

The Messianic Banquet

Feasting on Leviathan, Feasting on Christ

Luke 9:1 And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases,

² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

³ And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics.

⁴ And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart.

⁵ And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them."

⁶ And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

⁷ Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead,

⁸ by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen.

⁹ Herod said, "John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him.

¹⁰ On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida.

¹¹ When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing.

¹² Now the day began to wear away, and the twelve came and said to him, "Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place."

¹³ But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish-- unless we are to go and buy food for all these people."

¹⁴ For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each."

¹⁵ And they did so, and had them all sit down.

¹⁶ And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

¹⁷ And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

(Luke 9:1-17)

The Messianic Banquet: Feasting on Leviathan

- **The Tree of Life** with its fruit that you can eat to **live forever**. It would have been granted to Adam and Eve had they cast the serpent out of the Garden. It is offered to any in Revelation if they should conquer through faith in Christ.
- **The bread and wine** shared between Abraham and Melchizedek after a great battle victory.
- **The Passover**, given to the people of Israel as a perpetual remembrance of the Angel of Death's killing the firstborn of Pharaoh and the subsequent exodus from Egypt.
- **The manna in the wilderness**, sent to Israel as a test immediately after setting out from Elim (*'elim* means "gods" in Hebrew), the place of the gods, where there were seventy palms representing the angels of the nations and twelve springs representing the tribes of Israel.
- The elders and priests going up Mt. Sinai to behold the face of God and **eat with him** after the Exodus.
- Jesus and his disciples taking **communion** together at **the Last Supper**.

These and many more meals found in Scripture in one place or another teach us about eating with God. It is a glorious, intimate, almost unimaginable privilege with benefits we can never exhaust. Each of these meals also has in one way or another an aspect of overcoming or conquering in a mighty battle so that the meal is a victory celebration of a war—often supernatural in nature—come to an end. And now there's peace.

Each of these meals points to one climactic counterpart, the antitype of them all. Over the centuries, it has garnered a name. Theologians call it the *Messianic Banquet*. One dictionary defines it as “An eschatological banquet that manifests the joys of the Messiah's presence. Presented in the Old Testament as a restoration of God's people. Explicitly linked to Jesus Christ in the New Testament.”¹ Revelation calls it, the *Wedding Supper of the Lamb*, and it comes simultaneous to a White Rider, the Word of God, conquering the nations and the hosts of hell, and commanding the vultures to gather for the great supper of God (*Rev 19*).²

¹ Matthew J. McMains, “Messianic Banquet,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

² In the John-Revelation parallels I preached in that series, this meal has as the one-to-one parallel, the dead of Jesus (compare *John 19:19* and *23* with *Rev 19:16*; *John 18:38* and *Rev 19:11*; *John 19:5* and *Rev 19:11*).

As it comes near the end of Revelation, you can perhaps see why it is called an *eschatological banquet*. For eschatology deals with *the last days*. This banquet has its roots in passages like **Isaiah 25:6-9**, “On this *mountain* the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples *a feast of rich food*, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined ... He will *swallow up death forever*; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces ... Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

These verses come in the middle of *one of the longest oracles in the Bible* (**Isa 24:1-27:1**). Itself the climax of eleven long chapters of prophecies against the nations (**Isa 13-23**), it begins with God judging the host of heaven in heaven and the kings of the earth on earth (**24:21**). It moves to a beautiful section on *God swallowing up death forever*, in which is found this feast prophecy. It concludes with a dark and terrifying vision of God’s people *entering their chambers* for a little while until the fury of the LORD has passed by. The final verse is unforgettable, “*In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish*

Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea” (27:1).

As God’s people reflected on this Messianic Banquet prophecy in Isaiah in the years leading up to the coming of Jesus, they came to view **Leviathan**, whom John likens to Satan or the Devil (**Rev 12:9; 20:2**), as *the main dish*, a **fish-dish if you will**. Enoch, for example, which predates the NT predicts, “And the angel of peace who was with me said to me, ‘These two monsters [Behemoth and Leviathan] are prepared for the great day of the Lord when they shall turn into food” (**1En 60:24**; cf. 7-9). **4 Ezra 6:52** says, “... but to Leviathan you have the seventh part, the watery part; and you have kept [it] to be eaten by whom you wish, and when you wish.”³ **2 Baruch 29** is probably the most interesting. It is a messianic prophecy that when Messiah is revealed, **Leviathan** (and behemoth) “shall be food for all ... and it shall come to pass at the self-same time that the treasury of manna shall again descend from on high, and they will eat of it” (**2Baruch 29:3-8**). Curiously, it was written in the Second

³ **Going Deeper.** Oesterley cites TgJon Num 11:26ff. which has a long extended tradition of the two men Eldad and Medad who are prophesying—the very story we saw echoed in the last story of the Galilean ministry in Luke 9:49-50, where the Israelites will feast with great joy upon the ox [Behemoth] that has been prepared for them from the beginning. See **W. O. E. Oesterley**, *The Doctrine of the Last Things: Jewish and Christian* (London: John Murray, 1908), 142. For many more references see **Ginzberg**, *The Legends* 1.26-29 with notes 116-39 in 5.41-48 (cited in Aus). Also **b. Bava Bathra 74b**.

