

The Fourth Sign: The Feeding of the Five Thousand

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John begins by saying “After this” 6:1 – [1] *After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.*

- *After this* of course comes after JOHN 5 and Jesus’s clear defense of His deity in Jerusalem.
 - But this comes at least six months if not a year after that event.
- *But it also comes at the end of Jesus’s Galilean ministry.*
 - Essentially John *skips everything from Matthew 4:12 – 15:20.*

Why does John skip so much? The reason for that is that JOHN is NOT interested in giving us every MINUTE detail...

- John is selective. John 20:31 – [31] *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

The PROLOGUE serves as a GUIDE to the entire Gospel of John. John expresses a principle which JESUS teaches us in John 6.

- John 1:16 – [16] *For from His fullness we have received grace upon grace.*
 - *GROWTH in the CHRISTIAN LIFE is GRACE from the fullness of Christ.*
 - 2 Corinthians 3:18 – [18] *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

D) A Superficial Following

6:1 – [1] *After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.*

- Jesus crosses by boat with the disciples across the Sea of Galilee from the WEST side to the NorthEast Side.
 - Mark 6:32 – [32] *And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.*

6:2 – [2] *And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.*

- The verb implies *continuing action*.
 - They *CONTINUED to FOLLOW JESUS.*
 - Because they KEPT seeing the MIRACLES he was doing to the sick.
 - They are merely interested in *Jesus the HEALER. Jesus the MIRACLE WORKER. Jesus the TEACHER.*
- *What we have to do – is COME to CHRIST on His own TERMS.*
 - He said in JOHN 5 – that He is the ETERNAL SON of GOD.

6:3 – [3] *Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples.*

- So Jesus reaches the shore on the other side, and here is the topography – he ascends up a plain – and there is a LARGE HILL behind the plain.

John tells us 6:4 – [4] *Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.*

- John gives us a TIME reference, the PASSOVER.
 - No doubt JESUS is thinking about that event. And the Exodus that followed.
 - He says later in the chapter – John 6:48 – [48] *I am the bread of life. [49] Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. [50] This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.*
- Looking forward - In ONE YEAR, Jesus will be giving HIS LIFE as the FINAL PASSOVER LAMB.

II) A Spiritual Failure

6:5 – [5] *Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him,*

- The other gospels give us more detail on what happens here.
- Mark 6:34 – [34] *Seeing a great throng, he had compassion on them and began teaching them.*
 - Jesus didn't reluctantly teach these people – He yearned to teach people the WORD of GOD.
 - Alfred Edersheim – Every such opportunity was precious to him, who longed to gather the lost under his wings.... It was the depth of longing and intensesness of pity which now ended the Savior's rest, and brought him down from the hill to meet the gathering multitudes.
- And He taught them until the early EVENING.
 - *There was a FAMINE in the LAND of the teaching of the WORD of GOD.*
 - AMOS says in Amos 8:11 – [11] *Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord GOD, "when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. [12] They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it.*

Here Jesus is teaching... We know from the OTHER gospels that the disciples began to ask JESUS to send the people away so that they could buy food in the villages.

- Luke 9:12 – [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. But he said to them, "You give them something to eat."*

But Jesus wants the disciples to respond with compassion. 5b – [5b] *Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?"*

6:6 – [6] *He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.*

- He probably asks Philip because Philip was from the REGION – but Philip is also representative of the disciples.
- THIS is so IMPORTANT what JESUS is doing – Notice John says that JESUS did this to "TEST him."

- This word “TEST” means *to prove* or *to try*.
- The test is JOHN 1:16 – *Will the disciples understand that from Christ’s fullness is all grace upon grace?*
- You see GOD LOVES to TEST HIS CHILDREN to grow our Faith in Him.
 - Psalm 11:5 – [5] *The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.*
 - James 1:2 – [2] *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, [3] for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*

Unfortunately Philip fails the test. 6:7 – [7] *Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.”*

- He thinks only about fixing the problem with money.
- A denarius would have been equivalent to one day’s wage. So this would have been Roughly 8 months salary for a day-laborer.

6:8 – [8] *One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him,*

6:9 – [9] *“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?”*

- So apparently what happened - the disciples did a survey of the crowd, and Andrew found a little boy (we don’t know his age) who had five barley loaves.
- But notice what Andrew says – *“But what are they for so many?”*
- A. W. Pink – *“Keep your eye on Him and your difficulties will not be seen.”*

III) A Sufficient Feast

John 6:10 – [10] *Jesus said, “have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place so the men sat down, about five thousand in number.*

- Several things to notice HERE:
- John lists the number as 5,000 men. So we are talking probably between 15,000 – 20,000 between men, women, and children.
- Notice that JESUS has the people SIT DOWN – (we are told in groups of 50 in the other gospels)

John 6:11 – [11] *Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.*

- Jesus – verb is *eucharisteo* – which means to BLESS GOD.
- Praises GOD for what GOD is about to do.
- After HE blessed the LORD, he began multiplying the bread and the fish in His hands.

John 6:12 – [12] *And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.”*

- Christ makes ENOUGH bread to SATISFY their hunger.
- WHY does he TELL the disciples to gather the FRAGMENTS of bread?
 - *Because CHRIST’s blessings must be remembered, appreciated, and REVERED.*

John 6:13 – [13] *So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.*

- 12 Small Wicker Baskets of material.
- Essentially this would have been enough for each disciple to have enough for their next meal.

IV) A Solitary Figure

6:14 – [14] *When the people saw the sign, “They said, ‘This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.’”*

- The PEOPLE believed it was a SIGN.
- This is in reference to a prophecy that Moses had made in Deuteronomy 18:15 about a PROPHET who was to come.
- *So they RUSH to make HIM a KING.*

6:15 – [15] *Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.*

- Jesus had already resisted Satan’s offer of a KINGDOM (Matt 4:8-9).
- AND he refuses this offer as well – withdrawing back on the mountain.
- John Calvin – “If he had permitted himself to now be made a king, his spiritual kingdom would have been ruined, the Gospel would have been stamped with everlasting infamy, and the hope of salvation would have been utterly destroyed.”