

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

Greater Glory Than Moses

Introduction

The “Feeding of the Five Thousand” (probably should have been called ‘the feeding of the twenty thousand’) is a record of Jesus’ fourth sign or miracle and it is the one miracle that is recorded in all four Gospel writers. But like a group of reporters, writing on an event, each author emphasizes a different aspect to this miracle. When John wrote his Gospel, he was certainly aware of the other writers (called Synoptic Gospels), but there are some details he chooses not to include as he is writing to this group of second-generation people in Asia Minor.

He doesn’t include the reality that Jesus had just learned that his friend John the Baptist had been beheaded and he and his disciples were heading to the other side of the Lake for some respite – some time alone in conversation and prayer.

He doesn’t include as Luke did that Jesus was presenting himself as the Good Shepherd. He sees the crowd and bemoans that they are like sheep without a Shepherd. He causes them to sit down on green grassy slopes, dividing them into numbers. He feeds them. They do not want.

No, John has another emphasis. Let’s read the account:

Text John 6:1–21 (ESV)

Explanation

When I was in school, I remember in Math that in some problems the teacher didn’t want the answer, he or she wanted to see the work. If you were doing long division, you might arrive at the correct solution, but the teacher wanted to see how you got there. They would say, “Show me your work.”

I believe the point that John wants to draw out of this account is that Jesus is better than Moses. So how do I get that? Let me show you the work.

- a. First of all, the immediate event that the other writers note is the martyr of John the Baptist. John the Apostle’s preceding words are *“For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”* (John 5:46–47, ESV)
- b. In verse 6, John mentions “now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.” This Feast would be on the minds of the crowd. This Feast, of course, celebration the exodus of the Jews out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses.

- c. Thirdly, John explains that the actions of Jesus by suggesting the disciples could feed the crowd was a test.¹ The entire wilderness experience of Israel as Moses led them was a test. (*“who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.”* (Deuteronomy 8:16, ESV))
- d. John records that when Jesus accomplished the miracle the crowd said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”² That idea comes from “Deuteronomy 18:15–19ⁱ and the promise of a prophet like Moses . . . Doubtless Jesus’ provision of so much bread to so many people in a wilderness area prompted some to think of Moses’ role in providing manna.”³

Summary: It seems to me that John is responding to his readership in a way that places Moses at the background to these events.⁴

- John emphasizes that Jesus is leading the crowd up to a mountain. There’s a great similarity to Moses.
- John emphasizes that this is taking place during the time of Passover. Passover, a yearly Jewish festival celebrating when God rescued his people from Egypt.
- This crowd was fed miraculously even as Moses performed in Israel.
- This seemed so obvious to this crowd they thought that Jesus was the promised prophet that Moses foretold; and they wanted to make Jesus king.
- And lastly, when Jesus calmed the sea of his disciples, only John emphasizes that when Jesus got in the boat “immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.”⁵ With the presence of Jesus that arrived at the land they were going.

☞ What is the point that John is emphasizing to his readers? Answer? **Jesus is better than Moses.**

Better Than Moses

What is it that everyone remembers about Moses? We remember that he led Israel out of the tyrannical rule of Pharaoh of Egypt. We remember that Moses led, fed, and cared for the nation. Moses was the great liberator. When Jesus was born Israel was back in slavery. They were slaves of Rome. If a Moses “look-a-like” shows up, what do you think the people are going to think? They want him to lead them out of slavery. They want to start a revolution and overthrow their foreign captors. They want to make him king.

John records Jesus’ response to the crowd’s desire to make him king. *“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.”* (John 6:15, ESV). Satan had tried to offer Jesus the kingdoms of this world, but he wouldn’t

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 6:6). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 6:14). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

³ Carson, D. A. (1991). [The Gospel according to John](#) (p. 271). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁴ Carter, Matt. Exalting Jesus in John (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 6:21). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

take it. The crowd is now willing to force him to be king. He wouldn't take the offer. Jesus himself knew that the way his kingdom would triumph would not be by beating the enemy in warfare, but by sacrificing himself on a Cross and providing atonement for all who will believe.