Century A.D., so if this comes from a Jewish or Christian hand, we do not know.

The Jews were also reading [Psalm 23](#) this same way. The Psalm begins, “[The Lord is my Shepherd...](#)” ([Ps 23:1](#)). When it gets to, “[You have prepared a table for me in the presence of my enemies](#)” ([5](#)), they taught that this is “[a table with the flesh of Leviathan, Behemoth, and Ziz.](#)”⁴ Psalm 23, of course, tells us that this is all said to take place “[in the Valley of the Shadow of Death](#)” ([4](#)). Obviously, this was a well-known theme to all the people in those days, especially those living on the Sea of Galilee.

All this speculation of [a Leviathan meal arose](#), especially from places like the [Psalms](#) where God says he [once already gave Leviathan as food](#) to the Israelites at the Exodus. “[You crushed the heads of Leviathan you gave it as food to the people of the deserts](#)” ([Ps 74:14](#)).⁵ Here, Leviathan symbolizes both Pharaoh and the supernatural power(s) behind him. Of course, we saw last time how [Luke 9:1-50](#) is all about [Exodus typology](#). Thus, someone summarizes this saying

⁴ [Midr. Pss. 23/7 on Ps 23:5a](#). Cited in 154-55. [Roger David Aus](#), *Feeding the Five Thousand: Studies in the Judaic Background of Mark 6:30-40 par. And John 6:1-15*, Studies in Judaism (New York: University Press of America, 2010), 151-55. On the Christian Church possibly interpreting this in the iconography of St. Catherine’s Monastery at Mount Sinai see [Lois Drew](#), “[Leviathan, Behemoth and Ziz: A Christian Adaptation](#),” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 44 (1981): 152.

⁵ See [Robert Thomas Murphy](#), “[The Messianic Banquet in Isaiah 25:6-12](#),” Thesis (2020), 18. For future see searches in this on “leviathan.”

that the expectation in the days of Jesus was that, “At the time of the new Exodus, Israel will return to the Wilderness where the Lord will treat the nation as he did in the first Exodus [citing 2Baruch 29]”⁶ to feasting on Leviathan and the Manna, as the people have a banquet with Messiah.

Sending the Twelve, Herod, Feeding the 5,000

As we spent all of last time looking broadly at **Luke 9:1-50** from the perspective of the Exodus, I want to focus in today (and **certainly next week**, if not one more after that), on the first seventeen verses. These give us **two stories**, **Jesus sending out the twelve** and the **feeding of the 5,000** which sandwich the strange remark about **Herod Antipas**. Today, we will look at this from the perspective of **the Messianic Banquet** and what Jesus was doing when he, as John tells us, deliberately intended something before any of them had a clue what was about to happen (**John 6:6**). We will look mostly at Luke, though we also need to look at the other Gospels as well.

⁶ **Phillip J. Long**, “The Origin of the Eschatological Feast as a Wedding Banquet in the Synoptic Gospels: an Intertextual Study,” St. Andrews University (2012), *Dissertation* 86, 169. On the Messianic banquet and Leviathan see esp. 247-51.

Two ideas link the two stories together. These are *bread* and the *kingdom of God*. In the first story, Jesus tells the disciples, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor *bread...*” (Luke 9:3). And, of course, in the feeding of the 5,000, the disciples tell Jesus “We have no more than five loaves and two fish” (13). Similarly, Jesus sent out the twelve “to proclaim the *kingdom of God* and to heal” (2), as they would be given all power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases (1). Just prior to the feeding, we learn that the crowds followed Jesus, “and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the *kingdom of God* and cured those who had need of healing” (11). This shows that Luke wants the two stories to be read together. In the middle, we have Herod. Why?

