

Worksheet #7: John 6:1–71¹

Summary: Chapter six brings us to the midpoint in the Book of Signs, and also to a watershed moment in the life of Jesus. Many details appear in the chapter, which begins with the fifth Johannine sign—the feeding of the 5,000 from a young man’s lunch (6:1–14). With thorough coverage in all the Synoptic gospels (Matthew 14:13–23; Mark 6:31–46; Luke 9:10–17), the feeding miracle is one of the most familiar episodes in Jesus’ public ministry. In John’s account, it is closely followed by another miracle, as Jesus walks on the turbulent waters of the Sea of Galilee (John 6:15–21). The walking on water is not the evangelist’s primary concern, however, serving instead as an interlude before the extended “Bread of Life” discourse (6:22–59) that unpacks the significance of the aforementioned sign. The discourse proves to be decisive. Many “disciples” reject Jesus (6:60–66), while the Twelve remain apparently committed to Jesus (6:67–71). The loyalty of the Twelve is mixed, of course. Juxtaposed against Peter’s confession of faith is the ominous foreshadowing of Judas’ later apostasy, which elevates the tension as the overarching narrative proceeds.

Abbreviated Outline² (current passage in bold):

- I. INTRODUCTION: THE WORD MADE FLESH (1:1-18)
- II. THE BOOK OF SIGNS: THE SIGNS OF THE MESSIAH (1:19-12:50)
 - A. *The Forerunner and the Coming of the Messiah (1:19-51)*
 - 1. The Testimony of John the Baptist (1:19-34)
 - 2. The Beginning of Jesus’ Ministry (1:35-51)
 - B. *The Cana Cycle: Jesus’ Inaugural Signs and Representative Conversations (2:1-4:54)*
 - 1. Sign 1: Changing Water into Wine at the Wedding in Cana (2:1-12)
 - 2. Sign 2: One of Jesus’ Jerusalem Signs: The Clearing of the Temple (2:13-22)
 - 3. Representative Conversations: Nicodemus the Jewish Ruler, the Samaritan Woman (2:23-4:42)
 - 4. Sign 3: The Second Sign in Cana: The Healing of the Royal Official’s Son (4:43-54)
 - C. ***The Festival Cycle: Additional Signs amidst Mounting Unbelief (5-10)***
 - 1. Sign 4 at an Unnamed Feast in Jerusalem: The Healing of the Lame Man (5:1-47)
 - 2. **Sign 5: Galilean Passover: Feeding the Multitude and Bread of Life Discourse (6:1-71)**
 - 3. Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1-8:59)
 - 4. Sign 6: The Healing of the Blind Man and the Good Shepherd Discourse (9-10)
 - D. *Final Passover: Climactic Sign, the Raising of Lazarus, and Other Events (11-12)*
 - 1. Sign 7: The Raising of Lazarus (11)
 - 2. Final Events of Jesus’ Public Ministry (12)
- III. THE BOOK OF EXALTATION: PREPARING THE NEW MESSIANIC COMMUNITY AND THE PASSION OF JESUS (13-20)
 - A. *The Cleansing and Instruction of the New Covenant Community, including Jesus’ Final Prayer (13-17)*
 - B. *The Passion Narrative (18-19)*
 - C. *Jesus’ Resurrection and Appearances, Commissioning of Disciples (20:1-29)*
 - D. *Concluding Purpose Statement (20:30-31)*
- IV. EPILOGUE: THE COMPLEMENTARY ROLES OF PETER AND THE BELOVED DISCIPLE (21)

¹ Some may have noticed that the original schedule published on “Worksheet 1: Overview of John’s Gospel” indicated that we would divide chapter six into two studies, with the first covering verses 1–21 and the second covering the remainder. This plan has been discarded, however, since doing so would sever the integrally related events of the chapter from their obvious context, thus obscuring the impact intended by the evangelist.

² Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 307–308.

Interpretation: *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Notice how the crowd identifies Jesus as “the Prophet” (6:14) and then desires to make him their “king” (6:15). What led them to this, and what seems to have been their motivation for making Jesus their “king”?

2. Why does Jesus talk about the things the crowd should “labor” for in 6:27, and what does it mean to “labor... for the food which endures to everlasting life”?

3. In 6:34, does the crowd understand what Jesus said in 6:32–33? What might they mean by “this bread” in 6:34?

4. What part of the statement “I am the bread which came down from heaven” (6:41) seems to have been most objectionable to the crowd, and why? Which part of the statement does Jesus emphasize in 6:43–51, and why?

5. How does Jesus’ emphasis in 6:43–51 produce the reaction in 6:52? How does Jesus’ explanation in 6:53–58 capitalize upon and further aggravate the Jews’ misunderstanding?

6. In what sense are Jesus’ comments in 6:61–65 addressed to the crowd? In what sense are they addressed to the Twelve?

7. To what extent does Peter’s confession in 6:68 indicate understanding? Does it also include some misunderstanding?

Application: *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

8. What does this passage tell us about Jesus? How does it help us to understand “his place in the sweep of redemptive history”?³

9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?

³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 102.