

# OpenTheo

## Nazareth, Johns Death, 5,000 Fed (Part 2)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg examines the story of Herod and John the Baptist, highlighting the prevalence of guilt and paranoia in those who act wickedly. Gregg also touches on John's rebuke of Herod for his unlawful marriage, and how this resulted in his arrest and subsequent beheading. The discussion also covers the feeding of the 5,000, with Gregg noting that while the synoptic accounts present it as a miracle, John's version focuses more on the multitudes following Jesus for food. Overall, Gregg presents an insightful and engaging analysis of these biblical events.

### **Transcript**

People will seem to overcome the guilt that they felt about something, you know, after a short time, maybe a few days, they don't feel guilty anymore. They've just kind of put it behind them, and they don't think about it. They try to suppress the conviction they're feeling.

But then some incident can bring it all back, and they realize that they've just been repressing it rather than dealing with it, you know. I mean, some people may feel they're dealing with a clean conscience just because they're ignoring the guilt feelings, and they're just kind of living with a low-grade guilt that they became acclimated with, and they're not even aware of anymore. But as soon as something comes back to bring that thing back to mind forcibly, suddenly it turns out that guilt has not been dealt with at all, and the paranoia, and the... I'm thinking particularly, for example, of Joseph's brothers, sending them into slavery.

I have no doubt that some of them struggled with that in their conscience afterwards, especially as they saw their father weeping and moaning and saying, my son Joseph's gone. They didn't do the right thing, even at that point, but I doubt that all of them were so hard-hearted that they didn't feel any pangs of guilt and conviction at that time. But apparently they learned to live with it for 12 or 17 years.

I forget the exact number. Well, about 12 years, it turns out. And then, of course, when they went to buy grain in Egypt, and Joseph, whom they didn't recognize as Joseph,

started to give him rough treatment.

You remember that they said among themselves, this has happened just because of what we did to Joseph. What a funny thing for them to think of immediately. Twelve years later, any number of misdeeds might have been done in that period of time, and any number of things, you know, I mean, that's 12 years hence.

If they've been living with their conscience all that time, you'd think that they've learned how to kind of put it behind them and not think about it very much. But take something like, you know, bad karma coming back to them, you know, as it feels like to them. You know, I mean, you know, they're getting abused.

Now, if they'd known this was Joseph, then they'd have reason to put it together. Hey, Joseph's doing this to us because of what we did to him. But they didn't know it was Joseph.

For all they knew, it was just some foreign ruler who didn't know a thing about what they did. They saw it as retribution from God. That it was, you know, they're getting their just deserts for something they did 12 years earlier.

I imagine that they had learned during those years to not think a great deal about what they'd done to Joseph, but something, some crisis comes up that enlivens their conscience again and say, whoa, this is probably because of what we did back then. And here, Herod's got a similar situation, whether it's been a short time or a long time. Guilt makes a person paranoid.

It says in Proverbs, is it 28 or 29, the first verse of one of those two chapters, and I will have no difficulty letting you know which chapter that is in a moment here. Chapter 28, Proverbs 28, verse 1, says, The wicked flee when no one's pursuing. I love that verse.

It really captures human nature so well. It says, But the righteous are as bold as a lion. Now, the righteous sometimes flee when people are pursuing.

Even Jesus himself, when he heard people were after him, he went into hiding. And so did the disciples. But the righteous doesn't flee when no one's pursuing.

The righteous has confidence, but the emphasis here would seem to be that the wicked, because their conscience is not clear before God, they have no boldness, they have no confidence, and they even, you know, they've got paranoia. When you run away and there's no danger. When you run away and no one's chasing you, you're paranoid.

And essentially what it's saying is, wickedness, guilt, leads to paranoia. So, that's I think what we see in Herod here. He was feeling the guilt of what he'd done to John the Baptist, and when he heard about Jesus, whom I guess he hadn't really heard anything about before his killing of John the Baptist, I guess, news of Jesus had never reached his

royal palace.

But now it did, maybe because the Twelve had been out doing miracles in the name of Jesus, and so, you know, obviously there was more widespread publicity. Or maybe just because in the course of time the news would have to reach him about Jesus, who was drawing such large crowds and so forth, and doing such amazing things. In any case, by the time he heard of it, he had already killed John, and was now thinking, oh man, this has got to be John the Baptist's comeback.

And that explains why miracles are done by him, because it's kind of a supernatural visitation. Herod was obviously superstitious and felt that, you know, ghosts would come back to haunt him, and it made him afraid. Now, Matthew and Mark both take the occasion here.