I suggest to you an old interpretation of Herod as the first head of Leviathan. This interpretation is found as early as Tyconius of Carthage (ca. 380), a contemporary of Augustine, and continues through the Middle Ages. He is often considered the first head of Leviathan (Leviathan as a hydra had seven; Rev 12:3, etc.), the one who starts off the long line of persecutions in church history.⁷

⁷ Tyconius from Carthage (ca. 380), *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 175-76; Haymo of Auxerre (d. 878), *Expositionis* 1084, see p. 217; Joachim of Fiore (b. 1135-1202) *Book of Figures* 14. See Dojčin Živadinović, “The Origins and Antecedents of Joachim of Fiore’s (1135-1202) Historical-Continuous Method of Prophetic Interpretation,” St. Andrews University (2018), *Dissertation* 1656.

Notice the “death” imagery in the Herod story. We saw last time that this perplexed grandson of an Edomite paralleled the puzzled reaction of the Edomites to God freeing his people from Egypt. After this though, we learn that he is perplexed about Jesus “because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead” (Luke 9:7). Resurrection—new life from the dead. Some said that Elijah had appeared (a tip of the hat to Elijah about to appear with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration), and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen (8). Again, more rising from the dead. Herod couldn’t understand it because he had “beheaded” John (9). More death language surrounding this evil man, who had built the city of Tiberias only a handful of years earlier to be his capital right there on the Sea of Galilee. (It is also curious that he will reappear in 13:13 where he is trying now to kill Jesus.)

Now, we’ve already seen glimpses of Leviathan when Jesus calmed the waters, for Leviathan is the chaos monster and he is said to have lived in the Sea of Galilee (among others). Jesus also showed his dominion over Baal/Satan the storm God. Thus they declared, who is this that “even the winds (Baal) and water (Leviathan) obey him” (Luke 8:25). You also need to know that immediately after our stories today,

though not recorded by Luke, Jesus heads back down to the Sea and walks on the same water, thereby **symbolically crushing the head of the Leviathan**.⁸ So it is not at all inappropriate to see Herod as symbolizing Leviathan here too.

Jesus Sending Out the Twelve

The stories begin with Jesus calling the twelve together and giving them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases (**Luke 9:1**). This is clearly showing that his own authority given to him by the Father is being **passed on** to the first who will spread the **Gospel of the Kingdom**—the twelve. This will have a parallel in ch. 10 when he sends the seventy out next, so we will return to this more at that time (Obviously, this has parallels in Acts as well). For now, just note that it is supernatural power. The point is obvious. The kingdom of God is **intruding on the domain of demons in pagan/Jewish territory**. This is where Jesus is sending them—to any who will take them in as **itinerant exorcists** in the regions surrounding Galilee. This is the point of shaking the dust off your feet (**5**). **“Jews returning from pagan territory shook off**

⁸ Many have commented on this. One of my favorites is found in the fictional account **Brian Godawa**, *Jesus Triumphant: Chronicles of the Nephilim Book Eight, Special Limited Hardcover Edition* (Los Angeles, CA: Embedded Pictures Publishing, 2015).

its dust in order to leave behind any contamination. So this was a gesture of dissociation and judgment. To reject the messenger is to reject the message and the one who sent it.”⁹

In light of this, we also need to remember that not only has Jesus just calmed the storm (Luke 8:22-25), right after that, he cast out a Legion of demons and sent them into the pigs, who then drown themselves in the Sea of Galilee (26-39). We saw there that the pigs were here as they were almost certainly being raised by Gentiles to be the main dish in ghoulish ritual practices performed for the dead by the pagans throughout the northern regions of Galilee in their cults for the dead near all the dolmans and other graves, which the area is so known for, as this place has the largest concentration of dolmens on the planet.¹⁰

What is a dolmen? They are megalithic and prehistoric ancient tombs usually consisting of two vertical stones with a third positioned on top of them to look like a table. In fact, the word dolmen comes from the Breton word *taolmaen* or “stone table.” Curiously, we know that some kind of food rituals were performed for the dead at the dolmens. And

⁹ R. T. France, *Luke*, Teach the Text Commentary Series, ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), Comments on Luke 9:5.

¹⁰ We mentioned this in the sermon on Legion. See Ron Carpenter, “What are Dolmens? And Why Did Jesus Drive the Demons into a Swine Herd,” Nov 5, 2020, <https://teachingforsot-zambia.com/2020/11/05/what-are-dolmens-andwhy-did-jesus-drive-the-demons-into-a-swine-herd/>.

they were very likely built by the Amorites, giants like Og, who became associated with demons when they died.



Dolmen. Gamla, Golan Heights



Neolithic dolmen. Burren, Ireland.

