

SIGNS

in the Book of John



The Lord Who Feeds His People

Key idea:

Jesus fed the multitude as a sign that He is the True Bread of Life, Who came down from heaven so that whoever feeds upon Him through believing in Him would have eternal life.

Key text:

John 6:1–15 NIV2011

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias),² and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick.³ Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples.⁴ The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

⁵ When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?”⁶ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.⁷ Philip answered him, “It would take more than half a year’s wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up,⁹ “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

¹⁰ Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there).¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.¹² When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.”¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

¹⁴ After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Key points:

1. Jesus' fifth sign is the feeding of the multitude by multiplying five small barley loaves and two small fish.
2. This sign is combined with and explained by Jesus' first I AM saying in the Gospel of John: "I am the bread of life."
3. The people seemed to respond positively to the sign in two ways. First, they said Jesus must be the Prophet who was to come. And Second, they desired to make Him King.
4. Jesus did not allow the people to make Him King, and He criticized their response as simply desiring earthly, temporal bread, and showing no desire for the True Bread of Heaven and eternal life.
5. The sign of feeding the multitude, like manna in the Old Testament, was to point to our true need for the Word and True Bread - Jesus Himself.
6. There were two responses to Jesus' explanation of the sign in His teaching in John 6. The larger group turned back and did not follow Jesus anymore. But the other group followed Jesus in faith, knowing He alone is True Life.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's text and teaching stood out most to me? Why?
2. Why is it important that this story happens near Passover? How is that related to the story of manna in the wilderness in the Old Testament?
3. Why does Jesus test Philip (and the other disciples) by asking where they can buy bread to feed the multitude? How well do they do on the test?
4. Why did the people respond to the sign by saying that Jesus was the Prophet who was to come? How does feeding the multitude point to the Prophet and Messiah?
5. Why does Jesus withdraw to a place by Himself when the people want to make Him King? Why did He not allow this?
6. Why is Jesus critical of the response of the people in John 6:26-27? Once again, is Jesus interested in the sign itself, or that to which the sign points? Which are the people focusing on?

7. Is it wrong for me to want physical food? If not, what is Jesus criticizing in the teaching in John 6?
8. What does Jesus mean by saying we must eat His flesh and drink His blood to have life? Is He talking about physical eating, or something else? (Note John 6:40, 47, 54).
9. Is Jesus really talking about the Lord's Table in this passage? Why or why not?
10. Why does John record that so many "disciples" stopped following Jesus at this point in His ministry? Why does He note the response of faith of the Twelve? How does this fit into the story arc of John's Gospel?
11. Whom can I pray for, share what I have learned, and invite to church this week?

Preview of next week: The Lord Who Is Light (John 9)