



When Jesus Speaks: Through His Miracles, Week #7  
When Jesus Provides

8/19, 8/26, 9/2

**Miracles break this 400 years of “silence”** (mindsets were created as well as civic structure):

- God’s silence is broken by John the Baptist’s declaration of Jesus’ miraculous birth.
- His miracles force us to say “yes” or “no” to Him.
- They authenticate His ministry.
- They reveal His character.

1. **Jesus turns water to wine.** John 2:1–11
2. **Jesus heals a nobleman’s son.** John 4:46–54
3. Jesus provides a great catch of fish. *Luke 5:1–11*
4. Jesus heals a demoniac in a synagogue. *Mark 1:21–28; Luke 4:31–37*
5. Jesus heals Peter’s wife’s mother. *Luke 4:38, 39; Matthew 8:14–15; Mark 1:29–31*
6. Jesus cleanses a leper. *Mark 1:40–45; Luke 5:12–15*
7. Jesus heals a paralytic. *Luke 5:18–26; Matthew 9:2–7; Mark 2:3–12*
8. **Jesus heals a cripple at Bethesda.** *John 5:1–18*
9. Jesus heals a withered hand. *Luke 6:6–10; Matthew 12:9–14; Mark 3:1–6*
10. Jesus heals a centurion’s servant. *Matthew 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10*
11. Jesus raises a widow’s son. *Luke 7:11–17*
12. Jesus stills a storm. *Mark 4:35–41; Luke 8:22–25; Matthew 8:23–27*
13. Jesus delivers a demoniac in Gedara. *Luke 8:27–39; Matthew 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20*
14. Jesus heals a hemorrhaging woman. *Luke 8:43–48; Matthew 9:20–22; Mark 5:25–34*
15. Jesus raises Jairus’s daughter. *Luke 8:41–56; Matthew 9:18–26; Mark 5:22–43*
16. Jesus heals two blind men. *Matthew 9:27–31*
17. Jesus casts out a dumb spirit. *Matthew 9:32–35*
18. **Jesus feeds 5,000 people.** *John 6:1–14; Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17*
19. **Jesus walks on water.** *Matthew 14:22–33; Mark 6:45–52; John 6:15–21*
20. Jesus heals a Syro-phonician girl. *Matthew 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30*
21. Jesus heals a deaf and dumb man. *Mark 7:31–37*
22. Jesus feeds 4,000 people. *Matthew 15:30–38; Mark 8:1–9*
23. Jesus heals a blind man. *Mark 8:22–26*
24. Jesus delivers a demonized boy. *Mark 9:14–29; Matthew 17:14–21; Luke 9:37–43*
25. Jesus provides money in a fish’s mouth. *Matthew 17:24–27*
26. **Jesus heals a man born blind.** *John 9*
27. Jesus heals a woman bound by Satan. *Luke 13:10–17*
28. Jesus heals a man with dropsy. *Luke 14:1–6*
29. **Jesus raises Lazarus.** *John 11*
30. Jesus cleanses ten lepers. *Luke 17:11–19*
31. Jesus heals Bartimaeus. *Matthew 20:29–34; Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43*
32. Jesus curses a fig tree. *Matthew 21:17–22; Mark 11:12–14, 20–24*
33. **Jesus replaces Malchus’s ear.** *Matthew 26:51–56; Mark 14:46, 47; Luke 22:50, 51; John 18:10, 11*
34. **Wonders at Calvary.** Mt 28, Luke 24, Mark 16, John 20
35. **Jesus provides a catch of fish.** *John 21:1–14*

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<sup>1</sup> Richards, L. (1998). *Every miracle in the Bible* (pp. 163–165). Nashville: T. Nelson.



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Chapter 2 opens a new section of the gospel, containing John's account of the public ministry of Jesus from its commencement in Galilee to its climax in Jerusalem. It is organized around seven miracles. John's word for them is 'signs' (*semeia*), which is his alternative to 'miracles' or 'wonders'. John does not of course have any reservation about the operation of the supernatural in respect of these mighty works of power. He is concerned, however, to see beyond the miracles to their significance; they are signs, *i.e.* **special actions by Jesus which reveal his glory to those who believe and which confront others with the need to decide about Jesus.**

It is worth observing that this understanding of Jesus' miracles is somewhat different from that of the synoptic evangelists. Their favourite words for the miracles, *dynameis*, acts of power, and *terata*, portents, miracles, occur in John not at all in the former case, and only once (4:48) in the case of the latter.

The distinction can be put in this way: for the synoptic writers Jesus' miracles are actual occasions of the incursion of the kingdom of God. 'Fundamentally [they] are acts by which Jesus establishes God's reign and defeats the reign of Satan.' **For John, the miracles, though no less real as historical acts of supernatural power, are more symbolic; they point beyond themselves to Jesus and his significance.** Put more succinctly, the synoptic miracles are essentially eschatological, John's essentially christological. For John, faith based on miraculous signs is not regarded as satisfactory.<sup>2</sup> It is, however, at least a step beyond those who willfully refuse to even see the signs.

One other aspect of the 'signs' is worth noting. Jesus commonly refers to them as 'works' (*erga*). 'Works' can also include his words (*cf.* 14:10). The use of 'works' directly links the ministry of Jesus to that of the Father—'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working' (5:17). So close is the union of Son with Father that the works of Jesus can be considered as the Father's works in him (14:10). Thus the signs, like the entire gospel, confront us with Jesus and the inescapable challenge, 'Who are you?' (8:25).

There is some consensus among commentators that the two events in chapter 2, the changing of the water into wine at Cana, and the cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem, establish the terms of Jesus' ministry. They also anticipate Christ's future work. 'To attend a marriage feast and to cleanse the temple were among the first acts of our Lord's ministry at his first coming. To purify the whole visible Church and hold a marriage supper will be among his first acts, when he comes again.'<sup>2</sup>

### **John 20:30-31**

#### **The Purpose of This Book**

*<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

- **What is being communicating about Christ in this Miracle?** (About Jesus' Divinity and His unique Mission). "Special actions by Jesus which reveal his glory to those who believe and which confront others with the need to decide about Jesus."

**[CREATE ALL MIRACLE HANDOUT FOR END OF AUGUST]**

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<sup>2</sup> Milne, B. (1993). *The message of John: here is your king!: with study guide* (pp. 62–63). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.



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Water to Wine, John 2:1–11

Official's Son Healed, 4:46–52

Paralytic Healed, 5:1–13

Blind Man Healed, 9:1–12

Lazarus Raised, 11:38–44

Great Catch of Fish, 21:1–14

### 7<sup>th</sup> When Jesus Heals Malchus' Ear John 18

Jesus willingly goes to His death. Obedience unto the cross. Obedience unto death.

**Obedience** "Shall I not drink from the cup the Father has given me?"

### 6<sup>th</sup> The Large Catch of Fish

**Apart from me, you can do nothing and I am STILL HERE with you.**

### 5<sup>th</sup>. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.

**Jesus has Power over death.**

### 4<sup>th</sup>. Jesus heals a man born blind Jesus creates EYES = Jesus has creation power!

**Jesus is the only one who can give light to those lost in darkness** (spiritually as well as physically).  
(He can create what is not there.)

### 3<sup>rd</sup>. Jesus heals an unbelieving invalid at Bethesda

**Jesus and the Father are ONE.** (Master of Time?)\*

As Jesus went to find the man to let him know it was Christ who had the power to heal an unbeliever

Jesus is the one who can bring Salvation. **Jesus and the Father are ONE:**

- Grace bestowed on anyone He chooses (believer or unbeliever)
- Even on the Sabbath (He is LORD of the Sabbath)
- Power over the hopeless. (38 year invalid)

### 2<sup>nd</sup>. Jesus heals a nobleman's son. John 4:46–54

**Jesus' Words are the Power of God** [Jesus spoke and what He says is Truth]

- The greatest demonstration of God's deity is His ability to create everything by the power of His word. That's who He is. That's what He does. **His words are not just informative; they are performative.** Divine words spoken long-distance from over eighteen miles away had caused the terminally sick boy to recover.