Jesus Feeds the 5,000

Thus, we come to the main story for today. **Jesus feeds the 5,000**. Clearly, this is an extraordinary miracle. It has made its way into all four Gospels, one of only a handful of stories during Jesus' ministry to do that. The Apostles obviously thought that this was important to retell, and each to retell it in their own way. But why?

Extraordinary feedings of so many people with such little food is stuff that makes the imagination run wild. How is that even possible? Yet, there we see it, not just once, but time and again with Jesus. While Luke does not record it,

Jesus feeds 4,000 with seven loaves and a few small fish at another time (**Matt 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-9**).

These are **not the only time** we read in the Bible of incredible feedings though. **Israel is given manna in the wilderness as a test** after leaving the oasis of Elim. It is an impossible miracle that will literally feed them for 40 straight years, every single day on land that is rocky, hot, dry, barren, and desolate. We will see more of this as we go along, but Jesus directly relates the **feeding of the 5,000 to the manna** story in John's retelling. Later, as they grow sick of it, they will cry out to God for meat, and **God will feed them with quail** in such abundance that it comes out their nostrils.

One more feeding miracle that is related to our story appears in **2Kg 4:42-44**. There are a number of **direct structural parallels** that Luke is using from this story. It is a story that takes place through **Elisha**, the disciple of Elijah. In it, **bread is presented** to the prophet (**Luke 9:13; 2 Kings 4:42**), the prophet **gives orders** for the people to be fed (**9:13; 2 Kings 4:42**), a **reaction** of the prophet's followers is recorded (**9:13; 2 Kings 4:43**), a **new order** from the prophet is given (**9:14; 2 Kings 4:43**), the bread is **distributed** and eaten by 100 men (**9:16; 2 Kings 4:44**), and a note concerning the

leftovers is described (9:17; 2 Kings 4:44).¹¹ There is one main difference. Elisha is not here at the Sea of Galilee. And thus, there is **no fish** present. Instead, they are all fed with leftovers from twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain.

Is there anything else in this story that is **worth mentioning**? I think so. The first is where it takes place. “**And Elisha came again to Gilgal**” (38). While the writer obviously knew the place, we don’t. The problem is, there are many gilgals throughout Israel.¹² Gilgal simply means “**a stone circle.**” So, for example, a modern name put on one of the oldest sites in Israel about ten miles east of the northern end of the Sea of Galilee is called “*Gilgal Refaim,*” *Stone-circle of the Giants* (named after Og).

A second thing worth mentioning is that the man who brought the bread to Elisha came from **Baal-shalisha**. The place itself is disputed, but what matters to me is that a town was **named after Baal**. Paganism. The food comes from a place named after Baal-Satan and therefore is **associated with ... Leviathan**. Let’s turn then to the story in Luke.

¹¹ **David W. Pao** and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 310.

¹² See **Adam Zertal**: *The Footsteps of God: The Discovery of Israelite Gilgal Sites Dating to the Iron Age*, trans. Shira Steinberg (Haifa: The Samaria & Jordan Rift Valley Survey Association, 2021).

“On their return the apostles told him all that they had done” (Luke 9:10). This ties us directly a back to their mission, which they had been undertaking for the last few weeks and months. “And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida” (10b). This is the first time Bethsaida appears in Luke’s Gospel. It is the hometown of the fishermen Peter, Andrew, and Philip. Andrew and Philip both play prominently in the story as it is told by John, probably because the miracle takes place near here.

Most scholar believe that Bethsaida is located less than two miles north of the present day estuary where the Jordan runs into the Sea of Galilee, a place today called the Beit Tsaida Reserve, a nature reserve which leads to the archeological site. Herod’s son Philip built it up in 30 AD, renaming it Livia in honor of Augustus Caesar’s wife who died the year before. It is interesting in light of the things we have now learned about Herod that John introduces the location as simply “the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias” (John 6:1). Calling it Tiberias (which he only does in John 6 and 21, and is found nowhere else in the Bible) clearly evokes both Tiberias Caesar and Herod who built the city of that name on other side of the lake (perhaps another reason why Luke mentions Herod).

Luke next tells us that **the crowds** learned that Jesus had gone there and so they followed him, and he welcomed them and **spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing** (**Luke 9:11**). John says he did this on **a hill-mountain**, which means that they are not in the town of Bethsaida proper (**John 6:3**). They've gone outside of it, to what Luke will tell us is **“a desolate place”** (**Luke 9:12**).

Luke's focus is on **the Kingdom intruding again** into the heart of enemy territory, as it evokes the same language as the sending of the twelve. Curiously, however, Mark says, **“He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd”** (**Mark 6:34**).¹³ This very clearly suggests **Psalm 23:1**, **“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want”** (**Ps 23:1**).

