

Lesson 6
John 6:1 – 71
Jesus, the Bread of Life

Memory verse: “Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. “ (John 6:35 NIV)

Since John’s gospel is selective (John 20:30–31), he does not record events in the life of Jesus that do not help him fulfil his purpose. Between the healing of the paralytic (John 5) and the feeding of the five thousand, you have many events taking place, some of which are mentioned in Luke 6:1- 9:10 and Mark 3:1-6:30. During this period our Lord preached “the Sermon on the Mount” (Matt. 5-7) and gave the parables of the kingdom (Matt. 13).

"After" an undesignated lapse of time (cf. 5:1), Jesus travelled "to the other (east) side of the Sea of Galilee." That was the more sparsely populated side where fewer Jews and more Gentiles lived. It was particularly to the northeast coast that He went (cf. Matt. 14:13; Mark 6:32; Luke 9:10).

Jesus went up on the mountainside to be alone "with His disciples," who had just returned from their mission throughout the towns of Galilee (Mark 6:30-32; Luke 9:10). He had just heard that Herod Antipas had beheaded John the Baptist (Matt. 14:12-13). The crowd soon found Him, and He healed many of the people and taught them (Matt. 14:14; Mark 6:33-34; Luke 9:11). Only John mentioned that this happened on a mountainside. Perhaps he did this so his readers would see a parallel with what happened on Mt. Sinai (vv. 31-32; cf. Exod. 16:21). Possibly it is just a detail that he as an eyewitness observed.

The feeding of the five thousand was a miracle of such magnitude that it is recorded in all four gospels. A great multitude had been following Jesus for several days, listening to His teaching and beholding His miracles. Jesus had tried to “get away” to rest, but the needs of the crowd pressed on Him (Mark 6:31–34).

The purpose of the sign was that He might preach the sermon. Again, it was a ministry of “grace and truth” (John 1:17). In grace, our Lord fed the hungry people, but in truth, He gave them the Word of God. They wanted the food but they did not want the truth, and, in the end, most of them abandoned Jesus and refused to walk with Him. He lost His crowd with one sermon!

The preaching of the Word of God always leads to a sifting of the hearts of the listeners. God draws sinners to the Saviour through the power of truth, His Word. Those who reject the Word will reject the Saviour. Those who receive the Word will receive the Saviour and experience the new birth, eternal life.

Because of His compassion, in this event, He ministered to the multitude in different ways. He still ministers today to us. Do you feel your need because there is a spiritual hunger within? Are you willing to admit that need and come to the Saviour? If you will, He will save you and satisfy you forever!

Scripture Reading: John 6:25-59

To learn in this lesson: 1) Jesus’ authority over quantity 2) Jesus’ authority over nature 3) Jesus is the Bread of life.

Discussion Questions:

1) What solutions were offered in the feeding of the multitudes in John 6:1-14 and can we draw lessons from this miracle?

2) Why did Jesus asked His disciples to move away from the crowd onto a boat in the lake and later performed a rather private miracle: the fifth sign - walking on the water in John 6:16-21?

3) Jesus declared that He is “the bread of life”. Discuss His discourse in verses 22 to 71 with the crowd’s responses as follow: Seeking (verses 22-40); Murmuring (verses 41 – 51); Striving (verses 52-59); Departing (verses 60-71).