**Jesus Says:**

- Believe and inherit eternal life. **John 3:16**
- Your sins are forgiven. **Mark 2:9**
- Faith comes through hearing God's Word. **Romans 10:17**
- His Word exposes our inner thoughts. **Hebrews 4:12**
- His Word cleanses. **Ephesians 5:25-26**
- His Word Sanctifies. **John 17:17**
- His Word bears much fruit when it grows in our life. **John 15:7-8**
- His Word defeats the Enemy of our souls. **Ephesians 6:17**

### 1<sup>st</sup>. Jesus turns water to wine. John 2:1–11

**Jesus Transforms**

John's Gospel **describes Jesus' miracles as explanatory signs** (σημεία, *sēmeia*); the text never calls them "miracles" (δύναμεις, *dynameis*; Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 88).

Roberts, R. D. (2016). *Miracle*. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

**What is Jesus saying to me in this Miracle?**

**Do my beliefs about Jesus and His power need to change?**

**How, then, should my actions change?**



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**Johannian Signs that are in the other Gospels**

Other Miracles in John and the Synoptic Gospel: (Is there a meaning when the miracle is in all four?)

8/19<sup>th</sup>

**Jesus feeds 5,000 people**

*John 6:1–14; Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17*

- Jewish custom in counting only the men when reckoning the crowd.
- Some have estimated that the crowd Jesus fed, if the women and children were added, might have been fifteen or twenty thousand.
- This miracle is in all four gospels

**Mark 6:30-52** [Mark 8 = Feeding of the 4,000.]

**Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand**

<sup>30</sup> *The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught.*

[Sent out the 12 Disciples to Minister and **practice what He was teaching them**. John the Baptist is martyred.]

<sup>31</sup> *And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup> And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.*

[We would call this **selfcare**.]

<sup>33</sup> *Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. <sup>34</sup> When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.*

[We see the **heart of our Shepherd** here.]

*And he began to teach them many things. <sup>35</sup> And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. <sup>36</sup> Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” <sup>37</sup> But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?”*

[YOU DO IT! Remember, you just got done ministering LIKE JESUS!]

**Mark 6 Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles**

<sup>7</sup> And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. <sup>8</sup> He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— <sup>9</sup> but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. <sup>10</sup> And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. <sup>11</sup> And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” <sup>12</sup> So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. <sup>13</sup> And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

<sup>38</sup> *And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” <sup>39</sup> Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup> So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. <sup>41</sup> And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup> And they all ate and were satisfied. <sup>43</sup> And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. <sup>44</sup> And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.*



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**John 6:9**

<sup>9</sup> “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?”  
[What was Jesus point? What was He teaching us here?]

**Jewish Custom:**

- It was the responsibility of the head of each Jewish family at mealtime to look up to heaven while thanking God, and then to break and distribute bread for the meal.
- One of the most common of such mealtime prayers was, “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.”
- In performing this miracle, Jesus assumed the role of head of the family as well as the role of God, bringing forth bread to meet the needs of his people.

**Small Group: 4 Perspectives from the Participants**

*Jesus.* Jesus’ revealed his deity by creating bread, as if in answer to the usual mealtime prayer. He was not irritated with the following crowd. Even though He left the shore to find some rest with the Disciples. **He could sense and see their hunger.**

**WHAT DID JESUS SENSE? WHAT DO THINK HE SAW/NOTICED? HUNGER FOR WHAT?**

*Jesus’ disciples.* The disciples showed sensitivity to the needs of the crowd for food and shelter (Matt. 14:15). But their solution, to “send them away, so they can buy bread,” was not acceptable to Jesus. The disciples were stunned when Jesus ordered, **“You give them something to eat”** (Mark 6:37).

**WHAT WOULD YOUR FEELINGS/INNER REPLY/RESPONSE HAVE BEEN?**

*The crowds.* Great crowds had followed Jesus into a “deserted” (uninhabited) area. **They had come hastily**, without bringing food to eat on the way. Jesus saw them as sheep, wandering aimlessly, helpless without a shepherd.

**THEY WERE IN A HURRY TO CATCH HIM. HASTILY = WHY?**

*The boy.* The boy who provided the food Jesus multiplied is mentioned only by John (6:9).

**WHAT DOES THIS STORY SAY ABOUT THIS BOY?**

- **What is being communicating about Christ in this Miracle?** (About Jesus’ Divinity and His unique Mission). “Special actions by Jesus which reveal his glory to those who believe and which confront others with the need to decide about Jesus.”

**SELF REFLECTION:**

Asking the people to concentrate on what Jesus is saying to them in **this** Miracle. Once we can answer what He is saying, we can move on to whether our beliefs and actions need to change.

- Which one of the participants can I relate to the most?
- Which one is the most difficult for me?
- What is Jesus speaking(revealing) to ME through this miracle?

What is Jesus saying to me in this Miracle? Do my beliefs about Jesus and His power need to change? How, then, should my actions change?

**Disciples:** *It would take 8 months wages to buy enough food to feed them all. Add that up from your income. What would 8 months of your income buy? Would you be able to offer that for ministry? (most of us = no). Is that what Jesus is asking us to do? He is asking us to offer what we have...and have faith for what we do not have that is needed to accomplish His will.*



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- ?TRUSTING Jesus with BIG needs.
- ?Do not underestimate the small offering.
- ?Stepping out in faith – the offering of the lunch by the Boy, the Disciples DOING what Jesus asked

**Jesus is more concerned for our growth than our comfort.**

Oh wait, there is more....in Mark 6 (Jesus walks on water) [NEXT WEEK 8/26TH]

### Mark 6 Jesus Walks on the Water

[“Take him by force to make him king” (John 6:15)]

<sup>45</sup> **Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.** <sup>46</sup> *And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray.* <sup>47</sup> *And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land.* <sup>48</sup> *And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them,* <sup>49</sup> *but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out,* <sup>50</sup> *for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”* <sup>51</sup> *And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded,* <sup>52</sup> **for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.**

**HELP US WALK FAITHFULLY, LORD!**

**NotES:**

**John 6: 22- I Am the Bread of Life**



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<sup>22</sup> On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. <sup>23</sup> Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. <sup>24</sup> So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” <sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” <sup>30</sup> So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?” <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” <sup>32</sup> Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” <sup>34</sup> They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

<sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. <sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> 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. <sup>40</sup> 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.”

<sup>41</sup> So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” <sup>42</sup> They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” <sup>43</sup> Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. <sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>45</sup> It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— <sup>46</sup> not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup> This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

<sup>52</sup> The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” <sup>53</sup> So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread<sup>[a]</sup> the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” <sup>59</sup> Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

### **The Words of Eternal Life**

<sup>60</sup> When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” <sup>61</sup> But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? <sup>62</sup> Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? <sup>63</sup> It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. <sup>64</sup> But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) <sup>65</sup> And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

<sup>66</sup> After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. <sup>67</sup> So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, <sup>69</sup> and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” <sup>70</sup> Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” <sup>71</sup> He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

Jesus fed a large crowd which followed him into the wilderness, using only a few small loaves and fishes.

**Background to the miracle.** It was the responsibility of the head of each Jewish family at mealtime to look up to heaven while thanking God, and then to break and distribute bread for the meal. One of the most common of such mealtime prayers was, “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.”

