

## **Lesson 25 - Just before 4/13/29 AD Friday** **The Day before the Third Passover of Jesus' Ministry**

As this section begins, we need to understand that there were two significant things that had just happened.

First, the twelve disciples had arrived back from their mission where they had gone out two by two with instructions to preach and the power of the Spirit to perform miracles. The mission had probably lasted at least two months.

Second, Jesus had heard about the execution of John the Baptist (covered in the previous lesson).

At that time, Jesus withdrew by boat to a solitary place for two reasons. The first was to grieve the death of John the Baptist. The second was to confer with His disciples privately about their mission and give them a chance to rest. This incident is one of the few which is covered in all four of the Gospels, including John. Usually, the Gospel of John covers different events than the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>1</sup>

**Matthew 14:13a** **When Jesus heard what had happened** (*the death of John the Baptist*), **he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.**

**Mark 6:30-32** **The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught** (*on their mission*). **Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."** So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

**Luke 9:10** **When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida,**

**John 6:1** **Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias),**

Bethsaida was on the other or eastern side of the Jordan at the north side of the Sea of Galilee. Thus, it qualified as the eastern shore or "far shore" in John's description although it was only five miles from the village of Capernaum. It was just out of Herod Antipas' territory. It was in Herod Philip's territory of Gaulanitis.<sup>2</sup> Remember, that according to Luke 9:7-9 at that time Herod Antipas was anxious to see Jesus. He would never get to fulfill this desire until the day of Jesus' crucifixion. As ruler of Galilee, he could have fulfilled that desire by sending soldiers to

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<sup>1</sup> *Matthew, Mark, and Luke.*

<sup>2</sup> *So named after its chief city of Golan. Currently it is called the Golan Heights.*

bring Jesus to him. Almost all the succeeding months of Jesus' ministry were spent out of Herod Antipas' territory (see map below).



### *Political Division of Israel in 29 AD*

*Green – Pontius Pilate, Orange – Herod Antipas, Yellow – Herod Philip*

Matthew 14:13b-14 **Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.**

Mark 6:33-34 **But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.<sup>3</sup> So he began**

<sup>3</sup> *Old Testament passages describing the LORD as the shepherd of Israel: Isaiah 40:11 “He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.” Micah 5:4 “He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live*

teaching them many things.

**Luke 9:11** but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

**John 6:2-3** and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside <sup>4</sup> and sat down with his disciples.

The crowds in Galilee were now following Jesus in unprecedented numbers. Partly, this may have been a response to His recent trip to Jerusalem. Some of the increased response was undoubtedly due to the just completed missions of the Twelve. At the return of the Twelve Jesus took them in a boat to Bethsaida have some time alone with them. However, the crowds could see the boat's progress up the coast from the shore. They followed the boat and were waiting at His landing place near Bethsaida. That was only about 5 miles from Capernaum (see map on page 2). When He landed, He went up on an elevation to preach to them. Jesus had compassion on them, but He already knew that most of them were not there because of a hunger to know God. They wanted miracles which had temporal consequences instead of the saving Word of God which had eternal consequences. He performed some miracles but spent most of the day "teaching them many things" "about the kingdom of God."

**Matthew 14:15** As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

**Mark 6:35-36** By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

**Luke 9:12** Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here."

**John 6:4** The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

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*securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth." Psalms 23:1 "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want." Psalms 80:1a "Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock; you who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth." Also see Genesis 48:15, Psalms 28:9, Zechariah 13:7*

<sup>4</sup> The Greek word here is ὄρος {o'-ros} which can refer to any elevated terrain feature, whether hill or mountain.

Although the number of men is given as five thousand, the size of the crowd that had followed Jesus that morning from Galilee was probably at least ten thousand if we include women and children. There was no way that they could have found enough food close to Bethsaida, not to mention sufficient lodging. From the comment of John that Passover was near, we know that it was early spring. Typically, at that time of the year there was moderate weather and the rainy season had abated. The weather was probably excellent for sleeping outside.

We know that the year was 29 AD. That year the Passover (14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan) was on Saturday. Christ taught in the Synagogue in Capernaum the next day (John 6:59). Synagogues were only open for teaching on a Sabbath or a feast day. Thus we can deduce that this day was a Friday, the day before Passover and the weekly Sabbath.

