

I. Introduction. v. 10-11

- A. Food and meals are often significant in the Bible. 4:3-4 6:21 7:34,36ff 8:55 12:37 13:29 14:15-24 15:16-17,23 16:21 22:16-23 24:41-43 Gen. 2:16-17 3:6 Deut. 8:3 Exodus 3:8 12 16:1ff John 6:4 1 Co. 5:7 Num. 11:4-9,31ff Deut. 28:1ff Rev. 19:9 Isa. 25:6
- B. This is a very important miracle.
1. This is the only miracle (other than the resurrection) which is recorded in all four gospels. Matthew 14:13-21 Mark 6:33-44 John 6:1-14
 2. This miracle has a rich Old Testament background. Ex. 16:1ff 2 Ki. 4:42-44 John 6:31-32
 3. This miracle has significance for us.
- C. The context of this miracle is important.
1. The disciples have just returned from their preaching and healing mission.
 2. It is “sandwiched” between Herod’s question as to Jesus’ identity and Peter’s definitive answer. v. 9,18-20
- D. A restful retreat is interrupted. v. 10-11
1. The apostles report back to Jesus about their mission. v. 10a
 2. Jesus seeks to give them rest. v. 10b Mark 6:31 Mt. 11:28ff
 3. The crowds won’t let Jesus rest. v. 11a Mark 6:33
 4. Jesus welcomes the needy people and has compassion on them because they are like sheep without a shepherd. v. 11b Mark 6:34 Num. 27:17 Ps. 23
 5. Jesus’ care for the crowd is a model for His undershepherds. 1 Pet. 5:1ff
 6. Having a large crowd in this isolated location sets up the food crisis. v. 12

II. Jesus feeds the multitude. v. 12-17

- A. The disciples come to Jesus with a practical difficulty – human need. v. 12
- B. Jesus tests his apostles (who fail). v. 13-14a
1. This is a test of whether they truly understand Who He is. 9:1-2,10
 2. The disciples limit themselves to human calculation. John 6:5-9
 3. Jesus and His disciples normally fed themselves through ordinary means. 8:2-3
 4. The extent of the need is great – five thousand men, plus women and children (twenty thousand?). Mt. 14:21
 5. What should their answer have been?
 6. They should have remembered how God miraculously fed His people through His prophets in the past. 2 Ki. 4:42-44 Ex. 16:1ff Luke 5:1-11
 7. Sadly, the disciples will again fail the same test. Mark 8:1-9,14-21 Mt. 15:32-39
- C. Jesus miraculously provides for the crowd. v. 14b-16
1. After the disciples fail, Jesus takes over. 9:37-43a
 2. He arranges the multitude as if they are preparing to eat a banquet. v. 14b-15 Ps. 78:19
 3. Jesus blesses the food, acknowledging the Father’s provision. v. 16a 1 Tim. 4:5 John 6:11 11:41 17:1 Ps. 25:15 121:1 145:15
 4. Jesus multiplies the loaves and fish. v. 16b John 1:3 Col. 1:16 Rom. 4:17 Heb. 1:2
 5. The disciples serve the crowds. v. 16c
- D. His provision is superabundant. v. 17 6:21

III. What does this miracle mean?

- A. This miracle is a favorite target of religious skeptics. 4:18-19 Isa. 61:1-2
- B. The crowds misunderstand what has happened. 10:12-13 John 6:15,26-27,30-33,66
- C. The feeding of the multitude answers the question, “Who is this?” 9:10 8:25 5:21
 - 1. This miracle identifies Jesus with Moses and the prophets. 9:8,19,30 4:25-27
 - a. Elisha also provided for many with a little barley bread. 2 Ki. 4:42-44
 - b. Jesus is the Prophet greater than Moses Who feeds and shepherds His people. John 6:14,30-33 1:17 Num. 27:16-17 Deut. 18:15-18
 - 2. Jesus is the Bread of Life. 1:53 John 6:35,49-58,29
 - 3. The next event Luke records is Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ of God. v. 20
- D. This meal reminds us of the Lord’s Supper and of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. 22:14-23 1 Co. 11:23-24 John 6:53 Rev. 19:9 Isa. 25:6

IV. How does this miracle apply to us?

- A. We can trust Jesus to provide for our needs. 11:3 Mt. 11:28ff 6:33 Ps. 37:19,25 132:15 145:15ff 2 Co. 12:9
- B. We should be thankful for God’s abundant provision. v. 15a Mt. 5:45 1 Tim. 4:5
 - 1. To enjoy God’s gifts without giving thanks is robbing God. Rom. 1:21 Acts 17:25-28 Mt. 5:45 1 Tim. 4:5 Ps. 116:12 91:14 105:40 107:9
 - 2. We should be content with the basics. 1 Tim. 6:8
 - 3. His best gifts are spiritual. Isa. 1:18 Mic. 7:18-20 2 Pe. 1:3-4 Eph. 1:3 John 1:16 Rom. 8:32 John 4:13-14 6:35
- C. We should trust God to empower that to which He calls us. 6:27 Acts 1:8 1 Co. 1:26ff John 15:5 Phil. 4:13
- D. Jesus is the only Bread which will satisfy the human soul. 6:21 Isa. 55:1-2 Deut. 8:3 Amos 8:11 John 6:28-29,35 Eph. 1:7 Heb. 9:11-28 Rev. 5:9 1 Pe. 2:2
- E. Our job is to distribute the bread.

Discussion questions

1. Where and how in the Bible is food significant?
2. Why is it significant that Jesus welcomed the crowds? v. 11
How is He a model for our leaders?
3. What do you think about how the disciples spoke to Jesus? v. 12-13
What should they have done and why?
4. How would you answer those who try to offer a non-miraculous explanation (i.e. everyone shared their sack lunch or everyone only ate a tiny morsel) for the feeding of the multitude?
5. What is the meaning of the feeding of the multitude?
6. How does this miracle apply to us?