In performing this miracle, Jesus assumed the role of head of the family as well as the role of God, bringing forth bread to meet the needs of his people.



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The Gospel writers followed Jewish custom in counting only the men when reckoning the crowd. While the ideal woman of rabbinic lore stayed at home, it is clear from the Gospels and from various references in early rabbinic literature that women went to the market and worked in the fields with their husbands at harvest time. Some have estimated that the crowd Jesus fed, if the women and children were added, might have been fifteen or twenty thousand.

This is an especially significant miracle, for it is reported in all four of the Gospels.

**Parties to the miracle.** The significant figures in this miracle account are Jesus, the disciples, the thousands who had followed Jesus into a wilderness area, and a boy who shared his lunch.

**Jesus.** Jesus' revealed his deity by creating bread, as if in answer to the usual mealtime prayer.

**Jesus' disciples.** The disciples showed sensitivity to the needs of the crowd for food and shelter (Matt. 14:15). But their solution, to "send them away, so they can buy bread," was not acceptable to Jesus. The disciples were stunned when Jesus ordered, "You give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37).

**The crowds.** Great crowds had followed Jesus into a "deserted" (uninhabited) area. They had come hastily, without bringing food to eat on the way. Jesus saw them as sheep, wandering aimlessly, helpless without a shepherd.

**The boy.** The boy who provided the food Jesus multiplied is mentioned only by John (6:9). How strange that in many Sunday school lessons, he is made the focus of this story rather than Jesus.

**How the story unfolds.** Jesus had been surrounded and harried by crowds of people coming and going. He told his disciples it was time to rest, so they set out by boat to find a deserted place.

But other people recognized him as the boat passed. By the time the boat landed, a new multitude had gathered to greet him. Jesus couldn't escape, even for a moment. Rather than being irritated, Jesus was deeply moved; these ordinary people to him were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began to teach them.

When evening drew near, the disciples reminded Jesus that it was late, and they were in an uninhabited area. Jesus needed to send the people away soon, so they could "buy themselves bread." Jesus shocked the disciples by his reply: "You give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37).

Confused, the disciples objected. It would take at least eight month's wages to buy enough bread for such a crowd, even if that much bread were available. Jesus asked, "How many loaves do you have?"

The disciples reported they could come up with five loaves (each about the size of a modern dinner roll) and two small fish. Jesus told the disciples to have the crowd sit down in groups, as they would at mealtime. Christ then blessed the bread [i.e., said the prayer used before eating] and began to break the bread and fish into smaller pieces. The food was miraculously multiplied. After everyone had eaten, twelve flat wicker baskets of food were left over.

Jesus then sent the crowds away. While he went up into the mountains to pray, the disciples set out by boat to cross the sea.

**Sheep not having a shepherd (Mark 6:34).** Jesus' imagery has deep Old Testament roots. Moses prayed that God would provide a successor who "may lead them [Israel] out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep which have no shepherd" (Num. 27:17). God's answer in that situation was to set apart Joshua—which is the Hebrew version of the name "Jesus."

Even more significant is the use of the image in Ezekiel 34. In that passage, the prophet condemned the false shepherds who mistreated God's flock and who led them astray. God promised,

"Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them.... I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord God. "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick" (Ezek. 34:11–12, 15–16).

What happened that day by the Sea of Galilee identified Jesus with the Lord God of the Old Testament, whose concern was for the well-being of the flock. In Christ, God was seeking out and feeding Israel not only with bread but with truth as well.

**"You give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37).** Jesus didn't expect the disciples to perform a miracle. But the command, with its emphatic "you" in the Greek, is significant.

**Jesus challenged the disciple's solution.** The disciples had been concerned for the crowd. But their solution was to send them away so they could "buy themselves bread" (Mark 6:36). But Jesus did not come to send people away. He came to draw them to him. He came because the people could not "buy themselves" what they required to meet their deepest need. Only Jesus could meet that need, and he did so supremely on Calvary.

**Jesus challenged the disciple's vision.** Jesus was training his disciples so they would be able to meet the needs of the shepherdless. "You give them" was a challenge to help them catch a vision of the mission for which they were being prepared.





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*Jesus challenged the disciple's understanding.* The answer to their confusion on how to fulfill Jesus' command was not to buy bread but to look to Jesus. Christ never asks us to do anything without providing the needed resources to complete the task.

The miracle that followed illustrates this principle. Jesus took what the disciples had and multiplied it. No matter how limited our resources, God's ability to multiply them is as unlimited as they were on that day in the wilderness.

**Twelve baskets of fragments (Mark 6:43).** The Gospel writers report that everyone in the crowd ate and were filled, after which they took up 12 baskets of fragments. Some have seen significance in the number 12. There were 12 tribes of Israel. Messiah's provision was so generous that even his scraps can supply the needs of Israel, as represented by the 12 surplus baskets.

**"Take him by force to make him king" (John 6:15).** John adds a detail not mentioned in the other Gospels. After the meal, the enthusiastic crowd decided that Jesus must be the prophet promised by Moses (Deut. 18:18). Why not then acclaim Jesus king?

Jesus later commented on their motive. "You seek me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled" (John 6:26). The people had not seen the meaning of the miraculous sign which identified Jesus as the Lord God, their Shepherd. All they knew was that he was someone who could feed them. Self-interest, not faith, lay at the root of their enthusiasm. No wonder they were ready to proclaim Jesus king.

How ironic are the phrases "take him by force" and "make him" king. Those who acclaim a person king will be willing to submit to his will. The crowd intended to make Jesus submit to their will, thus robbing him of his royal authority. Let's be careful not to do the same. **When we come to God in Jesus' name, may our prayers be for that which is in his will. As true followers of Christ, we should not attempt to cajole him into doing our will.**

**Miracle and message (John 6:26–66).** John's Gospel follows a pattern noted before (p. 186). He describes a miracle, then records a lengthy teaching of Jesus which is related to it. That lengthy teaching in John 6 has been called Jesus' "Sermon on the Bread of Life."

In this sermon, Jesus pointed out the selfish motives of the crowds who followed him. But Christ himself is the true bread, the source and sustainer of life. He is the true bread of heaven, who has been sent by the Father to give eternal life to everyone who believes in him. The ancestors of his hearers who had eaten manna in the wilderness were all dead, but those who would appropriate Christ—figuratively eating his flesh and drinking his blood—would live forever.

John notes that after this sermon "many of his disciples [used here in the sense of loose adherents] went back and walked with him no more" (John 6:66). They had eagerly received the bread that sustained physical life, but they rejected the Word that promised eternal life.

Some people today preach a false gospel, which promises material prosperity to those with enough faith. How eagerly the crowds in Jesus' day would have welcomed such a gospel. And how quickly we turn away from the true gospel as well. The authentic gospel promises us new life, but then it calls us to live this new life not for ourselves but for the Lord.

**The meaning of the miracle.** Commentators tend to follow many side trails in discussing the feeding of the 5,000, but we must not forget this miracle's central message. In each Gospel, this miracle is an acted-out parable. Jesus declared himself to be the Lord God, come to shepherd his people, as he had promised through the prophet Ezekiel.

Richards, L. (1998). *Every miracle in the Bible* (pp. 246–249). Nashville: T. Nelson.

### 9. The fourth sign—feeding the five thousand (6:1–15)

The time-link to the previous section is vague: *Some time after this* (1). The reference to the Passover in verse 4 gives an indicator of duration. **A year has passed since the cleansing of the temple** (2:13f.). During this time Jesus has ministered largely in and around Galilee, as described by the other three evangelists. This sixth chapter is the only section of teaching in this gospel which is set in the Galilee region. **The Galileans were a distinct type, peasants living close to the soil and labouring hard for a subsistence wage.** The primary issues for them are the down-to-earth matters of food and the means of livelihood. This was in contrast to the more sophisticated audiences Jesus had encountered in the south, whose concerns were more theoretical: the fulfilment of scriptural prophecies, wrangling about the law and the theological implications of Jesus' claim.



