

“THE GREAT MIRACLE”

John 6:1-15

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INTRODUCTION

This is the one miracle described by all four Gospels. We cannot really call this the “greatest” miracle, for surely raising the dead would be greater, and Jesus’ own resurrection must be the greatest miracle of all. However, this is truly a great miracle. This is one of the miracles that evidences Jesus’ power over nature—in this case food. It must have made quite an impression on not only the apostles, but on the multitudes. For, afterward they wanted to make Jesus their King.

Notice a few things that this miracle is not. It is **not** Jesus’ attempt to solve the world’s hunger problem. Jesus made no attempt to do such. Here He fed the people because they had been listening to Him teach all day and were very hungry by this time. He not only felt compassion for them; He felt somewhat responsible to take care of them. However, this was not part of a concerted effort to solve the “food crisis.” Nowhere do we ever see either Jesus or the early church carrying out such a campaign. Their campaign was to spread the Gospel and disciple people.

Nor was this miracle an attempt at sensationalism in order to draw attention to Himself. In fact, Jesus continually tried to deflect attention away from Himself. **Nor was this an attempt** to manipulate the crowd to follow Him with enthusiasm in order to gain national notoriety. After the miracle Jesus had an opportunity to do that very thing, and He turned it down and walked away.

John the apostle tells us the purpose for this miracle [He calls them signs—v. 2, 14.]; in 20:30-31 he shows us that Jesus’ signs are for the purpose of bringing people to **faith in Christ as the Son of God so that they might have eternal life in His name**. This sign is no different.

In this passage we see the involvement of various groups and individuals who all help us to understand the significance of the event. Certainly later in the chapter Jesus purposefully draws attention to Himself as the **Bread of Life**. A sign is a miracle with a teaching purpose. Certainly Jesus wants these people—both disciples and multitudes, to recognize Him as the **Sustainer of Life**. He is greater than Moses who gave Israel the manna. He is greater than the bread and lamb eaten at Passover time—a feast just a short time off (v. 4). He is the only One who can both give life, and sustain it! He wanted people to recognize Him for Who He truly is. It is likely that many of these people were on their way to the Passover feast, and became attracted to this miracle worker. Moreover, eating and drinking in the OT are often connected with prosperity and divine provision (e.g. Dt. 8:9; 11:15; Neh. 9:36), and with divine fellowship (Dt. 12:7; 15:20; Neh. 8:15). Believers will one day share with Him in the great Messianic banquet (Rev. 19:9).

I submit to you that **you must trust Jesus and submit to Him as the sustainer of your life**.

Now, let us examine more carefully some of the interesting characters and groups in this passage.

I. THE WEARY APOSTOLIC BAND (1)

II. THE CURIOUS MULTITUDE (2)

- A. They were “miracle groupies”; notice “were following”, “were seeing”, “was doing”.
- B. Jesus was not putting on a display; He was healing “those who were sick.”
- C. The other Gospels tell us that these people had followed Jesus from the other side of the lake on foot and ran to Bethsaida before Jesus got there (Mk. 6:33).

III. THE COMPASSIONATE TEACHER (3-5)

- A. He ascended on the “mountainous area” in order to teach His disciples in solitude.
- B. He noticed that a great crowd was coming (5)
- C. He did not run from them—but went to them and ministered all day in teaching and healing (other gospels).

How do we respond to interruptions and demands upon our time?

“Lifting up the eyes” is used elsewhere of Jesus praying—11:41; 17:1.

IV. THE OVERWHELMED DISCIPLE—Philip (5-7)

- A. The Early Question (5)—likely asked early in the day to get him thinking.
- B. The Examining Question—Jesus was “testing” him—not “tempting” him.
- C. Jesus does not ask the question for His sake. **He knew what He was intending to do.**
- D. *Philip sees only the **Greatness** of the difficulty.*

V. THE DISCIPLE WITH THE DOUBTFUL SOLUTION—ANDREW (8-9)

- A. A little boy with a lunch
 - **It is interesting to think about the boy in this connection, and to notice what the Lord did with his “meager offerings”.

But, we must recognize that all of the focus in this passage is on the Lord, and not on the boy!

- B. **Andrew sees only the smallness of the resources.** “What are these among so many?”
Such is often the attitude of believers toward the greatness of our task, and of our own weaknesses and inabilities!

VI. THE OMNIPOTENT SON OF GOD (10-11)

Jesus calmly, quietly, and with great reserve takes control of the situation.

- A. Have the people recline on the grass.
 - Mark tells us that it was in groups of 50 like “garden plots”.
- B. The men alone were numbered at 5,000.
 - So much for not counting and having no interest in numbers! Cf. Pentecost.
 - Remember, **numbers are people—souls who have genuine needs!**
- C. Prayer preceded and brought on the miracle (11)

D. The Distribution was orderly—not chaotic.

E. Everyone has as much as they needed—in fact, as much “as they were wishing.”
v. 12 tells us “they were filled.”

Does this not show us our Lord’s generosity?

VII. THE DISCIPLES AS ASSISTANTS (12-13)

A. The Lord Commanded that all the remaining “fragments” be gathered.”

B. Nothing was to be lost

C. The disciples filled 12 baskets—likely one for each man.

WHY, WHEN JESUS COULD MULTIPLY FOOD AT WILL, WOULD JESUS BE SO CAREFUL, AND TEACH HIS DISCIPLES TO BE SO CAREFUL, ABOUT SAVING THE “LEFTOVERS”?

Here, the Lord shows us very plainly that “WASTEFULNESS IS SINFULNESS.”

In addition, Jesus and the disciples needed to eat.

**It is a matter of good stewardship to take care of and preserve what the Lord has so graciously and generously given us. We must never take His goodness for granted.

VIII. THE EXCITED MOB (14-15)

A. The miracle (sign) had astounded them!

B. They were convinced that Jesus was “the Prophet” of Deut. 18.

C. This may imply that they saw Him as some kind of Messiah—especially the expression, “Who is to come into the world.”

D. They intended to forcefully take Him to Jerusalem and make Him their king—after their own image. They were both unwilling and unready to repent of their sins and to follow Jesus’ teachings—as we will see in the following passage.

IX. JESUS SENT THEM AWAY AND WITHDREW FROM THEM (15)

Just as in His wilderness temptation, **Jesus refused Satanic attempts to force His hand to follow a different course and plan than that which was ordered by the Father.**

IT ISN’T THAT THERE WILL BE NO EARTHLY KINGDOM, BUT THAT BOTH THE TIME AND THE METHOD HERE WERE WRONG—AND JESUS WOULD HAVE NO PART OF IT!

CONCLUSION

Notice how Jesus at strategic times in His life gets alone with His Father in order to seek His fortification in order to accomplish His will. So should we!

Remember—Jesus is our sustainer—What He orders He provides for, in both your individual life, and in our Church.