



## SESSION 26 | JOHN 6:3-15

### JOHN 6:1-15 | JESUS IN GALILEE: THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

*The Feeding of the 5,000 is the fourth of the eight signs in the Gospel. For comparison, see Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17.*

- Verses 1-2 – See session 25
- Verse 3 –
  - Literally the Greek says that Jesus went to *the mountain*.
  - Since the entire area around the Sea of Galilee is mountainous, with difficulty knowing which exact mountain is in view, this likely shows the author’s familiarity with the scene.
    - For example, someone not familiar with me might say, “Randy lives in the mountains.” But I might say to a friend, “I’m going up to the mountain.”
- Verse 4 –
  - This is the second Passover mentioned in the Gospel; thus we will soon enter the second year.
  - Calling the Passover **a feast of the Jews** is considered by Bullinger to be the author’s recognition that the nation was outside of fellowship with God. In the past, the Passover was one of the “feasts of the Lord.” Furthermore, **the Jews** was the somewhat derogatory name given to “The House of Israel” by the Gentiles.
  - The fact that the feast **was nigh** explains why such vast throngs of people would be in the area. They were making their pilgrimage to Jerusalem.
- Verse 5 –
  - Jesus is on the mountain, and sees the **great company come unto him**. Clearly, they are looking for Jesus specifically.
    - Mark 6:33 explains that when Jesus left the southern end of the sea by boat, many ran around the sea to meet him on the other side (see v. 1). Jesus, seeing the crowd, begins to make plans (v. 6).
    - It appears that He later comes down from the mountain, where the feeding occurs (compare v. 15).
  - Philip is the **come and see** disciple (see Jn. 1:46). Perhaps Jesus selects Philip to test his resolve in this matter. A less “spiritual” reason that Philip was selected could have been because Philip was from nearby Bethsaida and would have known where to buy bread in bulk.
- Verse 6 –
  - Two things are worthy of note in this otherwise self-explanatory statement.
    - First, we should not make a doctrine out of this historical account.
      - Though there are several Biblical accounts of men being tested in their faith, we have no evidence that God is testing those of us who live in the age of *grace*.
      - Discipleship of Jesus Christ was always a test of obedience (see Lk. 14:33).
      - Life in the age of *grace* is a *gift* and we are *complete in Christ*. Certainly there are general trials that we should endure well, but there is no Biblical evidence that God is sending Christians specific pass/fail tests.
    - Second, the author clearly has knowledge of *the mind of Christ*. While this could be the result of revelation, it could also be because the author was the one *whom Jesus loved*. Their close friendship allowed him inside knowledge.

- Verse 7 –
  - The exact value of **two hundred pennyworth of bread** is largely irrelevant for application. Philip’s point was that the group’s finances were not going to solve the problem at hand.
  - It is unclear whether **two hundred pennyworth** is what they had on hand, or whether that was simply an astronomical number used for illustration.
- Verses 8-9 –
  - Clearly if **two hundred pennyworth** would not be enough for the crowd, it would be almost laughable for **five barley loaves, and two small fishes** to be sufficient. Andrew, therefore, apologizes (it seems) for bringing it up, saying, **what are they among so many**.
  - Compare 1 Kings 4:42-43, where Elijah was given an insufficient offering yet fed 100 men.
- Verses 10-11 –
  - There are two words used here for **men**.
    - In the first use, the word is ἄνθρωπος [anthropos] (from which we get *anthropology*), which is a word that can be used generally of *people*.
    - The second is ἀνήρ [aner], which is only used of males.
    - The precision of this language coincides with Matthew 14:21, in which we are told there were **about five thousand men, beside women and children**.
    - This is a reminder that every word has meaning and should not be overlooked by the diligent student of the Word.
  - Having **given thanks**, the food was distributed, and they ate **as much as they would** (a detail only found in the fourth Gospel).
- Verses 12-13 –
  - It would most likely be pure conjecture to get any spiritual application from the gathering of the leftovers. This simply expresses the bounty of the miracle.
- Verse 14 –
  - This miracle led them to conclude that Jesus was **that prophet that should come**. Literally, “that prophet, the Coming One.” This is not at all a reference to the forerunner nor Elijah, etc., but the Messiah (as the next verse proves).
  - What about this particular miracle convinced the crowd? Since the text does not tell us we cannot be fully certain. It may have been a culmination of events. However, the Coming One will usher in the age of abundance, freedom from poverty and hunger, etc. This miracle was so undeniable that the crowd recognized it as Messianic. See Psalm 132:15, for example.
- Verse 15 –
  - Why would the One who is anointed to be the King not allow the crowd to make Him King? Surely it was because He knew **mine hour has not yet come** (Jn. 2:4).
  - His purpose was not *just* to become Lord of the living, but **Lord both of the dead and living** (Rom. 14:9). For this to take place, of course, He must die, conquer death, and live again.
  - Furthermore, the Kingdom is not **by force**, as the people desired. Compare John 18:36.
  - Strangely, the same people who chastise these Galileans in their commentaries on John preach to modern believers about building the Kingdom, which is exactly what these people are trying to do.
    - “the more one thinks of the motives of the mob in wanting to make Jesus king, the less altruistic the reaction seems to be.” J.M. Boice, *John, Volume 2: Christ and Judaism (John 5–8): An Expository Commentary*
    - “The multitude wished to use Christ to fulfil their own ends even against His will. In this lies the foreshadowing of the sin of Judas” Brooke Foss Westcott and Arthur Westcott, eds., *The Gospel according to St. John Introduction and Notes on the Authorized Version*, *Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament* (London: J. Murray, 1908), 98.