Actually, and so does Luke, in Luke chapter 9. Mark, Luke, and Matthew all take this occasion to tell us what had happened to John the Baptist, namely, that Herod had killed him. And it gives the detail of how it happened. It tells us, first of all, why.

It says in verse 3, Herod had laid hold of him. By the way, Herod here is Herod Antipas. There's many Herods in the Bible.

They're all related to each other, but they are sometimes generations removed from each other. So Herod who killed the infants in Bethlehem was, of course, Herod the Great. But he died when Jesus was still an infant, in the year 4 BC.

This was one of his sons. One of his sons was Herod Archelaus, who is no longer in the picture by the time Jesus entered the ministry. But this was Herod Antipas.

He replaced his father, at least as ruling over that region of Galilee and Peraea on the other side of the Jordan. And so Jesus' ministry was taking place within Herod's turf. Herod Antipas is his name.

And later on in the book of Acts and elsewhere we read of Herod Agrippa. In fact, there's two Herod Agrippas. There's Herod Agrippa I, who dies in Acts chapter 12, and Herod Agrippa II, whom Paul speaks to on trial later on in Acts.

So there's a lot of Herods in the Bible. This one is Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. And he's also the same Herod who later Jesus stood before on trial.

If you've read ahead in the Gospels, I'm sure you have at one time or another, you know that when Pilate found Jesus to be a political hot potato and didn't want to deal with it, he was pleased to find out that Jesus was from Galilee, so he could transform and say, well, I don't think this is my jurisdiction. I think Herod's got to take care of this. He's the tetrarch of Galilee.

And Herod happened to be in town at the festival. And so Pilate sent Jesus to Herod. And we're told that Herod rejoiced to have Jesus come, because he'd been wanting to see a miracle from Him.

But Jesus didn't open his mouth or show him a miracle at all, and he was sent away from Herod in disgust. Now, apparently Herod had, you know, eventually Herod deduced that this wasn't John the Baptist and that Jesus wasn't coming to haunt him. And so the news of Jesus' miracles instead of scaring him kind of fascinated him.

And by the time Jesus was on trial, Herod had actually begun wishing to see this, you know, this mad magician do his tricks, you know. Anyway, this is the same Herod. And it says, Herod had laid hold of John and bound him and put him in prison.

We don't know when, well, we do know something about when that happened, because Jesus began his public ministry in Galilee when John was put in prison. We have a couple of things that have borne witness to that earlier. In John chapter 3, I guess it is, it mentions that at the point that Nicodemus had come to Jesus, and this prior to Jesus' beginning his Galilean ministry, John had not yet been put in prison.

Verse 24, John 3, 24, it says, This is when Jesus was still in Judea doing his ministry before the Galilean ministry began. However, in Mark 1.14, we read the beginning of the Galilean ministry, and the thing that made it happen was John's imprisonment. In Mark 1.14, it says, Well, John was in prison for a while before he was killed.

So we don't know how long their time elapsed when John was in prison and not yet killed. We only now read of his dying, though his imprisonment was mentioned earlier. So we are told in retrospect, in Matthew 14.3, that Herod had put John in prison.

We know that was quite a long time earlier. And he did it for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because John had said it is not lawful for you to have her. Now, what actually is known from history is that Herod Antipas had been visiting his brother Herod Philip, who is not in the Bible, and had, you know, lusted after his wife and had persuaded her to leave her husband and to come live with him.

And she did. And John the Baptist wouldn't let him sleep about it. You know, he said, Wait, you've just taken your brother's wife.

That's adultery. And you're supposed to be a king of God's people, Israel, and picked on him about it. So it's not lawful for you to have her.

Actually, in Luke chapter 3, we have a little bit more extensive information about John's harping on Herod. In Luke chapter 3, verse 19, Luke 3, verse 19 says, But Herod the Tetrarch, being rebuked by John concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this above all, that he shut John up in prison. So not only did John pick on him about Herodias and the adultery, he took the occasion

to pick on Herod about everything evil that he'd done.

So this guy was like a stinging gnat, you know, annoying Herod all the time. Every time Herod did something unjust or wrong, John the Baptist was at his gate, screaming out, you know, rebukes to him. And John was a popular guy among the Jews.

It was not good for Herod's political career to have someone who was such a, you know, John the Baptist may have been sort of like the Rush Limbaugh of, you know, of Herod, if Herod was like Clinton, you know, I mean, the guy's always, every time Clinton does anything wrong, I mean, there's never been a president that's been held accountable for so many things by somebody who's got popular support as much as Clinton has. And I don't, I'm glad someone's doing that to Clinton, but there's been some bad presidents before who didn't have this kind of accountability. I mean, JFK was a womanizer and a wicked man in many respects, but there wasn't a Rush Limbaugh around to nail him for every single thing he did or said wrong.