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**The feeding of the five thousand is the only ‘sign’, other than the cross and resurrection, to appear in all four gospels, indicating its importance in the minds of the first Christian witnesses. Like the audiences in the south, the Galileans are also attracted by Jesus’ miracles (cf. 2:23f.; 4:48).**

As the synoptics make clear (cf. Mk. 6:31), **Jesus is seeking privacy at this point. The disciples have just returned from a highly successful preaching tour and are also in need of rest.** Jesus takes them to the hills to the east of the sea of Galilee, the area known today as the Golan Heights. Verse 3 refers to *the* hillside, which may imply an often visited spot.

The crowd get wind of Jesus’ whereabouts and follow him round the head of the lake. Jesus is seated among the disciples as they approach. The reference to the Passover (4) is critical for the interpretation of this section. ‘The movement from the miracle to the discourse, from Jesus to Moses, and above all from bread to flesh is almost unintelligible unless the reference to the Passover picks up 1:29, 35, anticipates 19:36, and governs the whole narrative.’ We should also note that the Passover was a great patriotic festival which stirred the Jews’ sense of national identity.

Jesus accepts the invasion of his vacation and ministers to the crowd (cf. Mk. 6:34). The passing of time raises acutely the question of food and provides Jesus with an opportunity to test the disciples, Philip in particular. He was from nearby Bethsaida and was perhaps the spokesman conveying the disciples’ consensus that they had a major problem on their hands. Alternatively, knowing the district better than the others he would be cognizant of the fact that there was no local food source to draw upon. Philip thinks only in terms of the immediate reality of limited resources and makes his calculations accordingly. *Eight months’ wages* would buy only a morsel all round (7). Over against Philip’s gloomy estimate, Jesus remains unperturbed since *he already had in mind what he was going to do* (6).

This comment is capable of the widest application. Our Lord still surveys the needy world with compassion, just as he surveys the micro-world of our personal affairs. **He is not without plans.** He ‘already has in mind what he will do’ in our time and generation, and just as surely with the tangled threads of our personal present and future.

Andrew comes into the picture, to somewhat greater effect than Philip, producing *a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish* (9). The lad has brought a meal with him, the loaves being small rolls or scones, and the fish no more than titbits. John alone mentions the boy in this personal way, a nice eye-witness touch recalling another one in Mark (the ‘green’ grass, Mk. 6:39), which later detail incidentally confirms the time as around Passover, the only ‘green’ period of the year in Palestine. Beside the crowd, which with five thousand males alone would probably have totalled at least double that number, such a resource is pitiful in the extreme, as Andrew is not slow to point out (9). But on the basis of this tiny contribution the Master proceeds to make arrangements for a general feeding of the multitude. After thanksgiving the miracle happens. He *distributed ... as much as they wanted* (11). The multitude is fed, and satisfied too! The word for ‘giving thanks’ in verse 11 is *eucharistein*, from which ‘Eucharist’ is derived, a common term for the Lord’s Supper. Too much should not be read into that, however, as it is a fairly common word and John uses terms with some freedom.

Jesus commands that the scraps not be wasted and twelve baskets are filled (12f.). Preservation of this kind of leftovers was a Jewish custom. Jesus here, however, gives his dominical support to a concern for conservation which has many points of application today. Whatever the immediate stimulus, Jesus’ directive underwrites our revulsion at the destruction of excess food in a hungry world, as at the wastage of human skills and energy in unemployment, and also more general concerns to reduce waste through recycling. It is a sombre comment on our world that it has taken the threat of environmental pollution, and our planet’s diminishing ability to sustain life, rather than a moral repugnance at waste in general, to awaken a concern for conservation.

The twelve baskets may be a fortuitous indicator of Jesus’ ability to more than meet the needs of his whole people (cf. the twelve tribes of Israel), but more generally makes the point that **‘after all have been satisfied there is more left over than there was at the beginning’.** Jesus’ resources are without limit; he can meet all our needs and more.

The sequel to the miracle is significant and anticipates the dialogue which will follow. The crowd, buoyed up in their nationalistic aspirations by the Passover celebration, see in Jesus the fulfilment of Deuteronomy 18:15–19, *Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world* (14). While this Old Testament passage anticipates a prophetic figure rather than the messianic King, they immediately cast Jesus in the later role (15). The Passover had been instituted during Israel’s wilderness wandering, when God had fed his people



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supernaturally with manna from heaven. The setting was again a ‘wilderness’ area, where Moses had spoken of the ‘prophet’ who would come. Surely this was he, a ‘second Moses’, their long-awaited deliverer. ‘It was the custom of Messianic pretenders in Jesus’ time to seek credibility by either re-enacting or matching O.T. miracles.’

Jesus, however, will have none of it and *withdrew again to a mountain by himself* (15). Some manuscripts read ‘fled back’, which a number of commentators think is probably the original reading, copyists arguably making the change to tone down the embarrassing picture of Jesus in flight. Certainly Jesus’ rejection of their attempts to set him at the head of a revolutionary mob is an abrupt and decisive one. We can perhaps detect here an echo of the earlier temptation (*cf.* Mt. 4:8f.) to pursue a political route to his kingdom, or perhaps at a deeper level, a messiahship which would by-pass the cross and leave the dominion of darkness intact. We can recall a similar revulsion at Peter’s commendation of just such a course at Caesarea Philippi: *cf.* Matthew 16:23, ‘Get behind me, Satan!’ The disturbing effect of this experience may be reflected also in Jesus’ desire to be alone again with the Father as he ‘sends’ the disciples away, probably to protect them from the insidious influence of this nationalistic fervour.

**The application of the miracle is made in the discourse which follows, where Jesus presents himself as the bread of life, the satisfier of the hunger of the human heart (6:25–59).**

At this point, we note how vividly this story expresses the ministry challenge facing the disciples of Christ in our generation. Today, as never before, we are confronted by the crowds. World population levels will explode through the six billion mark by early next century, and the sheer human reality of the needy masses is an everyday fact for ministry, particularly in the teeming cities and mega-cities of the globe. It is therefore significant to note that Christ faces the crowd and makes his disciples face them also (5). We regularly struggle against that. J. H. Bavinck touches something deep in most of our hearts when he writes:

People wish to remain quiet, in the peaceful little Church under the high Gothic arches; they would brood about God and be preoccupied with the needs of their own souls. They do not want to be shocked by the bewildering idea that there are still many hundreds of millions of people who have never heard the gospel.

But Jesus will not let us brood, he challenges us with the need, both for the ‘bread of life’ as in Bavinck’s quotation, and also for material bread, and every other kind of need that cries out to be met.

**Faced with the need, Jesus still asks us individually, and also as church communities, *Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?* (5). This is a *test* of Philip (6); nor is that accidental. Jesus regularly tests his people. We cannot simply ‘amble along’ with Jesus, for he is concerned more for our growth than for our comfort. To walk with Jesus means climbing.**

**Think Impossible: “Attempt something so impossible unless God is in it, it is doomed to fail.” Pastor Mike**

### **Offer what we have**

Sadly, our response to the Lord’s testing is too often the same as Philip’s. We measure the need, quantify our inadequate resources, and resign in hopelessness. It is all beyond us; the need cannot be met. Even when, like Andrew, we identify some limited resource, the possibilities are not significantly improved. *How far will they go among so many?* (9). But this assembling of our resources is a key to the divine provision, for Jesus is not discouraged, as we are, **by what we have to offer**. Indeed, if we will put it into his hands he will still ‘give thanks’ for it, a wonder in itself. Our instinct is to put ourselves down and demean what we have to give, particularly when measuring it against raw human need. But Christ is thankful for us! And if we will believe sufficiently in his gifting to trust him with our whole selves, he will take us, break us as need be (Mk. 6:41), and offer us to the Father as in his hands the miracle is repeated, the resource multiplied, and a multitude fed.

