



The Miracle Lunch

John 6:1-15

Notes: The primary reference used in developing this Bible Study was the *Life Application Commentary*. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.

6:1 – How much time was there between Jesus confronting the Pharisees over healing the man at Bethesda and the miracle of the 5000 lunches?

This time period is unspecified but harmonizing the four Gospels reveals that a lot happened: the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus healing a Roman centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13), Jesus raising a widow's son to life (Luke 7:11-17), Jesus calms the storm (Matthew 8:23-27), Jesus sends demons into a herd of pigs (Matthew 8:28-34), Jesus heals a bleeding woman and restores a girl to life (Matthew 9:18-26), Jesus sends out the 12 disciples (Matthew 10:1-16), and King Herod kills John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12).

6:2-3 – Who followed Jesus to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee and why?

A large crowd followed Jesus because they saw the miracles He was performing by healing the sick.

Why did John call these miracles “signs”?

These miracles indicated who Jesus was, they pointed people to the divine power that was in the act, and they were done so that people: “*may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*” (John 20:31).

6:4 – What event was near this time?

The Jewish Passover Feast which was celebrated to recall God delivering the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. John mentions three Passovers during the ministry of Jesus: (1) when Jesus was in Jerusalem, John 2:13, (2) on this occasion, and (3) when Jesus went to Jerusalem before He was crucified.

6:5-6 – What human problem needed a solution?

The crowd would need food to nourish them. Jesus asked Philip where they could get food because he was from Bethsaida which was about nine miles away. If anyone knew a human solution to this problem, Philip would. But Jesus was testing Philip because He knew what it would take to feed the people and there were no human solutions.

Why did Jesus test Philip?

Jesus wanted Philip's faith to grow stronger. God often tests us in situations where we can see God working in our lives providentially and thus have our trust in Him be reinforced. God expects us to pass our tests as Jesus did in the wilderness and Abraham did when told to sacrifice his son. These tests are better described as proofs of our faith.

6:7-10 – Why didn't Philip have a solution to the problem?

Philip indicated that it would take eight months wages to afford enough food to feed the crowd that had gathered. Since they did not have this money, not to mention the distance they were from any food sources, the situation looked impossible.

Did Philip answer the question Jesus asked him?

Philip didn't really answer the question Jesus asked. Jesus had asked Philip to consider the ways of supply and Philip had jumped to what he considered to be the larger problem, the means of supply.

6:8-9 – Who spoke up with part of a solution?

Andrew who was Simon Peter's brother had found a boy that had a lunch with him: five barley loaves and two small fish. Barley loaves and fish were food that the poor had to eat.

What did Andrew think of this solution?

By questioning that this meager lunch could feed the crowd, he may have been using humor or hyperbole but he certainly did not expect what followed.

6:10 – How big was the crowd that needed to eat?

There were 5,000 men plus women and children that would have accompanied them.

Do you think there were others in the crowd besides the boy that had food? Why didn't they come forward?

There had to be others that also had some food with them. As the boy had, they would have had so little that they could not see how it would have helped. Also, they'd be risking the loss of what they had – or so they thought.

What lesson can be learned from the boy's willingness to contribute what little he had?

The boy demonstrated child-like faith in God. God can take what little we have and turn it into something great. If we offer nothing to God, He has nothing to use to show us His working in our lives. Most of us want to see a great work of God but are unwilling to take that first step of sacrifice.

6:11 – What did Jesus do with the fish and loaves?

Jesus gave thanks for God's provision then He multiplied it so that the people could have as much as they wanted. And we think the TV program Star Trek invented the concept of the food replicator.

What example did Jesus give us to thank God for food?

Jesus regularly gave thanks for food. This was so characteristic of Jesus that the disciples on the way to Emmaus recognized that they were in the company of the resurrected Jesus when He thanked God for the bread (Luke 24:30). When we give thanks for our meals, we follow the example that Jesus set for us.

6:13 – Did the people have enough to eat?

There was more food than the people could eat... the disciples filled 12 baskets with the leftovers.

What does the magnitude of the leftovers tell us about Jesus?

Jesus revealed Himself as the all-sufficient Lord who provides abundantly and whose power is able to more than satisfy any need that we have. Also, the leftovers reinforce that a miracle did indeed take place... it is harder to rationalize that the boy coming forward with his lunch triggered others offering up their lunch and the food that was already there was shared by the people.

What is the danger in seeking a scientific explanation for the miracles of Jesus?

Those who find it difficult to accept that God intervened to perform a supernatural act will also find it difficult to believe in the resurrection of Jesus which is necessary to be saved.

6:14 – How do we know that the people recognized lunch as a miracle?

They thought that Jesus must have been the Prophet that Moses had said would come:

Deuteronomy 18:15-18 - The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. ...I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.

This Prophet was a reference to the Messiah who would deliver Israel from their sin. Only a divine Messiah could tell the people everything God the Father commanded Him.

Elisha foreshadowed the prophesied Prophet in his feeding a hundred men with 20 loaves, a 5:1 ratio (2 Kings 4:42-44). Jesus fed 5,000 with five loaves, a 1000:1 ratio! Feeding the people is a Messianic sign:

Isaiah 25:6-9 - On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

6:15 – What did the Israelites expect of the Messiah?

The average Jewish person expected the Messiah to be a political leader who would liberate Israel from the tyranny of Rome. Certainly this is what Moses had done in liberating Israel from the tyranny of Egypt and what was prophesied about Him:

Daniel 7:13-14 - In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Why did Jesus leave before the people could make Him their political king?

Jesus knew that the immediate opportunity to be their ruler was nothing compared to what God had planned. Indeed, Satan had already offered Jesus authority over the governments of the world when Jesus was preparing for His ministry in the wilderness. For God's will to be done, it is important that the timing that God intends is observed as well. Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom ahead of an earthly one. Out of God's grace, Jesus delayed His taking authority in order to make the way for our sins to be forgiven. Thus those who have been saved are delivered from the tyranny of sin forever and not just the temporary tyranny of a human government.