But, you know, it must have been similar to that, because, of course, we know Rush is a very popular guy, and a lot of the conservatives, you know, he's sort of their poster boy, he's sort of their, you know, they rejoice to have him speaking up for them. And the Jews felt that way about John the Baptist. And Herod, probably a lot like Clinton, would be glad to get rid of John the Baptist.

But he feared the multitude, it says in verse 5. It says, although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude because they counted him as a prophet, one who was speaking up for their interests and for God's interests. Now, then we're told that on Herod's birthday there was a turn of events. There was a big feast.

Herod, no doubt, was himself quite drunk. Herodias' daughter came in and danced. Now, it was not common in the Greco-Roman world for women of nobility to dance on display for men.

Prostitutes sometimes were hired to come in and do that in their Greco-Roman feasts. At that period of time, it was not uncommon for prostitutes to come in and dance seductively and so forth for the pleasure of the male observers. But women of nobility almost never would demean themselves in that way.

I mean, this girl was a princess. She wasn't some common prostitute. She was the daughter of the queen and stepdaughter of the king.

She was a princess. And yet, it just shows how corrupt that administration was that she would do that which would be ordinarily considered undignified and immoral for royal persons to do. I mean, the things that usually you'd have to get a prostitute to do.

Now, we don't know that she was like a prostitute in any other respects, but she definitely didn't have any dignity or any morals. And that's clear, too, by the fact that

when he offered her whatever she wanted, she asked for the head of a prophet on a platter. Now, that wasn't her own idea.

She got that from her mother. But it's obvious that she and her mother were in cahoots quite closely because Herod actually offered Herodias' daughter. Her name is given as Salome elsewhere. That he offered her up to half of his kingdom, whatever she might ask.

And she could have asked for things that were more beneficial to enrich herself, but her mother's influence obviously prevailed, so that she asked for something that couldn't benefit her at all, except it just made her mother happy because her mother was obviously very vengeful toward John. And so the daughter submitted to her mother in this case. In fact, here's a case where honoring your father and mother should be observed to have limits.

You don't have to honor your father and mother in every case. And obviously what this girl asked of her mother was a criminal thing. Excuse me, her mother asked her to do it.

It was a criminal thing, and she shouldn't have done it, which shows that there is a limit to the kinds of things that people ought to do at the request of their parents. Now, in verse 9 it says, The king was sorry. Now, why was he sorry? Probably he just regretted having made the oath because he knew that it would be not politically expedient to kill John.

He knew that this would cause a tremendous amount of disapproval. Israel at this time was full of zealots, military armed guerrillas, who hated the Herods and hated the Roman presence, and would take something like the assassination of John the Baptist as a rallying point for a revolt. I mean, it would be such an atrocity that the volatile zealots who already caused problems at the drop of a hat would very possibly storm his palace for all he knew, or in other cases just cause trouble, pick off his troops as snipers when they march down the road, or even pick him off.

He feared the people. He feared the multitude, verse 5 tells us. And actually in Mark's version it says he feared John.

Now, whether in Mark 6, 20, it says that Herod actually feared John, but that may mean that he feared John personally, or that he feared John's influence and John's sway over the people, which would be another way of saying the same thing as it says here in Matthew, he feared the multitude. But what I'd like to point out to you is that a man who has no convictions and no morals is guided by popular demand. He wanted to get rid of John, but the multitudes intimidated him.

The fear of man brings a snare, the Bible says. And a person cannot act out of the fear of man. It's true, his not killing John the Baptist because of the fear of man, at least the fear

of man kept him from doing the wrong thing in that case, but it was also the same kind of fear of man that caused him to submit and do it.

Because it says, because of the oaths, in verse 9, and because of those who sat with him at the table, they heard him make the oath. He didn't want to displease them. He didn't want news to get around.

So out of the fear of man, again, now he does the wrong thing. A man who's got no convictions of his own just does what he thinks the people are going to respond favorably to him for. And initially he did the right thing out of the fear of man.

He was afraid of the multitudes. But his doing the right thing out of the fear of man doesn't make him virtuous. The only thing that makes a man virtuous is if he does the right thing regardless of human opinion.

He does the right thing because it's the right thing to do and because he's committed to rightness. He didn't do the right thing because he was committed to justice. He did the right thing because he was afraid for his own skin.

But now, the same motivation, namely the fear of man, the fear of disapproval, is what leads him to do the wrong thing. So we can see that a person who fears man is unstable, can't be counted on to ever act according to conscience, and certainly you wouldn't want to trust him in any way. Now, the head of John the Baptist was taken and brought to the girl, and she brought it to her mother.