**The key, beyond our believing in God’s ability and will to use us, lies in the wholeheartedness of our surrender to him.** William Booth’s secret is an open one. Asked to explain the phenomenal impact of his life, he replied, ‘For the last eighty years God has had all that there is of William Booth.’ Through him Christ fed a multitude.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Milne, B. (1993). *The message of John: here is your king!: with study guide* (pp. 103–109). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.



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### **MARK 8**

#### **Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand**

**8** In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them,<sup>2</sup> “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup> And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away.” <sup>4</sup> And his disciples answered him, “How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?” <sup>5</sup> And he asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven.” <sup>6</sup> And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. <sup>7</sup> And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. <sup>8</sup> And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. <sup>9</sup> And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. <sup>10</sup> And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.<sup>[a]</sup>

#### **The Pharisees Demand a Sign**

<sup>11</sup> The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. <sup>12</sup> And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.” <sup>13</sup> And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side.

#### **The Leaven of the Pharisees and Herod**

<sup>14</sup> Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. <sup>15</sup> And he cautioned them, saying, “Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>16</sup> And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?<sup>18</sup> Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? <sup>19</sup> When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” They said to him, “Twelve.” <sup>20</sup> “And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” And they said to him, “Seven.” <sup>21</sup> And he said to them, “Do you not yet understand?”

### **Johannian Signs that are in the other Gospels**

Other Miracles in John and the Synoptic Gospel: (Is there a meaning when the miracle is in all four?)

**8/26<sup>th</sup>**

#### **JESUS WALKS ON WATER**

*Matthew 14:22–33; Mark 6:45–52; John 6:15–21*



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### Matthew 14:22-33

#### Jesus Walks on the Water

<sup>22</sup> Immediately he **made[compelled!]** the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. <sup>23</sup> And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup> but the boat by this time was a long way<sup>[a]</sup> from the land,<sup>[b]</sup> beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. <sup>25</sup> And in the fourth watch of the night<sup>[c]</sup> he came to them, walking on the sea. <sup>26</sup> But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

<sup>28</sup> And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." <sup>29</sup> He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind,<sup>[d]</sup> he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." <sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" <sup>32</sup> And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>33</sup> And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." **[WORSHIP]**

### Mark 6:45-52

#### Jesus Walks on the Water

<sup>45</sup> Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>46</sup> And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>47</sup> And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. <sup>48</sup> And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night<sup>[a]</sup> he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, <sup>49</sup> but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, <sup>50</sup> for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."<sup>51</sup> **And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, <sup>52</sup> for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.**

### John 6:15-21

<sup>15</sup> Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

#### Jesus Walks on Water

<sup>16</sup> When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, <sup>17</sup> got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. <sup>18</sup> The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. <sup>19</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. <sup>20</sup> But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." <sup>21</sup> Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

- Did Jesus set this miracle up?
- Purposely removing Himself from the Disciples to provide another 'teaching' episode?
- Or is this 'just another ordinary day' living life with Jesus?
- Compelled = Force or oblige. Pressure. Drive. Impel. Require. Make. Enforce. Demand.
- Jesus did this on purpose.

**Parties to the miracle.** Jesus is the central figure. The others involved are the twelve disciples, with the emphasis on Peter.

- **Jesus.** After resting and praying Jesus was walking on the surface of the Sea of Galilee, apparently crossing it to join the disciples who had gone on ahead by boat. The miracle displayed Christ's control of the forces of nature.
- **The disciples.** The disciples' initial reaction of **fear was transformed to worship** as the miracle impressed them with the fresh realization that Jesus was "the Son of God" (Matt. 14:33).



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- **Peter.** Peter is both a good example and a bad example in this miracle account. He alone had faith enough in Jesus to step out of the boat into the stormy sea. But once on the waters, his gaze was torn from Jesus and fixed on his surroundings. We are also asked to risk in response to Jesus' call. Peter's experience reminds us not to take our eyes off Jesus in difficult situations.

**Mark 6:51-52** Their hearts were hardened...WHAT?

*<sup>51</sup> And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, <sup>52</sup> for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.*

How could this be? Like Pharaoh with Moses??

### Mark 8:31-33

#### Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

*<sup>31</sup> And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup> But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*

### Small Group:

- **What is being communicating about Christ in this Miracle?** (About Jesus' Divinity and His unique Mission.) "Special actions by Jesus which reveal his glory to those who believe and which confront others with the need to decide about Jesus."

### SELF REFLECTION:

Asking the people to concentrate on what Jesus is saying to them in **this** Miracle.

Once we can answer what He is saying, we can move on to whether our beliefs and actions need to change.

- Which one of the participants can I relate to the most?
- Which one is the most difficult for me?
- What is Jesus speaking(revealing) to ME through this miracle?

What is Jesus saying to me in this Miracle? Do my beliefs about Jesus and His power need to change?

How, then, should my actions change?

### NOTES:

Jesus walked on a stormy sea and joined his disciples in their small boat.

**Background of the miracle.** After Jesus fed the 5,000, he "made" his disciples get in their boat and go on ahead of him (Matt. 14:22). The strong Greek verb in this passage is often translated "**compelled.**"

What was the urgency?

- Jesus may have sent the disciples ahead to help diffuse the crowd that wanted to make him king (compare John 6:15).
- Jesus wanted to escape both the crowd and the disciples, to get some rest (Mark 6:31-32).
- Jesus definitely wanted to spend some time alone with his Father in prayer (Matt. 14:23).



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The separation of Jesus from his disciples provided the occasion for this miracle.

When the disciples first saw Jesus approaching them on the lake, they mistook him for a ghost. Their fear reflected the common first-century belief that ghosts were hostile beings, the shades of malevolent men who had died, and who would harm human beings.

**Parties to the miracle.** Jesus is the central figure. The others involved are the twelve disciples, with the emphasis on Peter.

**Jesus.** After resting and praying Jesus was walking on the surface of the Sea of Galilee, apparently crossing it to join the disciples who had gone on ahead by boat. The miracle displayed Christ's control of the forces of nature.

**The disciples.** The disciples' initial reaction of **fear was transformed to worship** as the miracle impressed them with the fresh realization that Jesus was "the Son of God" (Matt. 14:33).

**Peter.** Peter is both a good example and a bad example in this miracle account. He alone had faith enough in Jesus to step out of the boat into the stormy sea. But once on the waters, his gaze was torn from Jesus and fixed on his surroundings. We are also asked to risk in response to Jesus' call. Peter's experience reminds us not to take our eyes off Jesus in difficult situations.

**How the story unfolds.** Jesus hurried his disciples into a boat and away from the crowds. It is likely that he told them to wait for him until a fixed time and if he had not arrived by then, they should set out to cross the lake. But the sea was stormy and the wind was in their face. By four o'clock in the morning, the disciples were only halfway across the lake.

When they noticed a figure walking on the water, the disciples were terrified, assuming it must be a ghost. But Jesus called out and identified himself. Peter then asked the Lord to tell him to join him on the waters. Jesus did, and Peter stepped out into the stormy waters. He walked a few steps toward Jesus but was distracted by the raging winds and began to sink.

Jesus caught Peter's hand and lifted him up, calling him a "little-faith" person and asking, "Why did you doubt?" (Matt. 14:31). When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the winds and the sea calmed down.

