

## Lesson 9 – The Feeding of 5000 (John 6:1-15; 25-69)

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In our modern society people are no different than they were during the life of Jesus over 2000 years ago. Taxes are too high and economic circumstances threaten to diminish our quality of life. Maybe, as someone says, the end is near and divine judgment is nigh. Or maybe, this politician who accentuates the negative of the current administration is better suited to the task of national leadership. He speaks of change and offers hope when the current outlook seems bleak at best. People of Jesus' day were not only looking for a leader, they were looking for The Leader, The Prophet (John 1:21; 6:14; Deuteronomy 18:17-19).

Jesus' popularity has risen to new heights. His miraculous works have increased and become known throughout Judea and Galilee and they have continued for at least a year (John 4:45; 6:2-4). Another Passover feast is near and as people migrate to Jerusalem to worship, word has spread that Jesus is nearby. A great crowd has assembled and they have been drawn away to a deserted place to see him and witness the mighty works that he can do. Jesus' disciples are also with him and they have been with him since the beginning of his ministry. What they have beheld of his glory the writer has only alluded to in a few events. They understand the power of his words, because they saw the vast quantity of water changed to wine at least a year ago in Cana (John 2:11). They know that a single woman could influence an entire town to come out and hear what he has to say (John 4:28-30). Surely, these men know what Jesus is capable of doing.

A large crowd has assembled on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The magnitude of this crowd is greater than the 5000 men that are identified, for the author says there is a young boy among them also. So, some family members have traveled with the men. As Jesus looks out over the crowd and realizes that they have come to this location because of him, he understands that a great opportunity exists for doing good. Jesus asks Phillip, one of his disciples, "*Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?*" (John 6:5). Phillip's response is almost sarcastic, "It would require all a person could earn in 8 months just to allow a bite of bread for each person" (John 6:7). Even if the disciples had this much money with them, where in this part of the country would that much bread be available? The answer to Jesus' question is obvious – nowhere.

Another disciple of Jesus, Andrew, observes that a young boy has some barley bread and two small fish. He quickly adds, "How far would this go among so many?" (John 6:8, 9). There is no indication from his disciples that they anticipate what would happen after Jesus asks them to have the people sit down on the grass. From this position, the people are looking upward from the shore to Jesus and his disciples (John 6:3, 10). All had a clear view of what Jesus was going to do.

Unlike the healing of the official's son from a great distance, or the healing of the paralytic man beside the pool, all those present observed Jesus' mighty work. He took the barley bread and gave thanks and began to distribute enough bread to feed all those seated. He then took the fish and did the same. What a marvelous and astounding feat! They even collected 12 baskets of leftovers after this great feast. Now the men present understand an opportunity to do good for Israel is right before their eyes. A man as powerful as Jesus deserves to be our King. He is surely The Prophet we have been anticipating for so long. Imagine the disappointment when those ready to execute this plan cannot find him.

Questions:

1. As a reader of this story the only conclusions that can be drawn are diametrically opposed to one another. The account is either true or false. Credibility is given by the details of the story itself and the conclusion drawn by those present to make Jesus their King. Looking forward to Jesus' trial what motives would the Jews attach to Jesus' actions (John 11:47, 48; 18:28-38)?

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2. Contrary to what the Jews may have reasoned about Jesus' motives, the object of the miracle was the opportunity to teach and the result of the teaching actually reduced his followers (John 6:66). What was the real motive of those who traveled to the other side of the lake to see Jesus (John 6:14, 26, 30, 34)?

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3. Jesus' extraordinary feat is one of the miraculous signs that were recorded that would stimulate us to belief in Jesus as the Son of God and have life in his name (John 20:30, 31). What is so remarkable about Jesus' ability to spontaneously feed over 5000 people at one sitting?

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4. The symbolism of Jesus' action by the seashore is summed up by his claim "I am the bread of life." In what ways does Jesus' feeding the people, on this occasion, substantiate his later claim (John 6:35)?

- a. John 6:27 \_\_\_\_\_
- b. John 6:28, 29 \_\_\_\_\_
- c. John 6:32, 33 \_\_\_\_\_
- d. John 6:35-40 \_\_\_\_\_
- e. John 6:44-49 \_\_\_\_\_
- f. John 6:50, 51 \_\_\_\_\_
- g. John 6:53-58 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Simon Peter seemingly understands Jesus' discourse with the people and Jews at the synagogue in Capernaum. What did Peter understand was the source of eternal life (John 6:67-69; 5:36-40)?

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