**John 6:5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?”**

Jesus must have known that there was nowhere near to Bethsaida where they could get even a small fraction of the amount of bread they needed for that crowd. However, Jesus still asked Philip the question. Of all the disciples he would have been the most qualified to answer the question since Philip was from Bethsaida.

**John 6:6 He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.**

This “test” was a question to which Jesus would soon give the right answer. They would “buy” the bread from God the Father. This was to be a lesson for Philip and every believer who thinks they are out of resources.

**John 6:7-9 Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, “There is a *little* boy <sup>5</sup> here who has five barley loaves and two fish.<sup>6</sup> But what are they among so many people?” NRSV**

Only John of the four Gospels tells us that the source of the original supply was a small boy. He would not ordinarily have been considered as being worthy of any notice among the five thousand men. I cannot believe that Philip arbitrarily requisitioned the little boy’s bread. I must believe that this small boy had been nearby and, having heard the conversation of Jesus and the disciples had dug his food out of his bag and generously offered up his own supply. He exemplified what Jesus had said about such little children in Matthew:

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<sup>5</sup> *The Greek word here is παιδάριον {pi-dä'-re-on}. It is the diminutive of παῖς {pi's} which means “boy.” Therefore, the correct translation is “little boy.”*

<sup>6</sup> *It strikes me that five barley loaves and two fish was much more than a “little boy” could eat. Perhaps he had been given extra to share.*

Matthew 11:25 “At that time Jesus said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children.’”

Matthew 18:2-3 “He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: ‘I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.’”

Matthew 14:16-18 **Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered. “Bring them here to me,” he said.**

Mark 6:37-38 **But he answered, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “That would take eight months of a man’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five - and two fish.”**

Luke 9:13-14a **He replied, “You give them something to eat.” They answered, “We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.” (About five thousand men were there.)**

The enormous need seemed hopeless considering the supply.

Matthew 14:19 **And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.**

Mark 6:39-41 **Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all.**

Luke 9:14b-16 **But he said to his disciples, “Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people.**

John 6:10-11 **Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.**

Evidently, Jesus broke those paltry five loaves and two fishes <sup>7</sup> in full view of the crowd. And He just kept on breaking them. It must have taken Him well over an hour. I expect that the disciples serving the bread and fish included many of the rest of Jesus' larger group of disciples. Most of those men and women would later make up the group of 120 in the upper room waiting for Pentecost in Jerusalem the next year.<sup>8</sup>

Some have speculated that human history, from Adam's fall to the end of the Millennium, is slated to be completed in seven thousand-year days.<sup>9</sup> Building on this assumption they have speculated that the five loaves and two fish here represent those seven millennia of human history with the two fish representing two thousand years of the Church Age. The Church Age started in 30 AD at Pentecost. The speculation might be right. It might be wrong. Ask me in 2031 AD and I will be able to tell you which it is.

**Matthew 14:20-21** **They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men,<sup>10</sup> besides women and children.<sup>11</sup>**

**Mark 6:42-44** **They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.**

**Luke 9:17** **They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.**

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<sup>7</sup> *If each of the ten thousand souls got a half pound of bread and fish, that would have amounted to two and a half tons of food. It seems likely that as the food was broken into the serving baskets that it multiplied in the baskets. Otherwise, it would have taken four or five hours to break off ten thousand pieces of both bread and fish.*

<sup>8</sup> *See Acts 1:15.*

<sup>9</sup> *2 Peter 3:8b "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day." Psalms 90:4 "For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night."*

<sup>10</sup> *Why did the number count just men? It was an established tradition of the Hebrews dating all the way back to the Exodus, when the census of the people numbered only by the men who could fight: Numbers 1:2-3 "Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one. You (Moses) and Aaron are to number by their divisions all the men in Israel twenty years old or more who are able to serve in the army."*

<sup>11</sup> *I think we can safely estimate that the number of women and children present was at least as large as the number of men. Possibly there were as many as two times the number of women and children as men. The two calculations would make the total number either 10 or 15 thousand.*

**John 6:12-13** When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

I think that this incident was primarily meant to teach the disciples and us a lesson with an experiential parable. We know from what happened the next day that the real significance of the miracle was completely lost on most of the crowd. The disciples were shown that they could feed the multitude from what had been the dinner of a young boy. Spiritually, the bread and fish stood for the wisdom of the Gospel. That wisdom could be the possession of even a little child. Taken in that sense, the miracle demonstrated that any believer with His meager faith has enough to feed countless thousands with the life-giving truth of the Gospel. All he must do is break what he has been given and share it. It will never run out!