Amazed, the disciples worshiped Jesus. For the first time in Matthew's Gospel, they expressed the belief that Jesus was "the Son of God" (Matt. 14:33; see also Matt. 16:16; 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54).

**"The fourth watch of the night" (Matt. 14:25).** The Romans divided the night into four watches, the Hebrews into three. The Roman system was adopted by all the Gospel writers. Thus, Jesus approached the boat between 3:00 A.M. and 6:00 A.M.

**"It is I" (14:27).** The Greek phrase is *ego eimi*, and it may reflect the Old Testament name *Yahweh*, meaning "I AM." No wonder Jesus could encourage his disciples to "take courage" [rendered "be of good cheer" in our text], and "do not be afraid." Since God was with them, they had no reason to fear.

**"Command me to come to You" (14:28).** The incident with Peter offers an interesting commentary on Jesus' words of encouragement.

**"Lord, if it is You" (14:28).** The conditional here has the meaning, "Since it is You." Jesus had announced, *ego eimi* ("it is I"). Peter had confidence that Jesus truly was Lord.

**"When Peter had come down out of the boat" (14:29).** Jesus said, "Take courage." Peter showed his courage by stepping out boldly into the surging waters.

**"He was afraid, and beginning to sink" (14:30).** Jesus had said, "Do not be afraid." Out on the waves alone, Peter did fear. And he began to sink. Fear may overcome us also when we take our eyes off Jesus and concentrate on our circumstances.

**"O you of little faith" (14:31).** It is far better to be a "little faith" person than a "no faith" person. But best of all is to be a person of "great faith."

**"Why did you doubt" (14:31)?** At first, the answer seems obvious. Peter doubted because the circumstances were fraught with danger. But the question encouraged Peter and the disciples to look deeper. Jesus had announced "It is I." No matter how hazardous the circumstances may be, there was no reason to doubt when Jesus was present.

This is one of the most important messages of this miracle for us today. We can become so obsessed with difficulties and dangers that our doubts overwhelm us. Yet if Jesus, the Son of God, is with us, he is in control of every circumstance. We need to be as bold as Peter in walking through our stormy waters, yet wiser than Peter by never forgetting Jesus' presence in our lives.

**"They had not understood" (Mark 6:52).** Mark's account of this miracle displays a slightly different emphasis than Matthew's. Mark draws our attention to the disciples' hardened hearts. The phrase indicates an underlying attitude which accounts for their amazement at Jesus' ability to walk on water and at the immediate calming of the waters when Jesus entered the boat. They had just seen Jesus feed 5,000 people. They should have recognized his claim to be the Lord, come to offer himself as Shepherd to his people (see p. 208f.).



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While this emphasis is different from Matthew's, the two accounts are actually in complete harmony. The private miracle performed on the Sea of Galilee taught the disciples what the feeding of the 5,000 had not—that “truly, You are the Son of God” (Matt. 14:33).

**The meaning of the miracle.** With this miracle, we have evidence that the true identity of Jesus was beginning to dawn on his disciples. They would grasp the full meaning of that confession—“You are the Son of God” (Matt. 14:33)—only later, after the Cross and the Resurrection.

Looking back from that perspective today, we can see in this miracle more evidence that Jesus was who he claimed to be. We can see something of what it means to live in relationship with the Son of God.

The life of faith calls for a boldness like Peter's. He was willing to risk leaving the security of the boat to walk alone on the stormy lake. Faith also calls for a continual awareness that Jesus is with us. This will dispel our doubts, no matter how difficult our circumstances may be.<sup>4</sup>

### 10. The fifth sign—walking on the water (6:16–24)

Before the miracle of the loaves is discussed, a further ‘sign’ takes place, which also appears following the feeding miracle in the synoptic gospels (Mt. 14:22–36; Mk. 6:45–52). The disciples are alone in the boat in the darkness when a storm blows up, as was frequently the case on the lake of Galilee. There is a mood of discouragement underlined by John's observation that *it was dark* (17).

Here is discipleship without the discerned presence of the Lord, and, recalling the traditional image of the church as a boat, it is not difficult to make application. In many parts of the world today, particularly in the West, it would be difficult to find a more telling picture of the church. Here is a small handful of people, seemingly remote from the land where most people live their lives, apparently irrelevant to the great issues confronting the world. It is tossed by the winds of secularism without and controversy and uncertainty within, out of touch with its point of departure, unsure of its whereabouts, and with no clear destination ahead. All the while its members, like the disciples in the story, strain at the oars of good works and ministry, making no apparent headway in the process. Crucially, they have no manifest conviction that Jesus, the Head and Lord of the church, is anywhere in sight. ‘It is dark.’

Suddenly, Jesus is seen, or at least an approaching figure is observed walking on the waves towards them (19). Some commentators, who have difficulty with the miraculous, think they find a ‘let-out’ here, as the Greek of verse 19, *walking on the water*, can be rendered ‘by the water’. The suggestion is that the boat has never gone far from shore and Jesus appears walking along the shore line to encourage them. The difficulty with that interpretation lies in its complete inability to account for their terror (19). Besides, if this is not a miraculous appearance of Jesus, then it is difficult to see why the incident is included at this point, bearing in mind the theological undertow of the story. The traditional interpretation is much to be preferred, not least because it corresponds to the accounts in the other gospels where the ambiguity in meaning does not arise (*cf.* Mt. 14:24; Mk. 6:47). At first the disciples do not recognize him and are terrified, experienced sailors as they are. Clearly something extraordinary is occurring. The disciples are apparently more afraid of the Saviour than they are of the storm.

There are occasions when Jesus' coming seems only to intensify our troubles. That was to be Peter's experience later as Jesus faced him, painfully, with his failure (21:15ff.). It was Paul's experience when he responded to the call of Christ to go to Macedonia and found himself a bloodied victim in a Roman prison (Acts 16:9 with 24). Christ's coming can divide as well as unite (Mt. 10:34–39); it can bring rejection rather than acceptance (15:18–21).

So Jesus comes to them (19). They have never been out of his sight, even if he may have been out of theirs (Mk 6:48). His commitment is unconditional; the church, whatever its limitations, will never be abandoned. He stills the disciples' fear with his word of greeting, *It is I; don't be afraid* (or, more literally, ‘stop being afraid’, 20). The words *It is I* translate the Greek *egō eimi*, which in other contexts is the divine self-affirmation so often reproduced in this gospel, ‘I am’. The words would of course be natural enough in this context as a means of Jesus' identifying himself. It is difficult, however, to believe that John does not intend us to see more here, particularly if we recall the Passover background. The deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt led to the wilderness wandering and their supernatural sustenance by means of the manna. That wilderness experience, however, was reached by way of the Red Sea and the supreme demonstration of the majesty of God as he parted the waters for his people (Ex. 12–14). Jesus appears here as Lord of the waves and the seas, the personal manifestation of the Almighty who walked upon the waters at the Red Sea. ‘The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and writhed; ... Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters’ (Ps. 77:16, 19). A similar passage in Psalm 107 concludes, ‘He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven’ (29–30).

<sup>4</sup> Richards, L. (1998). *Every miracle in the Bible* (pp. 208–213). Nashville: T. Nelson.





## When Jesus Speaks: Through His Miracles, Week #7 When Jesus Provides

This 'arrival' is apparently a further miracle, for *immediately* on Jesus entering the boat they find themselves at their destination (21). The appropriateness is well caught by Godet:

One can scarcely imagine, indeed, that after an act of power so magnificent and so kingly as Jesus walking on the waters he should have seated himself in the boat and the voyage have been laboriously continued by the stroke of the oar. At the moment Jesus set foot on the boat he communicated to it the force victorious over gravity and space, which had just been so strikingly displayed in his own person.

