of Exodus). Earlier, John had John the Baptizer describe Jesus as the "lamb of God". John has Jesus state the "I AM" name of God that God spoke to Moses, when Moses, in the burning bush story, asked what he should say to people when asked who sent him
- After feeding the crowd, Jesus explains that the food he gives "endures to eternal life"; the contrast is between feeding the *body* and feeding the *soul*

# Jesus is Portrayed as Moses

- The Christian ritual of communion comes from the story we are about to read; in it the author of the Gospel of John has Jesus say “I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”
- To take this literally is, of course, not only gross, but impossible. I assume this is another example of the author showing that these stories are not literal events. Spong says the meaning is to “take Jesus’s life into their life”, which I take to mean that we should imitate Jesus, by being loving, compassionate, and forgiving; despite the words, I do agree with this meaning
- A few verses later the story says his “disciples” abandon him, which surprised me at first, but it then refers to “the twelve”, making it clear that the “disciples” referred to are not “the 12 disciples” which is what the term disciples normally does refer to; that a broader group is referred to as the disciples is not common as far as I know
- There is a sudden and unexpected change of location as John 6:59 says “in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum”. Spong says the teachings of Jesus did not require a synagogue, and of course we know that in about the year 88, this community was expelled from the synagogue

# Jesus Teaches the Disciples (John 6)

After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is *the* Sea of Tiberias. **2** Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased. **3** And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.

**4** Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. **5** Then Jesus lifted up *His* eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” **6** But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. **7** Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.”

**8** One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, **9** “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?”

**10** Then Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. **11** And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed *them* to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. **12** So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.”

**13** Therefore they gathered *them* up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. **14** Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

**15** Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.

# Jesus Walks on the Water (John 6)

**16** Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, **17** got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. **18** Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing. **19** So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid. **20** But He said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” **21** Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going. **22** On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone— **23** however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks— **24** when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. **25** And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?” **26** Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. **27** Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”



# Jesus Teaches the Disciples (John 6)

**28** Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” **29** Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” **30** Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?” **31** Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ “ **32** Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. **33** For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” **34** Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.” **35** And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. **36** But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. **37** All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. **38** For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. **39** This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. **40** And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

# Jesus Is Rejected by His Own (John 6)

**41** The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, “I am the bread which came down from heaven.” **42** And they said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”

**43** Jesus therefore answered and said to them, “Do not murmur among yourselves. **44** No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. **45** It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. **46** Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. **47** Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. **48** I am the bread of life. **49** Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. **50** This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. **51** I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” **52** The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this Man give us *His* flesh to eat?”

# Jesus Is Rejected by His Disciples (John 6)

**53** Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. **54** Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. **55** For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. **56** He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. **57** As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. **58** This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”

**59** These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

**60** Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this*, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?” **61** When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you? **62** *What* then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? **63** It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life. **64** But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. **65** And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”

**66** From that *time* many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. **67** Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?”

**68** But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. **69** Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

**70** Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?” **71** He spoke of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.