

"Loaves, Fishes, and Faith" The Gospel
of John Chapter 6:1-21

The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is found in all four Gospel accounts (Matt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:30-44; Lk. 9:10-17). Matthew and Mark also record a similar feeding of four thousand (Matt. 15:32-39; Mk. 8:1-10). Matthew informs us that women and children were also present at both feedings, so those fed each time could have been ten thousand or more!

The other evangelists record that Jesus directed His disciples to withdraw from the crowds to a private place, because they did not even have time to eat (Mk. 6:31). However, the crowds follow them because of the miracles of healing that Jesus has performed. So Jesus spends the day teaching them and ministering to their needs. As nightfall approaches, He wishes to feed them, but the disciples want to send them away. They had not yet learned that when you have Jesus in your midst, there is no reason to ever send anyone away. He will meet the needs of all who come to Him from His riches in glory (Matt. 6:7-11; Phil. 4:19).

Jesus asks Philip a question to test him. Jesus is not lacking for information, but wants Philip to recognize who He is and the power available to the Son of God. The Greek word (peirazo) translated test or prove in English is also translated as tempt (Matt. 4:1,22:18; Acts 5:9, 15:10; 1Cor. 7:5, 10:13; 2Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 2:18,4:15; Rev. 3:10). God **tests** us in order to build our faith and trust in Him (Gen. 22: 1-13). Satan **tempts** us in order to destroy us. God **cannot tempt** us (Jms. 1:13-18).

Philip rightly answers that two hundred denarii (a denarii was equivalent to a day's wages) was insufficient to feed such a crowd. Andrew mentions a lad who has five loaves (probably round barley loaves, baked hard on the outside) and two small fish (probably dried and salted). God is a God of order (Num. 2:1-34; 1Cor. 14:33,40), so Jesus has them sit in groups of hundreds and fifties (Mk. 6:39-40). The miracle that follows is one of creation, as in the beginning (Gen. 1: 1), for bread and dead fish cannot reproduce themselves. The people were filled with food, but believers are to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Jhn. 6:27; Eph. 5:18).

The people believe Jesus is the great prophet (Deut. 18:15) and want to make Him King. They wanted a physical kingdom, but Jesus came to establish a spiritual Kingdom (Jhn. 18:33-37; Col. 1:12-14). The miracle of Jesus walking on the water strengthened the disciples' faith (Matt. 14:33).