It was also prophetic of the small number that would begin to feed the world with the Word of Salvation after the Crucifixion. By breaking that bread, they would manage to feed the whole world.

We might well ask the question: Was there any significance to there being twelve baskets of fragments picked up afterward. Why twelve? Twelve usually refers to Israel (twelve tribes). Perhaps the twelve baskets that were not eaten foreshadowed the wholesale rejection of Jesus by the Jews.<sup>12</sup>

**John 6:14** After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

This last comment of the people referred to the prophecy of Deuteronomy about the promised Messiah:

Deuteronomy 18:17-19 “The LORD said to me (*Moses*): ‘What they say is good. I (*the LORD*) will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.’”

### **The Trip back to Capernaum**

According to our modern calendars it was late Friday, the end of April 13, 29 AD. By Jewish time, it was just before twilight. When night fell it would be the beginning of the next day which was the Sabbath. That day was the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, 29 AD. It was the day which culminated with the third Passover of Jesus’ Ministry. Exactly one year later Jesus would be crucified.

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<sup>12</sup> It could also be meant to refer to the Twelve Disciples and the over sufficiency of God’s power for their ministry.

What follows is the dramatic story of the return of Jesus and the disciples to Capernaum. It is included in Matthew, Mark, and John, but not in Luke.

**Matthew 14:22** Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side,<sup>13</sup> while he dismissed the crowd.

**Mark 6:45** And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side, *having before sent them unto* <sup>14</sup> Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

**John 6:16-17a** When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum.<sup>15</sup> (*out of recorded order*)

They had originally left their boat at Bethsaida (Luke 9:10) so that was where they returned to it. It was close to the end of the rainy season. That is when the prevailing wind is from the Mediterranean (the west or southwest). From the spot where they had left their boat near the coast east of Bethsaida, where the multitudes were fed, the disciples would have had a row of only about five to seven miles to the west. However, the wind was so strong that after they had rowed about 10 to 11 hours, they had made very little headway. It was at that time that Jesus came walking to them on the lake. The next morning mostly empty boats landed at Bethsaida from Tiberias on the southern end of the Sea of Galilee (John 6:25). There is little doubt that they had been blown all the way up there during the night (ten miles) as they had been trying to make their way home.

**Matthew 14:23a** After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.

**Mark 6:46** After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

**John 6:15** Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain (*hill*) by himself.

Evidently, the crowds were so impressed by the miracle of the bread and the fish that they wanted to make Jesus a king to make their physical lives better. Evidently, He managed it so that the crowds thought that Jesus was in the group of His twelve disciples. They followed the disciples down to the boats. In the meantime, Jesus slipped away to pray and commune with the Father.

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<sup>13</sup> That side of the Jordan was in Gaulanitis (Herod Philip's territory). The other side of the Jordan was in Galilee (Herod Antipas' territory).

<sup>14</sup> I have corrected the NIV translation which would have them rowing from Bethsaida to Bethsaida.

<sup>15</sup> See comment on Matthew 14:34 on page 11. Capernaum and Gennesaret could refer to the same place. The village of Capernaum was in the region of Gennesaret.

**Matthew 14:23b-24** When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

**Mark 6:47-48a** When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them.

**John 6:17b-18** By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough.

Jesus was obviously praying on a hillside that overlooked the sea. He could not have been too far from Bethsaida and He could see that, because of the wind, the boat had not gotten much more than half of the five or six miles back home to Capernaum. It was the night before Passover, which is always during a full moon. That may have allowed Him to be able to make out the boat on the lake.

**Matthew 14:25-26** During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear.

**Mark 6:48b-50a** About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified.

**John 6:19** When they had rowed three or three and a half miles,<sup>16</sup> they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified.

