

JOHN 6:1 - 8:30

Jesus not only performs signs, but he himself functions as a sign of God's life-giving and saving activity. But Jesus' words and actions demand a response. Will people believe in him and through him discover the way to life eternal begun now, or will they resist him and accuse him of being a dangerous imposter?

6: 1-24 - FEEDING OF THE 5,000 AND WALKING ON WATER

Jesus is in Jerusalem for the festival of Passover. Passover remembers the Exodus deliverance of the people of Israel and also celebrates events on their journey such as the feeding of the people with bread (manna) from heaven. Hence, the use of bread for the miraculous feeding is important. Jesus' discourse about himself being bread from heaven is also important. Jesus is the bread people need to eat for he is the one sent by God from heaven to nourish peoples' souls. The question always is this: will they respond by believing in him, or will they resist and question him being the one?

The people wonder whether he is 'the prophet who is to come into the world.' (This is a reference to Deuteronomy 18 where Moses predicts a messianic prophet like him to come in the future, and a popular reference to the prophet Elijah as well). Also, some people want to make Jesus 'King', which is a reference to the Davidic King prophecies applied to the Messiah.

The miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 is one more sign Jesus does, but like all signs, the meaning is spiritual and hidden to all except those open to see and believe Jesus to be the one from heaven.

The walking on water is also referenced in the other gospels, and it is one more example of a sign of who Jesus is.

6:25-59 - JESUS AS THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN

Jesus claims himself to be bread from heaven. The people were given bread from above when they were wandering in the wilderness, but Jesus is the kind of bread that is eternally satisfying. Believing in Jesus will give eternal life, for Jesus himself will resurrect the dead who believe in him.

To believe in Jesus is to trust him to be from God, to receive him and allow him to abide within one's spirit. And so, Jesus needs to be 'eaten' for he is the sacrificial lamb. His body broken and blood poured out, symbolized by the bread and wine of holy communion, is about eternal forgiveness and renewal of spirit.

6: 60 - 7: 9 - RESPONSES TO JESUS

Many people listen to Jesus with wonder, but few believe. Many in the crowds want miracles but few are willing to see the signs for their spiritual significance. They do not want to be changed by believing in Jesus, confessing their sins, receiving forgiveness and being drawn by the Holy Spirit of Jesus into a path of discipleship and service.

7:10 - 8:30 - JESUS AT THE FESTIVAL OF TABERNACLES

Jesus goes up to Jerusalem again for another important religious festival. This time, however, he goes in secret, concerned that the authorities will arrest him before his time. The festival of tabernacles provides the opportunity for Jesus to offer several more signs and declarations of who he is, challenging hearers to believe in him.

1) He challenges the Jews to consider why it is that they allow circumcision to be practised on the Sabbath while taking issue with healing being done on the Sabbath. Is one any less work than the other? Jesus accuses the religious teachers of the law of being hypocritical in criticizing him for healing while they maintain the practice of circumcision, a practice that also involves working on the Sabbath.

2) Water is used in the festival of Tabernacles, and for this reason Jesus refers to himself as being living water (water which can quench thirst eternally). Even more so, however, Jesus gives content to what this water becomes in a believer's life: the Holy Spirit living and breathing through him/her. When Jesus is glorified (crucified/risen/ascended), he will send the Spirit upon believers so that Christ will live inside them and be with them wherever they are and wherever they go.

3) Another symbol of the festival of Tabernacles is light. Jesus refers to himself as the light of the world. Those who follow in his light will never walk in darkness.

Finally, Jesus also speaks of those who do not respond openly and receptively to him. They will be judged by their unbelief. They will fall into condemnation and not experience the resurrection of the dead as eternal life with God.

Each time Jesus speaks, some believe in him, but there are others who refuse to believe and resist what he is saying about himself and God. It is tragic to see how peoples' hearts can be hardened and closed.

The Woman Caught in Adultery. Like the Samaritan woman, Jesus' judgement is grace and forgiveness. Condemnation is reserved for those who refuse to open their hearts and therefore live out the consequences of refusing abundance of life.