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FOOD FOR 5,000 ??

Maybe you can't get enough fresh tomatoes or sweet corn or watermelon in the summer. But how would you like to eat something that would **forever satisfy** your hunger? That prospect faced a privileged crowd of people following Jesus up from the seashore to the hills of Galilee. John writes about it in chapter 6. His dramatic narrative captures the only miracle recorded in all four Gospel accounts.

Why does God draw so much attention to this? It points to how Jesus fulfilled pivotal Old Testament prophecies - and the first of His great "**I AM**" statements. Verse 4 says the feast of the Passover was drawing near. With the large crowd coming to Him, Jesus tested His disciples on how they would feed them. Philip noted how it would take 200 days' wages. Andrew presented a boy with five barley loaves and two fish, saying, "**but what are they for so many?**" After all, the crowd numbered 5,000 men, and counting women and children would have been 10-15,000 people.

Perhaps you approach logistical problems like these disciples, thinking like mere humans, instead of seeing with eyes of *faith and trusting* God's divine supernatural power. Imagine the scene -- reminiscent of the Israelites in the wilderness after the first Passover and their Exodus from Egypt, when Moses fed them with manna from heaven. This object lesson takes new life as Jesus shows the people WHO He is.

Jesus had the people sit down. In verse 11, He gave thanks, then miraculously multiplied the loaves and fish so everyone ate their fill. Then He said "*Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.*" And they filled twelve baskets with fragments -- perhaps one for each disciple, to make a point. These were people who spent most of their working day just getting enough food for that day. The prospect of a miracle-worker who could miraculously feed them was astonishing. They figured Jesus was **the Prophet** that Moses had predicted would come. They wanted to make Him king, but Jesus withdrew.

Recall that in the beginning of His ministry, Jesus rejected Satan's temptations to make bread from stones and to be lifted up as King. Here Jesus multiplies loaves and fishes as He demonstrates His deity. But this was not the right Passover for Jesus to be crowned as King of the Jews. And, He came to set His people free not politically or physically, but **spiritually**. His is the Kingdom of God, not a kingdom of man.

Later, when the people found Jesus on the other side of the lake, He taught them the real meaning of the miracle. Their spiritual hunger was the real issue, not physical hunger. In verse 27 He said, "*Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.*"

Spiritual food is not physical, but eternal. Spiritual hunger is satisfied by faith, not food. In response to Jesus' words, the people asked "*what must we do to do the works of God?*" and in verse 29 He replied, "*This is the work of God, that you **believe in Him** whom He has sent.*" They saw Jesus as a mere miracle-worker. But Jesus explains how He's not like Moses, through whom God fed the multitude. Jesus IS God, come in the flesh to bring spiritual life - the "*bread of God*" who gives life to the world. He doesn't just feed them spiritual bread, He IS the bread. Believing in Him is the only way to receive His spiritual life.

In verse 35 Jesus declared, "***I AM the bread of life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst.***" This was remarkable. "I AM" is the name of God, revealed to Moses. Only those with eyes and ears and hearts and minds and wills of faith could receive this truth. Jesus went on to say "*you have seen Me and yet do not believe. But all that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out.*" These are words of invitation, for YOU to believe in Him.

Jesus underscores His mission in v38, "*I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and **believes** in Him should have eternal life, and **I will** raise him up on the last day.*"

If you haven't already, I urge YOU to believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior -- to receive His eternal spiritual life! Then, gladly share this GOOD NEWS with the spiritually starving people around you! **God can multiply** YOUR words of faith - and one by one, reach more than 5,000 people!