We're not told what was done with it after that, but the body was permitted to be collected by John's disciples. Now, by the way, it took a certain amount of courage on the part of John's disciples to come and ask for the body. When their leader had been executed by royal command, to identify yourself as one of his followers would have been somewhat risky.

I mean, even Jesus' own followers, after his execution, were hiding out, and when Jesus was arrested, just arrested, not yet crucified, Peter was afraid to acknowledge that he was one of his disciples at the fire. So we see that it was politically risky. At that very time, when John was recently killed by order of the king, for someone to come and say, I'm a follower of this guy, could I have his body to bury it? The body of Jesus was taken by request and buried by request of some members of the Sanhedrin.

And they did it kind of quietly too, it would seem, but they at least didn't have as much to fear because they were part of the ruling class of the Jews, they were part of the Sanhedrin, and were not very much at risk. But John's disciples were no doubt willing to risk their lives, in this case, to come and identify themselves as supporters of John and wanting to honor him in burial, since Herod's guilty conscience was probably already bothering him and he was sorry, and he realized that he'd better, you know, he killed

John only because he was kind of under pressure to do it at this point, and he probably wanted to make, in some sense, amends with the public. He didn't persecute the disciples of John.

What's amazing, though, is that a long time after this, there were still disciples of John, or at least the baptism of John was still being preached, without reference to Jesus, because we find in the book of Acts, Apollos is going around being acquainted with the baptism of John, which he's heard about, but he hasn't heard anything about Jesus, and likewise some of his followers in Acts 19. Yes, Julie? Oh yeah, that Herod heard John gladly. There were times, I think Herod was of two minds.

Let's look at that. Mark 6, 20 is a parallel to an earlier part of this. It says, Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him.

And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. It just shows that Herod was a guy with, you know, his ups and downs. Like a lot of people.

A lot of people who have no relationship with God, they have their moments of wanting, you know, to go to church, you know. I don't know why. There's some people who maybe feel like they're paying their dues on their conscience or something, you know, by listening to a sermon or something.

There are people who seem to delight to go to church, even though they live like the devil. I'll tell you what, if I wanted to live like the devil, I wouldn't bother to go to church. I wouldn't bother to play at religion.

Going to church is one of the harder things about being a Christian anyway, sitting through some of the sermons. But, you know, if I didn't love God, I certainly wouldn't bother going there. But there are people whose motivations I don't fully understand who sort of have a love-hate relationship with God, you know.

They kind of want to feel like they're paying their dues to God. They want to... There's something that makes them like to hear what the sermons are, even if they feel convicted. You know what I think it is? I've known some people like this who I think they consider feeling guilty to be sort of a cleansing thing from guilt.

I knew a guy who, in most respects, seemed to be a good Christian. But every weekend he went out and fornicated. Now, he didn't go out hoping to fornicate.

He was just, you know, he just wasn't that committed to holiness. I mean, he was a lot of the time, he seemed like. But I guess we could say he had a weakness toward women.

He was good-looking and women came on to him and he didn't have a great deal of moral strength to resist. But it seems like he was very open about this. After a weekend, he'd come in and he'd talk to me and he'd confess it and he'd be all aggrieved and so



forth.

And, you know, I got the impression that he got some sense that it was okay to go out and do these things as long as he occasionally came in for, you know, to be rebuked, to confess and be rebuked. And somehow, by feeling convicted, although he clearly didn't repent because he kept doing it weekend after weekend, there was no real repentance. But conviction itself sometimes is mistaken for repentance.

Sometimes people feel like, well, at least I feel guilty about what I'm doing so that should be okay, that should make it better. At least I know I'm doing it wrong. In fact, I can think of another Christian man who was convicted about his opulent lifestyle.

That is his affluence. He was a rich Christian and he'd read enough of the New Testament to know that he wasn't living the way that he felt Christians should in that respect. And he'd sometimes criticize other rich Christians.

And he'd say, the difference between me and them, he says, is that I at least know I'm doing it wrong. You know? And he thought that made him better than them in some respects. He knew he was not doing the right thing, but at least he wasn't kidding himself.

He said, at least I'm not fooling myself like they are. At least I know I'm doing the wrong thing. Which made me think, you know, how is this mind working? I don't quite relate to that kind of thinking, but it obviously meant something to him.

I deduce that he felt like, well, the fact that I feel guilty about it atones for it to a certain extent. You know, I mean, I get my regular shot of conviction once in a while to make me feel a little better about my guilt, which is strange. I mean, it's the opposite of what conviction is supposed to do.

