

John 6:1-21

II. Jesus Reveals Himself to the World (1:19-12:50)

I. The Third Sign – Healing of the Lame Man (5:1-18)

J. The Third Discourse – The Divine Son (5:18-47)

K. The Fourth & Fifth Signs – Feeding the Multitude & Walking on Water (6:1-21)

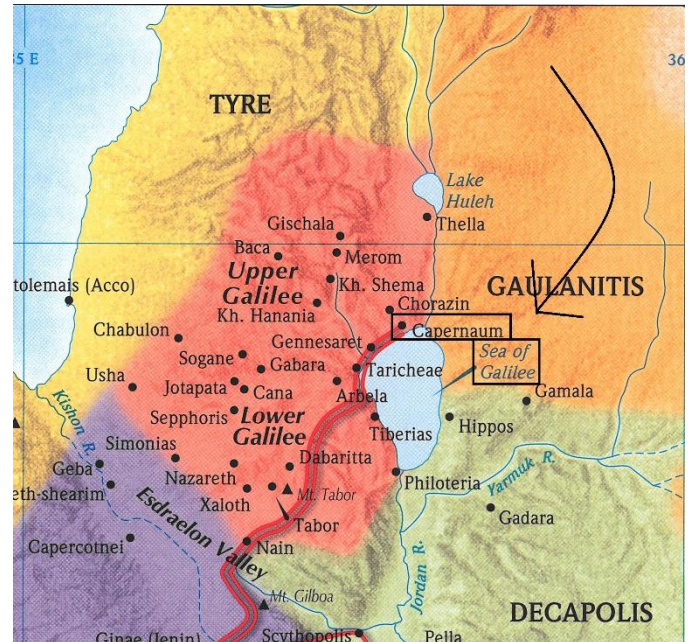
The setting now changes as we cross into John 6. Chapter five, with the healing of the lame man and the subsequent conversation with the Pharisees, took place in Jerusalem. Jesus now heads north-north-east up to the Sea of Galilee, which is also identified here as the *Sea of Tiberius* (v. 1).

Having travelled back into Galilee, *a great multitude followed Him* there (v. 2). After all, this Man was healing people and making them well! They wanted to see what He would do next! Ultimately, Jesus and His disciples were *up on the mountain* when they saw that *great multitude coming toward* them (vv. 3, 5).

Jesus, looking at His watch and realizing it's almost time to eat, turns to Philip and asks where they could find enough bread to feed everyone that was approaching them. John's parenthetical comment in v. 6, though, is quite telling: *But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do*. It's not uncommon for God to ask a question in the Word of God to which He already has the answer (cf. Gen 3:9, *where are you?*). Jesus isn't asking Philip because He Himself doesn't know what to do, He's asking him to get Philip to think more deeply about the circumstances. Jesus wants Philip to come to a fuller understanding of who Jesus is and what He can do!

God still works this way for us today. When God tests us, it's not to find out what our response will be. He's omniscient and eternal; He already knows the answers and outcomes. When difficulties or problems arise, or when God "asks us a question," it's not so He can learn something about us, but so that we can learn something about Him. Philip's response should have been, "Buy bread? Why would we need to buy bread?" In Genesis 3:9, God was fully aware of Adam and Eve's location, but He wanted them to think about why it was they were hiding from Him! When God places an unknown in our path, it's an invitation to look to Him in faith, trusting that He already *[knows] what He [will] do*. So let's quit trying to figure it out from our earthly perspective, and start seeing things from God's perspective!

For his part, Philip's response in v. 7 is similar to our response: "But Jesus, we'd need seven months' worth of wages just to give them each a morsel of bread!" Peter's worldview, like our own far too often, is far too small. Peter knows what he knows, and he hasn't yet learned to think beyond the boundaries of what he knows. Hunger requires food, but the only way to get that food is to pay for it! How else would it work?!



Peter's brother, Andrew, notices a young man who has *five barley loaves and two small fish* (v. 9), but also recognizes that's not nearly enough to feed the *five thousand* men (v. 10).¹ Nevertheless, Jesus has the people sit down in the grass, and He takes the five loaves and two fish and *He distributed to them to the disciples* (v. 11).² The disciples, in turn, pass them along to all who were sitting. Miraculously, there was more than enough to go around to fill the thousands upon thousands of people!

What had started as five loaves and two fish now ends with full bellies and *twelve baskets with the fragments* that were left over (v. 13). This is but one evidence as to why we ought to trust God in every circumstance, even when things look bleak. Remember, Jesus *knew what He would do* (v. 6), yet He nevertheless asked the question about finding bread! Our Lord brings us to each and every circumstance knowing what He will do. The question is, will we trust Him? When we trust Him, we're often left amazed and in awe over "the abundance" that we have leftover!

In response to this miracle, the men in v. 14 say: *This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.* We've seen other references to this Prophet before (1:21, 25), and we'll see another in the weeks to come (7:40). They all look back to Deuteronomy 18:15-19, in which Moses looks forward to another Prophet like himself. This Prophet will speak the words of God. People are beginning to catch on that Jesus may be the Prophet and, as a result, they seek to *make Him king* (John 6:15). Yet, that's not why Jesus came at His First Coming.³ So *He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone* (v. 15).

When night fell and Jesus hadn't returned, *His disciples went down to the sea* in order to go to Capernaum (vv. 16-17). The Sea of Galilee wasn't calm that night, though. There was *a great wind. . . blowing* (v. 18). Through the storm, and through much effort of their own in rowing, lo and behold, here comes *Jesus walking on the sea* (v. 19)! After reassuring them, they welcomed Him into the boat, and *immediately the boat was at the land where they were going* (v. 21).

¹The feeding of the five thousand is also recorded in Matt 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; and Luke 9:12-17. This is not to be confused with the feeding of the four thousand, recorded in Matt 15:32-39 and Mark 8:1-9.

²He does give thanks first. This is the biblical basis for a prayer of blessing and thanksgiving before our meals.

³That aspect of His Messianic duties will accompany His Second Coming!