

## The Feeding of the 5000 (John 6:1–15)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (8/15/2021)

### Introduction

1. This is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels. It is the only chapter in John that treats the Galilean phase of Jesus' ministry.
2. The location of the miracle was on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee, also known in the OT as *Kinnereth* ("lyre," because of its shape). Another name was the Sea of Tiberias after the town built by Herod Antipas (A.D. 20) on the western shore as a regional capital in honor of the Roman emperor, Tiberias Caesar.
3. The occasion was an effort to get away for a time of rest for Jesus and His disciples as evident in verse 3. However, a very large crowd was following Him (v. 2). Both the people in Judea and in Galilee were enamored of the miracles that Jesus performed. They did not follow Jesus because He was seen as worthy to follow (John 6:26, 27).

Jesus did the signs for the purpose of identification. The natural man, however, does not receive the things of the Spirit, which was evident when they responded to the rebuke (v. 28). Salvation is of God, and it is the work of God that enables anyone to be saved through *believing*—trusting in the One who alone can save them.

4. Another reference to the Passover is found in verse 4. There is profound significance to this miracle as it relates to the Passover. This would be the second Passover during Christ's public ministry, which technically identified Him as the *true Bread of God* in contrast to the *mana* that sustained Israel in the wilderness. The *last* Passover will identify Him as the Lamb of God. On the first Passover (John 2:13), Jesus identified Himself as the true Temple that must be destroyed in order to be rebuilt in three days. Messiah's dying was the Jews' major objection to Jesus, which will be noted later.

### I. The Test

1. This miracle and the incident to follow were to test the faith of the disciples. The occasion for this test—a large crowd, isolated and hungry, were seeking Christ because they saw the signs and concluded that He was the Messiah. Mark adds that it was a secluded place.
2. Philip and Andrew (named by John only) were specifically tested. How does the Lord test you?

### II. The Miracle

1. Organizational details are seen in verses 10–14. Jesus gave thanks for the meal. The meal was distributed. There was plenty of food. All ate their fill and were satisfied. Nothing was wasted, and the leftovers far exceeded the young man's offering. The 12 baskets of leftovers may speak of the faithless disciples or the tribes of Israel. All four Gospels draw attention to that number.
2. The spiritual lesson to be taken is that Jesus, the true Bread from Heaven, exceeded the manna in the wilderness (Jeremiah 31:14).

### III. The Response Provoked

1. The crowd determined to make Him King (vv. 14, 15). They saw this sign as convincing proof that Jesus was the Prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18:15. The Jews wanted to shortcut heaven's plan, just as Satan tempted Jesus to advance to the crown by circumventing the cross. There can be no salvation without the sacrificial Lamb. There can be no reigning King without the suffering Servant.
2. Jesus did not want to disrupt the political order. He withdrew and hid Himself. He had no desire for the people forcibly to make Him king. This is seen clearly in Jesus' interaction with Pontius Pilate (John 18:33–38).

John used this miracle to draw attention to the Bread of Life discourse that follows.

### Conclusion

1. What are your expectations of Jesus? *“Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal”* (v. 27).
2. When we read that Jesus rebuked the people for their failure to understand, we need to examine our own understanding. Sadly, the expectation of many professing Christians focuses more on what Jesus can do for them than how Jesus is to relate to them.
3. How important it is to see, as illustrated at the table, that Jesus is our life. We have been made partakers of Christ. This understanding ought to make a radical transition of our lives from that of selfish pursuits to selfless service to the King of kings.