Conviction is not supposed to make you feel good about your guilt or feel better about it. It's supposed to make you come to repentance. Conviction is not repentance.

I remember sometimes when I preached very confrontational words in churches, people would come up afterwards and say, well, you really stepped on my toes, pastor. But not criticizing me. It's saying basically they needed it.

And people would come up and say, well, I was really convicted by what you said. As if that's great. I mean, I'm not concerned to be convicted.

I want to repent. You know, I mean, conviction isn't the response. I mean, it may be a means toward that response.

Maybe they should get convicted so they'll repent. But just saying, I got convicted. Somehow that meant you succeeded with me, pastor.

You made me convicted, you know. I got my shot of guilt this week, so I can make it through the week now. I'll come back for a little more guilt next week, you know.

That's not what God wants. He doesn't want us living in conviction. But some people interpret conviction and guilt feelings, and maybe basking in it a little while, as somehow making an atonement for the fact that they did the wrong thing.

And I wouldn't be surprised if that's what we are to read about. Herod here. Herod was really guilty.

He was really upset with John the Baptist because of all the evils that he did that John was rebuking. But there were times when he wanted to hear him. Either Festus or Felix, I forget which, you know, wanted to hear Paul.

He got convicted and he trembled when Paul spoke, but he was curious and he wanted to hear him. I don't know if he was motivated the same way as Herod was. But Herod actually, it says, he gladly heard him sometimes.

He didn't gladly hear him in the sense of accepting what he said and living up to it. He apparently liked to get convicted once in a while, because every time he heard him, John was rebuking him. But sometimes a person who is living in rebellion against God, like I said, they somehow feel like they've somehow managed to make things a little more right if they've reveled in guilt feelings for a while.

If they've, you know, they've paid for their crime by feeling guilty for a little bit. And if they can go and induce a little guilt by getting preached at and rebuked a little, then they can walk away saying, okay, I've had my shot of guilt, I can go out and sin some more. And, you know, when I feel like it's about time again, I'll call for him again and I'll feel guilty again.

I don't know if you can relate to that. I can't relate to it except that I've seen people who apparently operate in that kind of motivation. And so I think it exists.

I won't psychologize about it, because I don't know why that would work for people. But some people do seem to get something out of that. Now, we're told that the disciples of John went and told Jesus about this.

And the next thing we read is the feeding of the 5,000. And that apparently happened immediately after Jesus heard the news about John the Baptist. Would you look at Mark chapter 6, please? In Mark chapter 6, at verse 30, we have the beginning of the story of the feeding of the 5,000.

I'm going to read the entire account for you, then make some comments about it. Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. Now, this suggests perhaps their return from their mission.

And that raises some questions about chronology. Because what we have here is Jesus then goes off and he feeds the 5,000. Now, Matthew suggests that the feeding of the 5,000 was the direct result of Jesus hearing about the death of John the Baptist.

Mark tells us that something else that occurred about the same time was the return of the 12. Now, if the 12 in fact returned at this point, then the story of Jesus going to Nazareth must not have involved the 12, or else we're placing it in its wrong chronological place, and it did involve them. But again, we can't decide that, and it doesn't much matter.

But we can say this, that apparently about the time that Jesus heard about the beheading of John the Baptist and the news came to him about it, the disciples who had been sent out came back and reported on their doings. Now, whether they came back because Jesus summoned them back, whether he sent out messengers and said, come quickly back, we're in a bad situation here, John's been beheaded, and who knows, we better lay low for a while. Or whether it had been prearranged that their outreach would end after a certain period of time, it just happened to coincide with this news coming to Jesus.

Or whether the disciples themselves, without any prearrangement or summons from Jesus, out on the field as they were, heard about the death of John the Baptist, and thought, we better get back to Jesus quick. And that may have been, the news of that event may have brought an end to their outreach, and they came back and told you about it. In any case, we don't know why they came back at this time, whether it was a summons or prearranged time to come back, or their own decision, but it did coincide with news coming to Jesus about the death of John the Baptist.

So, in verse 31, Jesus said to them, Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while, for there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a desert place in a boat by themselves. But the multitude saw them departing, and many knew him, that is, recognized him, and ran there on foot from all the cities, and arrived before them and came together to him.

And Jesus, when he came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. It's not the first time we've heard that. So he began to teach them many things.

And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came to him and said, This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread, for they have nothing to eat. But he answered and said to them, You give them something to eat.

And they said to him, Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread to give them something to eat? But he said to them, How many loaves do you have? Go and

see. And when they found out, they said, Five and two fish. Then he commanded them to make all sit in groups on the green grass.