Application

There is likely no Old Testament prophet more respected than Moses. He was the lawgiver, the liberator of Israel, and a worker of miracles. Moses had the unique privilege of speaking to God "face to face, as one speaks to a friend" (Exodus 33:11). But Jesus was better than Moses.

This point would be incredibly important to John's readers. These are people that are two generations removed from Temple worship. These are people that have a lot of questions; and a lot of doubts.

- They've already learned that Jesus has fulfilled the Passover lamb – He's the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.
- They've already learned that Jesus has fulfilled the ceremonial system – He is the fount that cleanses from sin.
- They've already learned that Jesus has fulfilled the Temple – He is the Temple.
- They've already learned that Jesus is the serpent lifted up so that all who look to him in faith will be saved.

Now they will have to wrestle with this numbing fact: Jesus is better than Moses.

As A.W. Pink has written, "It is hardly possible for Gentiles to understand or realize the veneration and affection with which the Jews regard Moses, the man of God."⁶ It is now the year 2019. None of us are Jews and none of us honor Moses as the Jews did. So what relevance is there for us today? You will leave this message persuaded that Jesus is better than Moses. So, we ask the question, "So what?" Let me answer that by telling a story.

Charles Weigle grew up in a devout religious home. He had all the benefits of Christianity at his fingertips, but he had never seen the glory of Christ. One night, he attended a revival meeting at his church. The Holy Spirit worked in his heart, pointing out his sin and need for Christ. He later wrote,

"There seemed to be no hope for me. My sins towered up before me. Then Jesus came and quieted my fears. He paid the penalty for all my sins and guilt...When this great truth dawned upon my mind, my heart was filled with gratitude and praise. There came a great love into my heart for my Saviour."

⁶ Pink, A. W. (2000). [*An Exposition of Hebrews*](#) (electronic ed., p. 157). Escondido, CA: Ephesians Four Group.

From that moment on, Charles grew to love Jesus more and more. He was hungry for the Word of God. As he grew spiritually, people noticed a remarkable change in his actions and attitude. He pursued holiness in life.

God eventually called Charles into evangelism. He travelled the country singing and preaching the Gospel. However, in time he went through a situation of unbearable grief and suffering. His days were dark – very dark. One night, he sat at the piano, thinking of how God had carried him through those dark days. Suddenly, the words came to his heart, “No one ever cared for me like Jesus.” For the next thirty minutes he wrote a now familiar song.

*I would love to tell you what I think of Jesus
Since I found in Him a friend so strong and true;
I would tell you how He changed my life completely –
He did something that no other friend could do.*

*Chorus:
No one ever cared for me like Jesus;
There's no other friend so kind as He;
No one else could take the sin and darkness from me –
O how much He cared for me!*

*All my life was full of sin when Jesus found me;
All my heart was full of misery and woe;
Jesus placed His strong and loving arms around me,
And He led me in the way I ought to go.*

*Every day He comes to me with new assurance,
More and more I understand His words of love;
But I'll never know just why He came to save me,
Till some day I see His blessed face above.*

I wonder if that's the Jesus you know. Do you honor a Jesus that you hope will make the socio-economic, political landscape better? Can we fall prey to the mistake of the Jews and look for a Jesus who will build a kingdom of man instead of the kingdom of God? Are we looking for someone to give us our best life now? Are we looking for bread and fish instead of something far more glorious? Moses can do that. But Jesus can take care of sin and darkness. Jesus can lead us in the way we ought to go. Jesus can save you completely so that some day you will be with him forever. Jesus can change your life completely.

You might ask, “How can I come to know this Jesus?” That is the good news we get to proclaim.

ⁱ *“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ And the Lord said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.” (Deuteronomy 18:15–19, ESV)*