

The Gospel According to John

“The Feeding of Five-Thousand: A Testimony and a Test”

John 6:1-15



John 6:1-6

After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?" This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.

John 6:7-11

Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.” One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?” Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.

John 6:12-14

When they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.” So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

John 6:15

So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

Main Idea

Jesus miraculously fed a multitude in the wilderness to testify to His identity and to test the disciples and the crowds as to their faith.

Testimony and Testing

What did Jesus do?



What did Jesus do?

He *miraculously* fed a multitude.

John 6:3-11

Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples...lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him...

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down" ...

So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks,

He distributed to those who were seated;
likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.

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This would likely have been
15,000-20,000 people!

What resources did they have?

John 6:8-9

One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?"

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said to Him, "There is a lad here
who has five barley loaves and two fish,

but **what are these for so many people?**"

It is possible for familiarity with this story to diminish the wonder of it, but consider for a moment the reality of what Jesus did!

What did Jesus do?

He miraculously fed a multitude.

He prepared a table in the wilderness.

John 6:3-5

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that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip,

“Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?”

The likely locations for this gathering would have been “in the wilderness”, some distance from any village or town.

Matthew helps us...

Matthew 14:15

When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, “This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”

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and said, “**This place is *eremos*** and the hour
is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may
go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”

A desert or wilderness!

Why was this significant?

The LORD fed the people manna in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 8:16

In the wilderness He fed you manna
which your fathers did not know.

Why was this significant?

The LORD fed the people manna in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 8:16

In the *eremos* He fed you manna
which your fathers did not know.

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Psalm 78:19-20

Then they spoke against God; They said,
“Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?”

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Psalm 78:19-20

Then they spoke against God; They said,

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Psalm 78:19-20

Then they spoke against God; They said,

“Can God prepare a table in the *eremos*?”

“Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out,

And streams were overflowing;

Can He give bread also?

Will He provide meat for His people?”

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Jesus prepared a table for them
in the wilderness and gave them
bread and provided meat.

Testimony and Testing

What did Jesus do?

Why did He do it?



Why did He do it?

To testify to His identity.

John 6:4

Then Jesus went up on the mountain,
and there He sat down with His disciples.
Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.

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John intended for his reader to make a connection between the Exodus (what is celebrated in the Passover) and Jesus' provision of bread and meat in the wilderness.

Consider some connections:

Exodus 16:2-3

The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron **in the wilderness**.

The sons of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the LORD’S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

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for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

John 6:11

Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks,
He distributed to those who were seated;
likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.

Bread and Meat

John 6:11

Jesus then **took** the **loaves**, and having given thanks,

He distributed to those who were seated;

likewise **also** of the **fish** as much as they wanted.

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likewise also of the fish **as much as they wanted.**

They “ate bread to the full”!

Jesus' miracle of multiplication testified to His identity as LORD of the Exodus, the Messiah come to lead His people out of captivity!

And how did the people respond?

John 6:41

Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him...

But this isn't new...

Exodus 16:2

The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

Psalm 16:29-31

So they ate and were well filled,
And their desire He gave to them.

Before they had satisfied their desire,
While their food was in their mouths,
The anger of God rose against them.

Another connection to consider...

John 6:10

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down."
Now there was much grass in the place.

Psalm 23:1-2 and 5

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures...

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The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures...

"You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

Jesus had them sit down on green grass and prepared a table for them in the presence of their enemies to testify to His identity as the Good Shepherd.

Why did He do it?

To testify to His identity.

To test the content of His disciples' faith.

John 6:5-6

Therefore Jesus...said to Philip,
“Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?”
This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew
what He was intending to do.

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Therefore Jesus...said to Philip,
“Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?”

This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew
what He was intending to do.

What is it that Jesus was testing?

This was not just a test to see whether Philip would trust Jesus to make much of a little; it was a sign to test the ***content*** of his faith.

Would Philip see *who Jesus is* and believe in Him?

This was a test for all the disciples!

John 6:12-13

When they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.” So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

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When they were filled, **He said to His disciples,**
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When they were filled, He said to His disciples,
“Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing

will be lost.” **So they gathered them up,
and filled twelve baskets** with fragments

from the five barley loaves which were left over
by those who had eaten.

This was not a coincidental number,
but a sign set before the disciples
to test the content of their faith.

Would they see this and believe
that Jesus is the King of Israel?

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and filled twelve baskets with fragments
from the five barley loaves which were left over
by those who had eaten.

John 6:39

“Now this is the will of Him who sent Me,
that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing,
but raise it up on the last day.”

Why did He do it?

To testify to His identity.

To test the content of His disciples' faith.

To test the focus of the crowd's faith.

John 6:6

...for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.

What did Jesus intend to do
in respect to the crowds?

John 6:2-3

A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.

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John 6:2-3

A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the
signs which He was performing on those who were sick.

Then Jesus went up on the mountain,
and there He sat down with His disciples.

Knowing why the people followed Him,
Jesus went up on the mountain
to give them a sign that testified
to His identity and that tested the
true focus of their faith.

How did they do?

John 6:14-15

Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

How did they do?

John 6:14-15

Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

So Jesus, perceiving that **they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king,** withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

What did Jesus' test prove?

Jesus' test revealed that their faith was focused on material provisions, therapeutic remedies, restoration of political sovereignty, and so on.

John 6:26

Jesus answered them and said,
“Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me,
not because you saw signs,
but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.”

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“Truly, truly, I say to you, **you seek Me,**

not because you saw signs,

but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.”

Not because you saw, understood,
and believed.

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“Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me,
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**but because you ate of the
loaves and were filled.”**

Testimony and Testing

What did Jesus do?

Why did He do it?

What is Jesus doing with it now?



What is Jesus doing with it now?

He is still testifying to His identity.

The Spirit of Christ moved John to record
this sign for us now for the same reasons
He performed it for them then.

To testify to His identity
and to call us to faith in Him.

John 20:31

...but these [signs] have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

John 20:31

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John 20:31

...but these [signs] have been written so **that you**

**may believe that Jesus is the Christ,
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and that believing you may have life in His name.

Jesus is still using the works He did then
to testify to you now that He is the Christ!

John 20:31

...but these [signs] have been written so that you
may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;

and **that believing you may have
life in His name.**

What is Jesus doing with it now?

He is still testifying to His identity.

He is still testing our faith.

What will we learn from these signs?
Do we learn that He is a meal ticket,
a therapeutic solution to suffering,
a king who will return to restore our
national greatness, or that He is the
Christ come to rescue us from our sin?

In other words, Jesus is still testing the content and focus of your faith?

John 20:31

...these [signs] have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Conclusion

What do you believe about Jesus?

Why are you coming to Him?