So they sat down in ranks in hundreds and fifties, which is no doubt why they were able to deduce the total number at the end, because they were in groups that could be counted by hundreds and fifties. And when he had taken the five loaves and two fish, he looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them. And the two fish he divided among them all.

So they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments of the fish. Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men.

Now we're going to stop there. This miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, and really feeding of the five thousand isn't quite accurate. We're told it was about five thousand men.

And in some of the other accounts, like Matthew 14.21, says besides women and children. So Matthew tells us there were five thousand men. And in addition to that, there were an unnumbered group of women and children, which may have exceeded the number of men, for all we know.

In fact, it seems most likely most men would have been working during the day and wouldn't be free to just run around after Jesus. Women with their children in tow might be a little more at liberty during the day. It's hard to say.

But it's possible there were upwards of 15,000 people fed on this occasion with this small amount of food. Now this miracle of the feeding of these multitudes actually is the only miracle recorded in all four of the Gospels, except for the resurrection of Jesus, of course. It's recorded in all four Gospels.

No other miracle, including the virgin birth, or other important miracles is recorded in all four Gospels but this. The four Gospel accounts do show a tremendous amount of independence from each other, which is always good. It shows that they didn't just copy each other, and we have independent witnesses on it.

And the independence is seen in some of the difference of detail that's given, particularly between the synoptic versions and John's version. John gives much more treatment of it. Now why this would be recorded by all the Gospels and other miracles are not, I'm not sure I can say.

John tells us, however, this was a kind of a turning point in the Galilean ministry. The other Gospels don't tell us this, but John records that the day after he fed this multitude, they chased him around the lake again, met up with him in Capernaum, and he rebuked them that they were not seeking the bread from heaven, but they were seeking the bread that fills their stomachs. And after a discourse that he gave to them that was full

of offensive language to them, he basically turned them off, and a great multitude left him.

In fact, one is left with the impression that of these many thousands, only the twelve remained loyal to him. Some have called that the Galilean crisis, and it seems to be a major turning point in his popularity. Up to this point, his popularity has just been rising.

He's on the crest of the wave, but it's as a result of this miracle and the sequel to it, that is the sermon he preached the next day, that the Galilean ministry we could say collapsed, as it were. He was more obscure after this, or less followed by the multitudes in Galilee. One other thing, too, that we're told in John's gospel, is that after this miracle, it says in John 6, 15, that Jesus perceived that the multitudes were going to take him and make him a king by force.

And he therefore sent them away, and went off alone to pray by himself to prevent this from happening. This miracle was the occasion for the first attempt to forcibly make Jesus be the kind of Messiah that the Jews were hoping for. Now, Jesus wasn't into being that kind of Messiah, and so he diffused their plans by sending him away, but they wanted to make their Messiah a king by force.

And no doubt, many Jews prior to this time had kind of hoped he might initiate, that he might make himself a king, and that he might rally armies, but he'd made no moves in that direction. And up to this point, no one else made any either. But this miracle became the occasion for them wanting to take him and make him a king forcibly, whether he liked it or not.

Now, a couple of factors may have contributed to this desire on their part. One was the fact that John the Baptist had just been killed, and no doubt everybody in Galilee was grieving over that, especially the godly and the politically right-wingers. You know, the guys who were the zealots, who hated Herod, and would hate him all the more now, and who perhaps were in large numbers in Jesus' audience, just watching for a signal from him to see if he wanted to be their new leader.

The zealot party, which of course was militantly anti-Roman, had been started by a leader named Judas of Galilee back in 6 AD, but he had been hunted down by the Romans and killed. Many of his followers had also been crucified and killed by the Romans, and they were without a dynamic leader at this time. So no doubt, those who were of this persuasion were watching closely to see if Jesus was going to volunteer.

Maybe they might have at one time been looking to John the Baptist for this, but when he was arrested, no doubt Jesus was the one that kind of kept their eye on. And when John died, it's possible that they thought this should be the crisis that will set Jesus on course here. I mean, this is a tremendous injustice.

This is certainly the time when anti-Roman hostility would be at its highest in the populace. This would be the opportunity for Jesus to exploit the people's anger at Herod to get them to come against him. And it's probable that the crowd that followed Jesus was fairly heavily thick with zealots who were ready to react in some way to the news that Herod had killed John the Baptist, and looking to Jesus as the only man who might rally sufficient popular support to take that movement to victory.

And then when Jesus fed them all, no doubt that only confirmed to them that this was the man. This was the man, anyone who can feed multitudes. I mean, whoever holds the bread holds the people's loyalty.

