

We Have Seen the Lord

length, and they must have been hungry when they reached the place where Jesus sat.

As they came, Jesus knew precisely what He would do to feed them, but He said to Philip by way of testing him, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” Apparently checking to see how much money they had, Philip answered, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that everyone of them may have a little.” Then Andrew came forward with a lad who had five barley loaves and two fish, but it was so little against so many that Andrew said, “. . .but what are they among so many?”

As they looked at one another in despair, Jesus had His disciples seat the people. The text says there was much grass in the area, so they sat. When counted, the men alone numbered about five thousand. Matthew’s account adds there were also women and children (Matthew 15:21). Jesus took the five loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to all who were seated, and likewise the two fish. Our text affirms the multitude ate as much as they wanted.

What an impact this must have been on their faith! A great multitude fed with a small boy’s lunch, and all those in that multitude were filled. There were even leftovers! Jesus said to His disciples, “Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.” So they gathered them up and twelve baskets were filled with what remained.

When the people saw this demonstration of His power, they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.” For us, the feeding of the five thousand is another sign proclaiming the divinity of Jesus and it teaches us of His nature: His compassion and hospitality toward others, His thankfulness for what He had, and His unwillingness to waste even that which had come so easily from His power. Should we not each strive in these ways to be like Him?!

God's Son Revealed by Signs

A Kingdom Not of This World

John 6:15

Throughout His ministry, the people found earthly meaning in the Lord's teaching and failed to grasp its spiritual significance. The Samaritan woman applied His words to the water in Jacob's well although He actually spoke of living water springing up to eternal life. Nicodemus struggled to understand how a man could reenter his mother's womb and be born again when Jesus actually spoke of a spiritual rebirth. The five thousand He fed saw in His power only the ability to fill their stomachs. They failed to realize that He who has power over nature is God's Son with power over sin and death as well.

Seeing His power and believing He was the promised Messiah, they wanted to make Him king by force. It was what they had longed for ever since the earthly kingdom of Israel had been dismantled. God had promised them a restored nation. Several of the Old Testament prophets had recorded the day when God's people would be reunited and His kingdom re-established. Daniel 2:44 predicted, "In the days of these kings," speaking of the Roman rulers, "The God of heaven will set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed,..." Consequently, the people wanted an earthly kingdom and were prepared to force it into being. But, God had not promised an earthly kingdom. He had in mind a spiritual one in which Jesus Christ would reign in the hearts of men. That kingdom of God's design was, in fact, established on earth shortly after Christ's death.

The primary message of John the Baptist was, "The kingdom of God is at hand." It was imminent. Jesus Himself predicted in Mark 9:1, "...there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power." Shortly after the resurrection, when the apostles asked Jesus when the kingdom of Israel would be restored, He said they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them

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(Acts 1:6-8). That happened on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. In Peter's explanation of those events he said that God had raised Christ up and seated Him at His right hand, on the throne of David, to reign as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:34-36).

It is significant that after Acts 2, every New Testament reference to the kingdom of God indicates the kingdom was already established. Paul said in Colossians 1:13, "For He *delivered* us from the power of darkness, and *transferred* us to the kingdom of the Son of His love." John said in Revelation 1:6, "He *has made* us to be a kingdom." (NASV) Did you catch the past tense of both passages? His kingdom existed in the first century. John affirmed he was in the kingdom (Revelation 1:9). Christ was already on the throne. So it cannot be a physical, earthly kingdom. It was and is spiritual just as Jesus explained to Pilate in John 18:36 when He said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Because His kingdom is not of this world, Jesus departed from them when they tried to make Him king.

Today, as they, we are creatures of the here and now, the physical. Shall we allow this world's physical trappings blind us to the spiritual nature of the kingdom to which we have been called?

Jesus Walks On Water

John 6:16-21

This is the fifth miraculous sign of the divinity of Jesus found in John's gospel. It is a miracle which vividly demonstrates the Savior's power over nature. He walked on water, and by His presence He stilled the tempestuous sea. Matthew and Mark also record this incident, each giving a somewhat fuller version than John. However, since our purpose is to study John's gospel, we will restrict our thoughts primarily to this text.

As John unfolds these events for us, we are impressed with the danger which threatens the disciples. They had left the eastern

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coast of the Sea of Galilee where the five thousand were fed and began rowing across the little sea toward Capernaum on the other side. It was evening, and darkness enveloped them. Jesus was not with them. He had stayed behind on the grassy slopes. Why, John does not say, though Matthew and Mark tell us that he stayed to pray.

As they rowed, the sea became increasingly restless. Galilee can do that. Quickly and violently the winds will begin to blow down from the mountains that surround the lake. In moments the sea can be turned from serene calm to a raging tempest, a frightening threat to anyone in a small boat, even those who were experienced seamen.

We are also impressed with the timeliness of the Savior's intervention. After rowing some three or four miles which would have put them right in the middle of the crossing, just when the storm was at its peak, Jesus appeared in the darkness, walking on the water, drawing near to the boat. They were frightened. His appearance was sudden, and it was dramatic. It is hard to guess where and when they expected Him to catch up to them and by what means they thought He would make the trip, but this is certainly not what they expected. Jesus said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." They, therefore, received Him into the boat, and immediately the danger was over. The sea became calm, and they arrived safely on the other side.

Jesus always knows the plight of His disciples. Though He may seem far away, He is near and able to step in just when the storms of life seem at their worst. He does not shelter us from the fearfulness of a howling wind or of rolling waves. Such times may require every ounce of our own ability and energy to keep life's boat from capsizing. They are necessary for testing and strengthening our faith. But, just when it seems that our troubles will swamp us, He steps in, the waves begin to subside, and daylight begins to dawn.