

CHRIST'S SEVEN SIGN MIRACLES OF HIS PERSON AND MISSION
IV. Feeding Of The Five Thousand: Christ's Salvation By Faith Versus Works
(John 6:1-15)

I. Introduction

- A. John's Gospel presents only seven miracles of Jesus in His earthly ministry, each of them sign-miracles that reveal His Person and mission for readers to believe that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, and thus to receive eternal life, John 20:31; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Intro. to the Gospel Acc. to John," p. 1492.
- B. Viewing these sign-miracles both strengthens our faith in Christ and offers us talking points in witnessing to the unsaved, so we view the fourth sign-miracle, Christ's feeding of the five thousand, for our edification:

II. Feeding Of The Five Thousand: Christ's Salvation By Faith Versus Works, John 6:1-15.

- A. The miracle of Jesus' feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle (besides His resurrection) that was recorded in all four gospels, so its theme is very important in God's plan, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 293.
- B. Significantly, that great theme of this miracle is the futility of human works versus God's abundant grace:
 - 1. Jesus left a multitude of people who were infatuated with His miracles to go up into a mountain and sit so that people would follow Him out to this place away from any humanly adequate food supply, John 6:1-5.
 - 2. Once He was set on that mountain and the throngs came unto Him, Jesus clarified the inability of the people with Him to address the feeding of the crowd of people who were present, John 6:5-9:
 - a. First, Jesus exposed the great lack of money humanly available to buy the food for the crowd, Jn. 6:5-7:
 - i. Jesus asked His disciple Philip where they would buy food for the people to eat, John 6:5.
 - ii. Christ knew He was about to perform a great miracle, but he asked this question to test Philip, v. 6.
 - iii. Philip replied that 200 denarii, that is, 8 months' worth of wages, were not enough to buy food for all the people, and Jesus and His disciples certainly lacked such funds, John 6:7; *Ibid.*
 - b. Second, Jesus exposed the great lack of food that was humanly available to feed this crowd, John 5:8-9:
 - i. Peter's brother Andrew spoke to Jesus, explaining that a boy present possessed five barley loaves and two small fishes, but then he asked what good were they among such a great crowd, Jn. 5:8-9.
 - ii. Matthew 14:21 explains the number 5,000 referred to the men, that the women and children present exceeded that number so that the crowd likely numbered at least 10,000 people, *Ibid.*, p. 294.
 - iii. The five barley loaves and two small fishes were humanly hopelessly inadequate for the 10,000!
 - 3. Nevertheless, Christ displayed God's abundant grace in performing the feeding miracle, John 6:10-13:
 - a. Jesus displayed God's abundant grace in providing a perfect picnic setting for the people, John 6:10:
 - i. After Jesus told His disciples to have the crowd sit down, John explained that there was much "grass" (*chortos*) there, John 6:10a; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 892.
 - ii. This Greek word "almost always" means "green grass standing in" a "field or meadow," *Ibid.*, what fits the time -- spring near Passover (John 6:4) when the fields are green only few weeks each year!
 - iii. Accordingly, Christ graciously *timed* this miracle to supply comfortable seating for the crowds headed to Jerusalem for Passover, seating that would not be available after the grass had died!
 - b. Jesus displayed God's abundant grace in providing the miracle of multiplying the lad's food, Jn. 6:11-13:
 - i. Christ took the food, gave the typical Hebrew thanksgiving over it, then handed it out to His disciples who in turn gave the morsels to the people who were seated on the grass, John 6:11a.
 - ii. The people were able to take all the food they desired to satisfy their hunger, John 6:11b, 13b.
 - iii. Jesus then frugally told His disciples to gather up the fragments that remained that nothing be lost, and they gathered up 12 full baskets, far more than what Jesus had even begun to use, Jn. 6:12-13a!
 - 4. Finally, God's rejection of human works versus His grace is contrasted in responses to the event, v. 14-15:
 - a. The crowd reacted to the miracle by believing Jesus was the prophet like Moses Who would come as foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15-18, but instead of believing in Him for salvation as God desired, they sought to take Him by human effort to make Him king, not relying on God's grace, John 6:14-15a.
 - b. In contrast, Jesus wanted the people to believe in Him for salvation, to be saved by God's grace, so He withdrew from them, preserving the program of salvation by God's grace, John 6:15b.

Lesson: *In the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus clarified the total impotence of human meritorious works and the abundant sufficiency of God's grace, that men might believe in Him for salvation and not rely on human work.*

Application: *In witnessing to the lost, may we emphasize God's abundant grace versus human works for salvation.*