The Psalm continues, **“He makes me lie down in green pastures.”** As the day grew long and **“began to wear away,”** the twelve came to Jesus and said to him, **“Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place”** (**Luke 9:12**). But though it was desolate, John makes sure that we know that there was **“much grass in the place”**

¹³ I noticed this from Blomberg's study, which also talks about Leviathan and the Messianic Banquet. See **Craig L. Blomberg**, *Contagious Holiness: Jesus' Meals with Sinners*, ed. D. A. Carson, New Studies in Biblical Theology vol. 19 (England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2005), 103-08.

(John 6:10). Curiously, the targum renders the psalm, “He makes me rest among the beauty of grass.”

The reason why there was grass here is at least partly due to the time of year. John needs you to know that “the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand” (John 6:5). This puts us sometime in late March or early April, when everything in this part of Israel is lush and green, even the desolate places.

At this point, I think I’ve now given you enough information to hear my speculation on where Jesus took everyone. I happened to visit it about a month ago at just this time of year, in fact only a week prior to the Passover. We were heading up to visit Bethsaida, though this was not our main destination that day. Instead, we were going to a truly remote spot only some 900 ft. west of the northern end of the modern nature reserve.

We were going here to get a close up look at a truly ancient place, a stone-circle, a *gilgal* called Khirbet Bteha. Because of how ancient it is and its proximity to the village, everyone would have known about it, even though few today have. Located at the top on the very edge of a 100 foot ridge that descends to the Jordan Valley and River, Khirbet Bteha is a megalithic complex of unknown age that is badly

run down, in fact the western portion of it has fallen down the cliff. Studied in the 1970s and again in 2006,¹⁴ it consists of a series of three concentric circular walls with a large cairn or *burial tomb* at the center. The *Shadow of Death* is obviously at play in its construction. It is between 300-350 ft. in diameter and is made up of thousands of large basalt field stones that form the *gilgal*. I'm in possession of what is probably the best aerial footage of the place on the planet.



Drone footage of Khirbet Bteha overlooking the Jordan River 100 ft. below.

Gilgal Refaim is overlaid on the top right.

Courtesy Derek Gilbert and Aaron Lipkin

¹⁴ Michael Freikman, "It Happened in Tseidan, Regarding a Tree": A Proposed Identification of a Megalithic Monument of Khirbet Bteha," *Judaica Petropolitana* 5 (2016): 32-41.

The site is most reminiscent of [Gilgal Refaim](#), a stone monument three times its size, located about 10 miles to the east. In between the two sits the [largest dolmen field on the planet](#). *Stone tables*. Khirbet is also situated at the entrance to the Hula Valley, named after the ancient swamp-lake that was drained in the 1950s because it was a cesspool and breeding ground for diseases such as malaria. Because of these dolmens and ancient swamp, modern researchers have speculated that this is what David referred to when he spoke of [the Valley of the Shadow of Death](#) in Psalm 23.¹⁵ Bethsaida is the entrance to it; Jesus has taken them to it on purpose. Why?

It is important to know a couple more things about this place. First, remember that it is called a “[desolate](#)” place. This is the same word used for Jesus when he goes into the “[wilderness](#)” to be tempted by the devil. The word *eremos* is quite possibly related etymologically to Hermon, the giant mountain located at the northern end of the valley, which will come into play in the next stories. When we looked at the temptation, we saw that I suggested that this wilderness

¹⁵ This is the thesis of Derek and Sharon Gilbert, who took us to Israel in March 2023. You can hear Derek talk about it here: [Derek Gilbert](#), “Ep: 159 The Valley of The Shadow of Death with Derek Gilbert,” *Blurry Creatures* (March 23, 2023), <https://www.blurrycreatures.com/listen/ffxytham9gtkx95-l7g6y-tysyf-mcmz8-ttax5-ltxz5-na3rs-ms2ea-khh4k-jbkgp-sbs5p-w4tn2-z2mbb-x4pks-d3jh2-2y2n7-sxltb>.

was in fact the same Valley of the Shadow of Death and it was where Jesus was tempted, by the devil, to **turn the stones into bread**. But Jesus answered, “**It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone’**” (**Luke 4:4**; cf. **Deut 8:3**). So Jesus is returning to the place of his own testing.

Second, when we looked at **the baptism**, I suggested that this was the very spot that Jesus was in fact baptized. In fact, it is quite possible that they were looking down at the very place as the food miracle occurred (see picture above). Think about it. If you are going to have 5,000 men with more women and children besides, you are going to need **access to a lot of fresh water**.

