

A Study of John's Gospel

Lesson 7: Conflict with the Jewish People (6:1-34)

The two miracles recorded in chapter 6 are John's only miracles that are also included in the other gospels; 1) feeding of the multitudes (Matt 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17), and 2) Jesus walking on the water (Matt 14:24-33; Mark 6:47-52).

“they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets” (6:1-15)

This chapter begins with a very familiar story. Jesus fed 5,000 men (women and children are not counted) with only 5 barley loaves and 2 small fish. He used this occasion to teach the spiritual message of His complete sufficiency for man, and that He can provide the necessities of this life even when hope seems unattainable. All sufficiency is divinely emphasized with 12 baskets of left-over food. Though the Jews recognized Jesus as “the Prophet”, they were limited in their understanding to a physical satisfaction.

“they saw Jesus walking on the sea” (6:16-25)

The end of verse 15 records that Jesus departed to the mountain alone then came to His disciples after they had already rowed their boat a few miles out on the Sea of Galilee. These experienced Galilean fishermen, were frightened when they saw Jesus walking on the water toward them. Mark recorded they “supposed it was a ghost, and cried out” (Mark 6:49). Jesus' control of the wind caused them all to “be amazed beyond measure” (Mark 6:51). Both of these miracles demonstrated that Jesus had power over all nature.

“My Father gives you the true bread from heaven” (6:26-34)

Many followed Jesus because of His miracles. The Jews, after being fed on the mountain side, went to Capernaum, “seeking Jesus” (24). When they found Him, Jesus turned the situation into a spiritual lesson. He knew the hearts and limitations of this multitude (2:24-25) and challenged their thinking with higher concepts. We can almost smell the fish still on their breath and the see the bread crumbs in their beards as they asked Jesus for more. He made the application that He is “the bread of life” and those who come to him will no longer hunger and thirst.

Questions:

1. How did Jesus “test” Philip in verse 5? What do you think John means when he wrote, “for he himself knew what he would do” in verse 6?
2. Why did Jesus withdraw himself in verse 15? What does this say about the thinking of the people?
3. What did Jesus say to the disciples as He was approaching the boat (verse 20)? From Matthew 14:28-33, what lessons of faith can we apply to our lives?
4. From verses 28-29, how shall we do “the works of God”?
5. How did Jesus contrast Himself with the manna that was sent from heaven to Moses and the Children of Israel while they were wondering in the wilderness (verses 30-34)?