

## The Fourth Sign: The Feeding of a Great Multitude

John 6:1-15

September 18, 2022

1. The Setting: Jesus on the Mountain at Passover (1-4)
  - a. The chronological and geographical setting (1)
    - i. "After these things" – John uses this phrase to indicate that a new section has begun without giving us any description of how much time has passed.
    - ii. "Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias" – Herod Antipas named the sea of Galilee, "Tiberias", in honor of Emperor Tiberias around AD 20.
  - b. The political setting (2)
    - i. Jesus had a growing following (cf. 10).
    - ii. The growing multitude were recognizing the miracles Jesus did as signs of the Messiah.
  - c. The theological setting (3-4)
    - i. The Mountain(3) – the definite article is present in the Greek text and is very likely being used purposefully to echo the scene at Mount Sinai with Moses (cf. 31-33). Jesus is about to give new meaning to the manna that God gave to sustain Israel at Mount Sinai and during their wilderness wandering.
    - ii. The Passover (4) – this is the second of 3 Passovers mentioned in this gospel; all 3 point to the death of Jesus; the Jewish Passover celebrated Israel's exodus from Egypt, but it also provided the grounds for hope in a coming deliverer, which explains the excitement in verse 15; Jesus is about to give new meaning to the Passover bread and the Passover Lamb.
2. The Conflict: From Where Shall We Buy Bread? (5-9)
  - a. Jesus tests His disciples (5-6)
    - i. Jesus intentionally turns His attention to the need of the hungry multitude before Him (5a).
    - ii. Jesus brings the need to the attention of His disciples, Philip in particular (5b).
      1. Philip is singled out likely because he was from the nearby town of Bethsaida.
      2. Philip would have had firsthand knowledge of the cost to feed such a crowd
  - b. The disciples response (7-9)
    - i. Philip: "The need is too great" (7)
      1. A penny, the Roman denarius, was a full days wage in that day.
      2. Feeding a multitude of this size would have cost more than half a year's wage, and even that would provide a very small amount of food for each person.
    - ii. Andrew: "The resources at hand are insufficient" (8-9).
      1. Andrew notices a little child (paidarion), a diminutive term for a very small child.
      2. The small child has two small tidbits of fish (opsaria), very likely not even 2 whole fish.
      3. The small child has 5 barley loaves, a cheap bread "suited for men in unhappy circumstances" (Philo).
      4. This tiny amount of food could not have appeared more insufficient for the need of such a multitude of hungry people.
3. The Resolution: The Hospitality of Jesus (10-13)
  - a. Jesus prepares the crowd for a meal (10).
    - i. Jesus commands the crowd to sit down (anapipto: to lay back, or sit back for a meal (10a).
    - ii. Jesus chooses to serve this great multitude in the open air in a large grassy field near the mountain, a field large enough to accommodate 5,000 men and their families, a multitude that likely numbered well over 10,000.
  - b. Jesus serves the meal (11).
    - i. Jesus gave thanks for the meal in anticipation of His miraculous provision.
    - ii. Jesus personally distributed the meal to His disciples to give to each person according to their individual need.
  - c. Jesus abundantly satisfied his guests (12-13).
    - i. The crowd ate until they were completely satisfied (12a).
    - ii. The once skeptical disciples gather up 12 baskets of leftover provision, 1 basket for each disciple to carry, as abundant proof of Jesus' ability to utterly satisfy those who partake of His provision.
  - d. Lessons:
    - i. Jesus is the Bread of Life Who completely satisfies those who partake of His provision.
    - ii. The disciples are the means that God uses to offer that provision to each generation, one person at a time (cf. Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19-20).

4. The Conclusion/Interpretation: He is the Prophet, Make Him a King! (14-15)
  - a. The response of the multitude (14):
    - i. The multitude recognized this miracle as a sign that Jesus was the prophet foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;"
    - ii. The multitude recognized identity of Jesus as their Messiah.
    - iii. Unfortunately, they did not recognize the mission of Jesus as the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world (cf. Revelation 13:8).
  - b. The response of Jesus (15)
    - i. Jesus knew that they wanted to make Him their Warrior King to lead them in triumph over their Roman government.
    - ii. Jesus' withdrawal was a rebuke of their insufficient belief in Him as the Bread of Life, and the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (1:29).
    - iii. The Samaritans embraced Jesus as Savior of the world (4:42), an identity that the Jews refused to accept.

Conclusion:

1. Just as Jesus met the needs of an unbelieving multitude, so Jesus longs to meet your deepest needs. Will you let Him?
2. Christian, do you have a need that you have not yet brought to Jesus' feet because you don't believe that He can meet it?
3. Just as Jesus met the needs of the hungry crowd, so Jesus expects us who have tasted of His abundant provision to offer it to those around us today. Are you sharing what Jesus has so richly given you?
4. Before you can crown Jesus King, you must accept Him as Savior. Have you trusted Jesus as your personal Savior (salvation)? Christian, are you daily yielding to Him as your King (sanctification)?