So Jesus is deliberately taking the crowds to the place of his own baptism and temptation. A place suitable for all of them, but with tons of imagery in the background both from his own experiences and of the stories of the pagans of old. Are there **other reasons** he might have done this? Let's continue the story.

Luke tells us that he told the disciples after they told him to send the people away, “**You give them something to eat**” (**Luke 9:13**). This is remarkable, given that there are at least **5,000 people** here. In John's Gospel it gets more specific. Jesus looked straight at **Philip** and asked him, “**Where are we**

to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” (John 6:5). He adds, importantly, but he had said this to “test him, for he himself knew what he would do” (6). Remember how we said that this whole miracle is likened by John to the Manna miracle? In that miracle, it is specifically said that the manna was itself a test for the people of Israel. “The whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness ... Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them’” (Ex 16:2-4).

Philip told him that a year of wages wouldn’t feed all these people (John 6:7). Andrew chimed in that there was a boy who had five loaves of bread and two fish (9; cf. Luke 9:13). So Jesus told the disciples to have the people sit down in groups of about fifty (14) because there was grass. *The Shepherd makes me rest in green pastures.*

Here, they are sitting (15). Why? Because they are about to go to table. Where? In the Valley of the Shadow of Death, surrounded by stone-tables and stone circles and cults and rituals for the dead. In the place of temptation. In the midst of their enemies. What enemies? The supernatural enemies

of the region, whom Jesus is doing battle with at this very moment. The demons. The devil. The leviathan.

To help you see this, consider a kind of anti or bizarro-translation that one scholar has recently done of Psalm 23.¹⁶ The idea for this comes from the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (not of the pants fame), who taught his students to use binaries or opposites to clarify mythic roles and themes in texts. In doing this, you can much more easily see what lay behind the story you are reading (in this case, the context of Psalm 23), and why it was written the way that it was. As you hear it, it might be rather unnerving, but I believe it really helps you see the satanic backdrop behind Jesus' war and the incredible miracle he is truly performing here. Here then is what is happening, not to David, but to his enemies who follow the gods of old.

The Shepherd is my Lord, I shall be ever wanting.¹⁷

¹⁶ Judd Burton, "Structural Analysis of Psalm 23," 5/23/23. Unpublished, but we hope to add it to our upcoming book on the Serpent Mound. In what follows, I will provide his notes after each line for further clarification.

¹⁷ Azazel, Azaga, Pan. Ever wanting like the fate of the Watchers and Nephilim. [My addition. The watchers are called "Shepherds" in Enochian literature (cf. 1En 89:59). The gods are called Shepherds in pagan literature (cf. Baal in The Baal Cycle: KTU 1.12.II; Adonis in Virgil, *Eclogues*; Osiris in Egypt with his shepherd's crook staff; Tammuz in Babylon; etc.). Furthermore, Enoch at this point may have the Messianic Banquet in mind. See Long, 246-47. That Messiah was also viewed as a shepherd is found in Aus' discussion immediately after the Levitian discussion, see pp. 155-59]

He forces me prostrate in barren wilderness; he misleads me to the stagnant waters.¹⁸

He depletes my soul, he instructs me in the ways of wickedness, for his own schemes.¹⁹

Because I crawl through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I panic. For you menace me from a distance; Your sword and your spear, they terrify me.²⁰

I prepare a table before you in the presence of your council, I give placcation to you and offering.²¹

Surely evil and heartlessness pursue me every day, and I will wander the Tomb of the Shepherd for eternity.²²

Can you hear the evil? Does it not just ooze off the pages as the background that David could easily have been thinking of as he wrote this psalm? Hopefully it can help you better understand just what it is that **God have saved you from** and just what it is that the Messianic banquet brings us to.

People have wondered, does **the bread and fish symbolize anything**? The answer is yes, they both do. The change from ears of grain with Elisha to fish with Jesus is no accident

¹⁸ Compulsion to worship. Misdirects to the abyss, the stagnant waters of the ancient Hula swamp.

¹⁹ Takes away humanity. Misleads by way of the Watchers and Rephaim instruction for their evil, rebellious ends.

²⁰ Hula Valley, disease. Panic. Azazels weapons.

²¹ Your vessels are emptied. Cult of the dead, meal, at area sites and [stone-table] Dolmens. Vessels for libation and offerings.

²² Tomb, Cult of the dead, abode of El.

of history. Jesus very clearly tells us in John's account that **the bread is himself**. They are **feasting on Messiah**. "I am the **Bread of Life**" (**John 6:35, 48**). "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (**53**). **Life!** The opposite of the death they are all surrounded by. Jesus is holding out life, eternal life, in perhaps the most starkly dark region of the planet, perhaps on a *gilgal* circle of death built by the demons themselves before they lost their bodies at the very place that cultic food rituals of bread and pig were offered to dead ancestors so that it might go well with them in the afterlife.