And if he can feed multitudes, he'll have everyone literally eating out of his hand, figuratively and literally. And so when they saw this miracle, they decided, we've got to make our move now. We've got to strike while the iron is hot.

And when Jesus saw that this kind of motivation was in motion, he diffused it quickly by sending multitudes away. And himself, he sent his disciples across the lake in a boat. We didn't read that part, but that's in the next verses.

And he went off by himself. Now there's another thing about this miracle that might have caused these people to act this way, and that is that there was a widespread rabbinic tradition at the time that when Jerusalem was destroyed almost 600 years earlier, well, it was actually more than 600 years earlier at this time, by the Babylonians, that the Ark of the Covenant had been rescued by the prophet Jeremiah. Now there's no record of this.

We know that Jeremiah, just before the destruction of Jerusalem, did escape to Egypt with a lot of others. But the Jewish rabbis taught that Jeremiah had rescued the Ark of the Covenant out of the temple and taken it down to Egypt, where it was then lost. But the rabbis taught that as the Messianic age was about to begin, Jeremiah would reappear supernaturally, like they expected Elijah to reappear.

They thought Jeremiah would come back too, and that he'd bring the pot of manna that had been in the Ark, and he'd miraculously feed the multitudes from this pot of manna as a signal that the Messianic age had begun. You might recall, if you've read ahead, that at Caesarea Philpi, when Jesus said, Who do men say that I am? The disciples said, Well, some say you're Elijah, some say you're John the Baptist, some say you're Jeremiah. Ever wondered why they said Jeremiah? Well, because there was this tradition that Jeremiah was going to come and signal the Messianic age and feed the multitudes miraculously with a great Messianic feast.

This was, we are told in John's Gospel, around Passover time, feast season. And for Jesus to do the miracle of feeding multitudes with a small quantity of food may have been interpreted by them, and that coupled with their dissatisfaction with Herod and the Romans because of the killing of John the Baptist, they may have felt like Jesus was

advertising himself as the one who has now initiated the Messianic kingdom. As a matter of fact, he was, but not a kingdom such as they hoped.

And when they misinterpreted and wanted to physically make him their king, he, of course, wouldn't have nothing to do with it. Now, as far as the details of the story, we're told that Jesus, when His twelve came back from their outreach, He felt that they needed some R&R. They needed a little bit of time away from the multitudes.

It's as many people are coming and going. I'm sure there are a lot of people coming to Jesus telling Him about John the Baptist and what are you going to do about this, Jesus? Certainly the people will follow you if you'll rise up. We've got to do something about this oppression.

And Jesus and His disciples needed rest. They needed to get away, so they got in a boat and pointed it across the lake and head off. We're told that people saw which direction He was going and ran around the north end of the lake and met Him on the other side.

They actually beat Him to the other side. Now, the distance they would have had to run to get to the other side of the lake, well, we don't know they ran the whole way. They probably walked and hastened and ran some of the time because they wanted to keep ahead of the boat.

They probably walked faster than the boat was moving and it was, across the lake, it was about an 8-mile shot that Jesus would have to go. But around the end it would be a little longer. They'd have to go maybe about 10, maybe 12 miles max.

But that'd be, you know, 3 or 4 hours walk or a little less than that if they ran some of the way. And they actually beat the boat around there. Now, there is some reason that Jesus wanted the crowds to do this.

Not all of them. He wanted to test their loyalty. There were all kinds of people coming to Him, but He wanted to see how dedicated they were.

Because He could have pointed the boat further south and hit a southern point on the other side of the lake that they could not possibly have followed Him to, except by boat. But He made it easy for them, as it were. If they wanted to, they could follow Him and beat Him there.

And He didn't send them away. He didn't get angry when He saw them there. He had compassion on them.

And even though the disciples hadn't gotten much rest, probably a few hours in the boat only, Jesus then devoted the whole day to preaching to them. And we're told in parallel accounts that He preached to them about the kingdom of God and healed their sick. It says that in Luke 9.11, in the parallel here, when He saw the crowds on the other side of

the lake when He landed, it says He received them, or welcomed them, and spoke unto them of the kingdom of God and healed them that had need of healing.

Now, near the end of the day, it was observed by Jesus that they were getting hungry. Now, the way it reads in the synoptics is somewhat different than the way it reads in John, although they can be harmonized. Here's how it reads in the synoptics.

In Mark, it says, in verse 35, And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, excuse me, the disciples initiated this, send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread, for they have nothing to eat. But Jesus answered to them, You give them something to eat.

Now, actually, this reads somewhat different than the way John gives it to us. In John chapter 6, it has not the disciples initiating this matter of eating, but Jesus initiating it. It says in John 6, 5, Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and seeing a great multitude coming toward him, he said, Philip, where shall we buy bread that these may eat? But this he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.

