

# Loaves and Fishes, a Lesson in Sharing?

by Sebastian R Fama

After hearing the gospel reading concerning the five barley loaves and two fishes (John 6:1-15), I heard a man proclaim the oft repeated belief that the miracle that took place here, was that Jesus inspired the people to share their food. It is difficult for me to understand why anyone would think that. The text is very clear.

For instance, in verse two we see that a large crowd was following Jesus because they had seen Him heal the sick. Upon seeing the five thousand plus people coming toward Him, Jesus asks Philip: "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" Philip responds: "Two hundred days wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little [bit]." Hearing this, Andrew informs Jesus that there is a boy who has five barley loaves and two fishes.

In verse eleven we read: "Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted." The Bible is literally telling us, that it was the five loaves and two fish that Jesus distributed to the people. There is no mention of other people sharing their food. If that was the lesson that Jesus was trying to teach here, God would have made sure that it was noted and recorded in Scripture.

Verses twelve and thirteen tell us: "When they had had their fill, He [Jesus] said to His disciples, 'Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted.' So, they collected them and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat." Note that the twelve wicker baskets held fragments "from the five barley loaves." That tells us one of two things; either Jesus performed a miracle and multiplied the loaves, or the kid was carrying around five really, really, big barley loaves. Each one big enough to feed thousands of people.

There is something else to consider. If people had just eaten the food they brought for themselves, it is doubtful that there would have been much in the way of leftover fragments. If, as alleged, they shared their food with others, it would be even less likely that there would have been any. But even if there were, why would Jesus be gathering up fragments of other people's food?

Look also at the reaction of the people. Verses fourteen and fifteen record the following: "When the people saw the sign that He had done, they said, 'This is truly the prophet, the one who is to come into the world.' Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make Him king, He withdrew again to the mountain alone."

So why did the people want to make Jesus king? Not because He told them to share their food. Once again, the text is clear, it was because they: "saw the sign that He had done." All throughout the New Testament, Jesus's miracles are referred to as signs. And that is just what we see here; the miracle of the loaves and the fishes.