He does it **at the very place he was himself baptized**, anointed to be the Messiah of God. **Baptism** is a symbol of the dead coming back to life. Resurrection. It is a symbol of dying to the evil spiritual forces of the world through the resurrection of Christ. And that takes us to Leviathan.

What is **Leviathan**? He is chaos personified as a sea-serpent ... *a fish*. Jesus is on a three-year mission, a war, a grudge-match with the devil. First, he is **baptized** and comes out of the death waters alive. Then he is **tempted** and wins with God's word. Then he **calms the storm** and shows his authority over Leviathan. Next, he will **walk on the water**, trouncing on his head. Soon, he will show himself to them

in the [transfiguration](#) in glory, announcing to the powers and principalities that he is here, come and get him. We will look at this next time.

Here, he is giving the people a real-life, right-now [fore-taste of the Messianic Banquet](#). The Messiah has come and they are going to feast on the flesh of Leviathan even as they feast on the spiritual body of Christ. Just as the Jews were expecting. But *not in the way they* were expecting it.

For [this is the first coming](#), the coming in [grace and servanthood and suffering](#), not judgment, rule, and glory—*yet*. His broken body will soon be something that is envisioned in the Lord's Supper (even as it is foreshadowed in Jesus' sermon in [John 6](#)), which will [take place at the next Passover a year from now](#). But yet even here we are reminded of [God's victory](#), that amazing night so many centuries earlier when God told Israel to prepare unleavened bread that they would eat in haste ([Ex 12:11-12](#)), as that night [the Angel of Death](#) would strike down the firstborn of Egypt and they would be leaving that country the next morning, free and alive. And, as the Psalm said, [they feasted on Leviathan](#), and as all the traditions said in unison, would happen again when Messiah came. It is happening at this very moment.²³

²³ In an interesting [foreshadowing of the Transfiguration](#) story just a few verses from now, the rabbis taught that God will make a *sukkah* (booth) for the righteous in the world to come out of

Listen to the totality of **that expectation in Baruch** now in light of all these things,²⁴ things that **many Jews missed** because they didn't get how Jesus could be fulfilling their expectations of Messiah. The things **the disciples themselves did not understand** as Jesus is about to predict his death (foreshadowing the Lord's Supper via this miracle) two times in the next few verses and they were clueless. The thing **many Christians today continue to miss** as all their thoughts with the Messianic Banquet go to the future Second Coming and they miss what is already here before their eyes in history performed long ago.

3 And it shall come to pass when all is accomplished that was to come to pass in those parts, that *the Messiah shall then begin to be revealed*. 4 And Behemoth shall be revealed from his place and *Leviathan* shall ascend from the sea, those two great monsters which I created on the fifth day of creation, and shall have kept until that time; and *then they shall be for food for all that are left*. 5 The earth also shall yield its fruit ten-thousandfold and on each vine there shall be a thousand branches, and each branch shall produce a thousand clusters, and each

the skin of Leviathan. When Jesus told Peter he did not know what he was talking about when he said let us make tents for you and Moses and Elijah, it makes you wonder if he might have had something like this in mind too. See Pesiq. Rav Kah. Suppl. 2/4 cited in Aus, 154.

²⁴ If Baruch here is written by a non-believing Jew, then it reflects Jewish traditions. However, if this is a Christian redaction, it is proof that Christians read the story of the feeding of the 5,000 as a feasting on Leviathan.

cluster produce a thousand grapes, and each grape produce a cor of wine. 6 And *those who have hungered shall rejoice*: moreover, also, *they shall behold marvels every day*. 7 For winds shall go forth from before Me to bring every morning the fragrance of aromatic fruits, and at the close of the day clouds distilling the dew of health. 8 And it shall come to pass at that self-same time that *the treasury of manna shall again descend from on high*, and they will eat of it in those years, because these are they who have come to the consummation of time.

(2 Baruch 29:3-8)

When Luke finishes his story, he says that *the people ate and were satisfied* (Luke 9:17). This is *the same word* used in a Midrash on Joel 2:26, “In the time to come a great banquet will be prepared for you out of *Leviathan’s flesh* ... as it is said, ‘You shall eat in plenty and *be satisfied*.’”²⁵

(*A note here after the sermon.* Some had a question of how God would have us feast on, essentially, the devil while we are feasting on Christ. Their confusion came in thinking that it is the same kind of feast. Both are spiritual, not literal. In the Manna, we get our spiritual nourishment from Christ alone, the Bread of Heaven. In the fish-dish, Leviathan, Christ has conquered him. Thus, all his carcass is left for is

²⁵ Cited in [Aus](#), 153.

food to be eaten. Read Revelation 19:6-10 and the Messianic Supper with Christ with Revelation 19:17-21 and the ghoulish dinner of vultures dining on the dead as simultaneous meals and you will get a kind of counterpart metaphor.)