So Christ's presence brings renewed hope and power to his dispirited church, and, where needed, to individual lives. The last word does not lie with the world, no matter how threatening its manifestations. Jesus still comes walking upon the waves, and in a recovered experience of his presence, the church, for all its internal failings, may yet sweep upon its way, and at the last be carried by its triumphant Lord on to that 'eternal shore' for which we are destined.

Verses 22–26 relate the surprise of the crowd at not finding Jesus on the east side of the lake where the miracle of the loaves had taken place. Only one boat had made the crossing and Jesus had not been aboard when it set sail, of that they were sure. He plainly was no longer in the vicinity, however, and so they return to Capernaum, his place of residence at this point, to try and find him. They go, the text says, *in search of Jesus* (24), and that helpfully sets the scene for the long discourse which follows in which the mystery of<sup>5</sup>

### WONDERS AT CALVARY

Jesus performed no miracle while on the cross, but his death was accompanied by wonders.

It is appropriate to note several wonders associated with the death of Jesus on the cross. These, like his miracles, were extraordinary events with a religious purpose caused by God.

***The cross is one focus of fulfilled prophecy.*** It is a wonder indeed that hundreds of years before Jesus came to earth, his crucifixion was described in great detail.

Psalm 22 was acknowledged to be messianic long before Christ was born. It contains the following verses:

“My God, My God, why have  
You forsaken Me” (22:1).  
They shoot out the lip, they shake  
the head, saying,  
“He trusted in the LORD, let Him  
rescue Him;  
Let Him deliver Him, since He  
delights in Him” (22:7, 8).  
They pierced My hands and My feet (22:16).  
They divide My garments among them,  
And for My clothing they cast lots (22:18).

As we read the Gospels, we discover that each of these verses describes something that was said or something that happened at Calvary.

Isaiah 53 describes Jesus' death in the company of criminals (Isa. 53:9, 12), predicting that he would be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isa. 53:9). Psalm 34:20 predicts that none of Jesus' bones would be broken. This is a striking prediction, for the legs of the thieves with whom he died were broken to hasten their deaths (John 19:32, 33).

These and other prophecies fulfilled at Calvary on the day Jesus died are one of the wonders of God's Word. They remind us that the Cross was always a central element in God's plan and that the death of Jesus was decreed by the Father, not by human beings.

To find the meaning of the Cross, we must understand it not as a tragedy, but as the key to God's triumph over Satan, sin, and death.

***The wonder of the torn veil.*** Matthew reports that at the moment of Jesus' death the veil of the temple was “torn in two from top to bottom” (Matt. 27:51). The same event is reported in Mark 15:38 and Luke 23:45.

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<sup>5</sup> Milne, B. (1993). *The message of John: here is your king!: with study guide* (pp. 103–109). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.



## When Jesus Speaks: Through His Miracles, Week #7 When Jesus Provides

The veil that hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in the temple was a thick, woven tapestry of multiple colored strands. No known force could rip it apart.

The veil was also spiritually significant. Only once a year could the high priest go behind this veil—and then he carried sacrificial blood to sprinkle on the cover of the sacred ark of the covenant as an atonement for Israel’s sins.

The writer of the book of Hebrews reveals that the veil which separated the two inner rooms of the temple indicated that “the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest” (Heb. 9:8). The veil cut off not only the people but even the priests from direct access to God. It was a symbol of the reality that no avenue of approach to God existed in Old Testament times.

But with the death of Christ, a radical change took place. He took our sins upon himself and opened the way to God through his sacrifice. And so the writer of Hebrews declares, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

The wonder of the torn veil symbolizes the end of one age and the beginning of another. In this new age, all believers can enter the holiest of all boldly and with confidence, knowing that God’s throne is a throne of grace for all.

***The wonder of the opened graves (Matt. 27:52, 53).*** Matthew alone reports this extraordinary event. He indicates that an earthquake struck the area at the moment of Jesus’ death, opening a number of graves. Many of the saints were restored to life and seen in Jerusalem after Jesus’ resurrection.

The implications of this wonder are clear. Jesus’ death brought life to some who had been dead. What a symbol of victory over death, and of the resurrection life that Jesus offers to all who trust him as Savior. Richards, L. (1998). [\*Every miracle in the Bible\*](#) (pp. 246–249). Nashville: T. Nelson.

### **EASTER MIRACLES—AND BEYOND**

Each Gospel devotes much of its space to the story of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion. Yet each Gospel account ends on a note of triumph. Jesus has been falsely accused and foully murdered. Yet death cannot hold Jesus. In an unmatched exercise of the power of God, Jesus is raised from the dead!

The account of events on and beyond the first Easter focus our attention on a number of wonders associated with the Resurrection, which is the greatest wonder of all. As we look first at the associated wonders and then at the Resurrection itself, we realize how utterly central the bodily resurrection of our Lord is to authentic Christian faith.

### **WONDERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE RESURRECTION**

***The tomb’s stone seal was rolled away (Matt. 28:2; Mark 16:1–3; Luke 24:1–2).*** The tombs of wealthy first century Jews like Joseph of Arimathea, where Jesus’ body was placed, were hewn into rock cliffs. Such tombs generally had several niches carved into the rock, where the bones of several generations of the family could be stored. These tombs were sealed by large stone “wheels,” which would be rolled along a track cut into the rock to seal the tomb. When on the first Easter morning several women set out for Jesus’ tomb to wrap His body in linen strips interwoven with sweet-smelling spices, they worried. How could they roll away the heavy stone that sealed the tomb?

When they arrived at the tomb, they discovered the tomb already opened! Matthew tells us that an earthquake had jolted the stone from its track, and an angel had moved it away from the tomb’s opening!

***The guard posted at the tomb was unconscious (Matt. 28:4).*** The Jewish leaders had asked Pilate, the Roman governor, to put a military guard at the tomb. They remembered that Jesus had promised a return to life, and while they did not believe Him, they thought His disciples might try to steal the body.

But the appearance of the angel and the earthquake shocked the military guard into unconsciousness. Later, when they awakened, some of the guard reported what had happened to the chief priests. These religious leaders who had conspired to see Jesus executed then bribed the soldiers with “a large sum of money” to say that the disciples stole Jesus’ body while they were asleep.

The leaders must also have promised the soldiers protection, for the penalty for a Roman soldier who slept while on guard was death. And, of course, if the disciples had actually stolen Christ’s body while the soldiers slept, the soldiers could hardly have been credible witnesses. How would they know *what* happened, if they were asleep? Like most political cover-ups, this attempt to confuse the population about Christ’s resurrection was destined to fail.

***Angels informed visitors to the tomb that Jesus had risen from the dead (Matthew 28:3; Luke 24:4–7; John 20:12–13).*** This is a third wonder associated with the Resurrection. One or more angels appeared to groups of women who came to the tomb, and testified to Jesus’ resurrection. In each case the angels appeared in their natural, radiant state, rather than as ordinary persons. There could be no mistaking the supernatural character of these witnesses to the raising of Jesus.



## When Jesus Speaks: Through His Miracles, Week #7 When Jesus Provides

***The undisturbed graveclothes (John 20:2–10).*** When Peter and John heard that Jesus' tomb was empty they ran to see for themselves. Peter stooped and stepped into the tomb and was stunned by what he saw.

In biblical times bodies were loosely wrapped in strips of linen, and a cloth was placed over the head of the deceased. What Peter saw was the cloths in which Jesus had been wrapped, still in the shape of the body around which they had been done up! But there was no body inside! Jesus had somehow passed through the grave cloths, leaving them as an empty husk!

The apostle John tells us that when he saw this, he believed (John 20:8)!