So Jesus was acting according to plan here. He wasn't just trying to figure things out in a surprise situation that he didn't know what to do in. Philip answered him, Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.

That's the same figure given in the synoptics, of course. Two hundred denarii was about a year's wages for the average worker. A denarii was a copper coin that was given a typical wage of a laborer.

Two hundred working days would be what it would be, at least two-thirds of a year of wages, I guess it would be. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, There is a lad here who has five bottle of loaves and two small fish. Now, I believe that between, in John 6, between verse 7 and 8, there's a gap of probably some hours, and I'll tell you why.

Because it suggests that the thing that Jesus said to Philip was in the beginning of that day, or at least it was early on. It was when the crowd was first gathering. Jesus, in verse 5, saw the great multitude coming toward him.

This is before he preached to them, before he healed them, when he got out of the boat and he saw the crowd was gathering. Early on in the day, he said to Philip, We're going to get something to feed these people. And Philip must have spent some time doing inquiries to find out whether there was food available, because Mark tells us that when the day was now almost over, the disciples, apparently Philip and Andrew, came to Jesus in Mark 6.36, and said, Send them away, that they may go to the surrounding country.



Now, Jesus had started by saying earlier, when the crowd was gathering, to Philip, How are we going to feed these people today? And Philip, I guess, complained that it would take 200 denarii's worth of food, but Jesus said, Well, go and find out how much you have. That's what it says in John. Go out and find out how much food there is.

Apparently, Philip and the disciples had to circulate throughout the crowd, saying, Anyone got any food here? Anyone got any food? And probably while Jesus was healing and teaching, they were doing this investigation. And then when the day was almost over, they came back and reported back to Jesus, and said, Hey, you'd better send them home. There's no food here.

They're hungry. There's villages and towns a ways off. If they want to go, they can get food.

They're reporting back to Jesus, saying, We can't feed them. We don't have the food. And Jesus said, Well, how much food do you have? And they had an immediate answer, probably because they had done this investigation.

There must have been some hours of search. According to Mark, he said to them, Verse 38, How many loaves do you have? Go and see. And when they found out, they said, Five and two fish.

And John's gospel tells us that they found this food from a boy, that a boy had the food. This is verse 9 of John 6. There's a lad here who has five barley loaves, two small fish. But what are they among so many? They had done an investigation across the sea.

How much food is there? They found very little. Only a boy's lunch, and they just figured that's not even consequential. These loaves were not what we think of as a bread loaf.

They were little muffins. You've got five of those and two little sardines, and we've got a multitude to feed here. And no doubt, they didn't come and say, Well, Lord, here's five loaves and two fishes.

Do your stuff. We know you can do something with this. It was the opposite.

They were trying to impress you with the fact that it's hopeless. Send them away, Jesus. And he says, Well, how much do you have? Well, you really want to know? We have found one person that had some food, and it's just five little muffins and two little fishes.

Now, are you convinced we need to send them away? And he said, No, just bring me the food. And he multiplied it and fed them, to put it very briefly. Now, certainly the story deserves more treatment than this, but as I said, the miracle of feeding these people was interpreted as a messianic sign by the people.

And it led to, of course, almost a political outbreak to make Jesus a king. Now, there are

people who say this didn't really happen as a miracle. Of course, radical critics always try to explain miracles away, and they suggest that these people all had food with them, but they were not sharing it with each other.

And that when they found this young boy willing to share his lunch, though he was as hungry as everyone else, he was willing to surrender his lunch, that touched the hearts of the people, and they pulled out the food they were hiding, and they all began to share it, too. And there was no actual miracle, except a miracle of softening the hearts of otherwise greedy people. But obviously, that's not the kind of miracle that would have impressed people, that a miracle had taken place.

And the next day when Jesus preached that to them, he said, You didn't come to me because you saw the miracle. You came because your belly was filled. So he acknowledges it was a miracle.

They saw it as a miracle. They were impressed. Hardly seems like the radical explanation would work.

Furthermore, the collecting of twelve baskets at the end of it suggests that this wasn't the people's own food. What right would the disciples have to collect the extra food that people had brought with them? It's clear the food originated with Jesus. He gave out the food, and he had the right to collect the fragments.

A lot more can be said about this. Unfortunately, we've run out of time. We will talk about the sequel next time.

We'll probably pick up and talk a little more about the Feet of 5000, too, just because we've been pressed to the wall with time restrictions here. And so we'll kind of break off in the middle here and do more with it next time. Yes, Tim.