Feasting on Christ

You therefore have now been made aware of a **great war that Jesus is continuing to fight** in the Gospels as he brings greater and greater clarity to his mission on earth as the Son of Man. More will be revealed next time. More about how **Jesus Christ is the Messiah and that this really is therefore a Messianic Banquet**. He is fulfilling both **biblical and traditional expectations** of Messiah, but not in the ways people expected.

As he gave his great **Bread of Life discourse** the next day in the synagogue of Capernaum, reflecting upon the previous evening's extraordinary miracle, he told them over and over again, "**Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that ensures to eternal life which the son of Man will give to you**" (**John 6:27**). That work is to "**believe in him whom he has sent,**" Jesus (**29**). He is the **true Bread from heaven, the manna in the wilderness** who gives life, not only to Jews,

but to the whole world (33). Curiously, in the **Targum of Psalm 23:3**, “He [the Shepherd] restores my soul with manna.” Whoever comes to him will **never hunger again**.

But the Jews “*grumbled*” about him because he said he came down from heaven (41). They had already been mocking his previous eating with sinners, calling him a **glutton and drunkard** (**Luke 7:34**). **They did not believe**, even in the midst of signs and wonders and miracles, and I suppose even seeing and eating the very banquet that previous evening themselves. **Jesus was testing Philip and the Jews and you**, even as God tested the Israelites. Who will believe his word? Who will see with the eyes of faith who he really was, what he had actually just done, and what he would do for any who turned to him in faith? As Peter would say at the end of all this, as everyone else was going away, “**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of Eternal Life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God**” (**John 6:68-69**). Christ had chosen them for this very purpose (70). You may know you are chosen when you believe upon him.

In this miracle, **Jesus proved to the whole world**, yet again, that he is the Messiah, indeed Very God in human flesh. This **Messianic Banquet** was in perfect harmony with

his teaching concerning the Kingdom of God and Jewish customs.²⁶ He **provided for the spiritual needs** of the people as he taught them about **the physical needs** that he was also so kindly providing for them in the healings, the exorcisms, and the feedings. Jesus provides for these same needs today through his Holy Spirit and church for any who bow their knees to his Lordship.

Curiously, at Khirbet Bteha, Dr. Michael Freikman discovered **two petroglyphs**. He called them *wasm* marks, tribal marks characteristic of local Bedouin. He said they are **hard to date**, but the color of the patina markings is much lighter than the surrounding surface, meaning that they are younger than the original construction of the monument, thousands of years before Christ. The glyphs he discovered were of **a serpent and a fish**.²⁷

Did someone at the feeding miracle understand and **commemorate this event of Jesus in the rocks** of this otherwise totally deserted and unknown place? Jesus is the Bread of Life and he has conquered the serpent of old, Leviathan, and fed him to the people as proof of his victory at the cross.

²⁶ Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), 321. The kingdom and customs come together in the Jewish blessing, "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the world, who bringest forth bread from the earth." Taylor, 324

²⁷ See Freikman, 35-36.

The last days so long ago predicted, have begun. **Christ now feeds Leviathan to whomever he wishes, whenever he wishes. And more, he feeds them himself.** The bread and the fish.



Left: Serpent Petroglyph (top of rock); **Right:** Fish Petroglyph
Courtesy Michael Freikman

I pray he would feed you with such food, and that you would know that he is the Bread of Life, so that you would never hunger again.

Appendix: Psalm 23 Targum

A psalm of David. *It is the LORD who fed his people in the wilderness; they lacked nothing.* 2. *In a place of thirst, he makes me rest among the beauty of grass; beside gentle waters he leads me.* 3. He restores my soul *with manna*; he leads me in the ways of righteousness, for the sake of his name 4. Even when I go *into exile* in the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear evil, because *your Memra is my support; your straight staff and your Law*—they comfort me. 5. You spread a table before me [Midrash: the table of flesh of Leviathan], *manna is raised up* in front of my oppressors; *you make my body fat with stout birds, and the head of my priests with the oil of anointing*; my cup overflows. 6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, when I shall *dwell* in the house of *the sanctuary of the LORD* for length of days.

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2 Baruch.

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