***Mary saw Jesus Himself (John 20:12–18).*** Even after Mary had seen the angels at the tomb, she wept uncontrollably. She was still convinced that “they” had taken Jesus away.

Then through her tears Mary saw a figure standing nearby. Supposing him to be the gardener she asked the figure where the body of Jesus had been placed. Jesus then spoke only one word to Mary: her name. Immediately Mary recognized His voice.

***Jesus appeared unrecognized to two disciples on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:13–35).*** Another striking incident is reported in Luke. As two disciples return to their home in Emmaus from Jerusalem they are joined by an unknown man. The man questions them, and when they share their vanished hopes that Jesus might have been the Christ, the man leads them through the Old Testament prophets, showing from Scripture that it was foretold that the Christ would suffer as Jesus had!

On arriving home the two travelers invited the stranger to take a meal with them. As the stranger broke the bread and gave thanks for it, in the traditional Jewish table blessing, they suddenly realized that their companion was Jesus Himself, raised from the dead. Jesus then disappeared, and the two hurried back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples that Jesus was alive.

***Jesus appeared in a locked room (Luke 24:36–43; Mark 16:14).*** The text tells us that Jesus came to His disciples and spoke with them personally shortly after the Resurrection. Luke adds a fascinating detail. The room where the disciples had gathered was a locked room, where the disciples were hiding for fear of the religious leaders who had manipulated Jesus' death.

The sudden appearance of Jesus in the room is one of the proofs that the resurrection body is not limited in the way our mortal bodies are limited. Jesus appeared and disappeared at will, most likely freely crossing the barrier between the material and spiritual universes which no mortal can cross.

***Jesus' resurrection body bore the marks of crucifixion in its hands and side (John 20:24–31).*** The disciple Thomas had not been present the first time Jesus appeared to the gathered disciples. He would not believe the report of the others that Christ had shown Himself to them, alive. Thomas bluntly stated that he would not believe unless he touched Jesus' hands and side, and confirmed that the One who now lived was indeed the same One who had been crucified.

Yet when Jesus did appear, and invited Thomas to touch His wounds, Thomas found he did not need this confirmation after all. Thomas knew Jesus, and fell down before him, confessing “My Lord and my God.”

These events, each closely linked to that first Easter morning, were wonders indeed. Yet they pale in comparison to the event with which they are associated: the literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION: *Romans 1:4;*  
*1 Corinthians 15*

Some contemporary “theologians” have argued that it doesn't matter whether the resurrection of Jesus was literal and historical or not. They claim that a “spiritual” resurrection is all that is required. What mattered is not whether or not Jesus' body was raised and transformed. What mattered is that the disciples *believed* that Jesus was raised. What mattered is that they experienced Him in a different way than when He lived among them.

But the Bible makes it very clear that the resurrection of Jesus was a literal resurrection of the material body, and that the Resurrection took place in space and time as a true historical event. Romans 1:4 reminds us that by His resurrection Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power.” The Resurrection is the capstone miracle, which confirms once and forever Jesus' claim to be God the Son and Son of God.

The apostle Paul provides a thorough discussion of the Resurrection in chapter 15 of his first letter to the Corinthians. Tracing that discussion we gain some insight into both the nature of Jesus' resurrection, and its significance to our faith.

***Christ's death, burial, and resurrection are all historical events prophesied in the Old Testament (1 Corinthians 15:3–4).*** This is significant, as prophecy which has been fulfilled has invariably been fulfilled literally. We can conclude from this that the death of Jesus was a real death, and the resurrection of Jesus was a real, historical resurrection.

***Christ was seen alive after His resurrection by many witnesses who knew Him, and who could not have been deceived (1 Corinthians 15:5–11).*** Paul not only mentions the Twelve, but also some 500 others, most of whom were alive when Paul wrote the Corinthian letter.

***Christ's was raised as the first of many (1 Corinthians 15:12–20).*** Christian faith promises resurrection to all who believe in Jesus. If Christ was not raised, this critical promise is an empty one. On the other hand, because Jesus did experience a bodily resurrection, our own future resurrection is assured.



## When Jesus Speaks: Through His Miracles, Week #7 When Jesus Provides

*The Resurrection is a critical element in God's eternal plan to destroy death itself (1 Corinthians 15:21–28).* Adam's sin introduced death. Biblically "death" is not only the cessation of biological life; it is also that corruption of human moral nature which separates human beings from God and brings them under divine judgment. In dying Jesus paid the penalty for our sins. In His resurrection Jesus provided eternal life for those who believe in Him. When God's plan reaches its culmination believers will be resurrected also, and the last taint of sin and death will be forever done away.

The dynamic power of Jesus' resurrection life will accomplish the resurrection transformation of believers, that once again God may be all in all.

*While mortal and resurrection bodies are related, the resurrection body is of a different order (1 Corinthians 15:35–48).* The great apostle struggles to find analogies that will help us understand resurrection. In a real sense, we will never understand the glorious prospect God holds up to us until the final resurrection comes. Yet Paul does suggest a series of contrasts which helps us sense something of the transformation that took place when Christ was raised, and that will take place when we are raised from the dead.

*Corruption vs. incorruption (1 Cor. 15:42).* The natural body is subject to dissolution. The resurrection body is not.

*Dishonor vs. glory (1 Cor. 15:43).* The contrast is explained in the verse. Our natural body is weak and subject to all sorts of disabilities. The resurrection body is infused with power.

*Natural body vs. spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:44).* This contrast points out that our mortal body is governed by principles implicit in the material universe. In contrast, the resurrection body operates on principles that are supernatural, i.e., "spiritual."

*Earthly source vs. heavenly source (1 Cor. 15:47–49).* The first man, Adam, was molded from the earth, and his material body was infused with life by God. But Christ's origin is heaven itself, as is the origin of the transformation that produced His resurrection body. In the same sense the essence and origin of our resurrection bodies will be heavenly. In the resurrection "we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man."

The bodily resurrection of Jesus is most certainly one of the three Grand Miracles of our faith, as described on pages 15 through 17 of this book. The literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus also serves as a miraculous confirmation of our own destiny, and as such is foundational to authentic Christian faith.<sup>6</sup>

### **Ephesians 1**

#### **Thanksgiving and Prayer**

<sup>15</sup> For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love<sup>[a]</sup> toward all the saints, <sup>16</sup> I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, <sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup> that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

#### **NLT**

#### **Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom**

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<sup>6</sup> Richards, L. (1998). *Every miracle in the Bible* (pp. 238–243). Nashville: T. Nelson.



## When Jesus Speaks: Through His Miracles, Week #7 When Jesus Provides

<sup>15</sup> Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere,<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>16</sup> I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, <sup>17</sup> asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom<sup>[b]</sup> and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. <sup>18</sup> I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.<sup>[c]</sup>

<sup>19</sup> I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power<sup>20</sup> that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. <sup>21</sup> Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.

Jesus Turns Water into WineNature [Jn 2:7-8](#)

Jesus Heals an Official's SonHealing [Jn 4:50](#)

Jesus Heals a Lame ManHealing [Jn 5:8](#)

Jesus Feeds 5,000 PeopleProvision [Jn 6:1-13](#)

Jesus Walks on WaterNature [Jn 6:19](#)

Jesus Heals a Man Born BlindHealing [Jn 9:7](#)

Jesus Raises LazarusResurrection [Jn 11:43-44](#)

Jesus Rises from the Dead [Jn 20:1-10](#)

Jesus Appears in a Locked RoomNature [Jn 20:19-23](#)

Jesus Appears in a Locked Room for ThomasNature [Jn 20:26-29](#)

Jesus Provides a Miraculous Catch of FishProvision [Jn 21:4-6](#)