They had rowed for three full watches or nine hours, and they had only covered three and a half miles. Then they saw Jesus walking on the water. First, they thought what they saw was an apparition or specter<sup>17</sup> and hoped it would pass them by. As soon as Jesus was near enough for them to hear over the howling wind, He spoke to them.

**Matthew 14:27-33** But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said,

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<sup>16</sup> Literally “25 or 30 stadion.” A stadion was a Roman measurement about equal to 200 yards or a little less than a furlong. It was about the length of most sporting arenas of the time as the long sprint in the games was that long, hence our word “stadium.”

<sup>17</sup> The Greek word here in both Matthew and Mark is φάντασμα {fä'n-tä-smä}. It is the word from which we get the English “phantasm” or “phantom.” It is more properly translated “apparition” or “specter.”

**“why did you doubt?” And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”**

As related by Matthew, this episode should have a familiar feel to it for those who know the Gospels. The events of the night exactly one year later were, not coincidentally, similar. As we have seen earlier, in our commentary on John 6:4, in 29 AD the day of this journey was the night that proceeded the day of the Passover sacrifice. After Jesus broke bread for the supper which fed the five thousand, He left the disciples to deal with the storm alone. They had to deal with it for three watches. Then Jesus came to them walking on the water. You know the story. You should be able to see the outlines of what I am talking about. Exactly one year later Jesus broke the bread for His disciples at the Last Supper. Then He was arrested, tried, and crucified. Then for three days (instead of watches) He was in the tomb. Finally, when they had almost given up hope, He “came walking to them” in His resurrection.

For Jesus to come “walking on water” was more than a physical miracle, it was deeply symbolic. In the ancient world, to stand on something was a symbol of conquest. In scripture, deep water is often used to speak of the judgment of death, as in Noah’s flood, or in the destruction of the army of Pharaoh. For Jesus to walk on the water was a symbol of His conquest of judgment and death which He would accomplish on the next Passover.

Christ’s death and resurrection was not the only thing which was symbolized here. The failure of Peter one year later was also in view. One year later, as here, Peter asserted what he thought was the superiority of his faith when he said:

Matthew 26:33b “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”

Here, a year earlier, while all on the boat were afraid, Peter suppressed his fear and stepped out of the boat. However, his fear overcame him, and he began to sink into the water until Jesus rescued him. His failure came in the fourth watch of the night which was the watch during which the cock generally crowed.<sup>18</sup>

**Mark 6:50b-51 Immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down.**

**John 6:20-21 But he said to them, “It is I; don’t be afraid.” Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.**

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<sup>18</sup> “The Romans and the Jews divided the night into four watches—6 p.m. to 9 p.m.; 9 p.m. to midnight; midnight to 3 a.m.; 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. It was between the third and fourth watch that the cock was supposed to crow.” William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1963), II, p. 380.

Not only did the wind die down, but also they saw that as soon as Jesus had entered the boat they had covered the remaining three miles to Capernaum in an instant. This too was a figure that showed that what Jesus would do on the cross would “finish”<sup>19</sup> our salvation.

**Mark 6:52** **They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.**

The disciples had not understood that the miracle of the loaves was not about literal bread. Even so here, they did not understand that the miracle they had just seen was not about walking on water but about the defeat of the judgment of death. Jesus would take pains that coming day to explain the true significance of the miracle of the loaves of bread.

***Time – 4/14/29 AD Saturday, still 14 Nisan***  
***Third Passover of Jesus’ Ministry – The Message on the Bread of Life***

The Passover of 29 AD marked the beginning of the last year of Jesus’ life, and a transition of His ministry into a new phase. The first year He had spent mostly in Judea. The second year He spent mostly in Galilee. This last year He would go up in the far north as far as Tyre and Sidon and Mt. Hermon. He would then go down the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee in the Decapolis. Finally, He would return through Galilee on the way to Perea, Judea, Jerusalem, and the Cross. The last year He revealed unequivocally to His disciples that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. On the first day of that period, He gave His great dissertation on “the bread of life” which drove many away because He made clear that the solution that He was bringing was a Spiritual one, not a physical one. He had to separate the wheat from the chaff to prepare for the beginning of His Church.

**Matthew 14:34** **When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret.**

**Mark 6:53** **When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there.**

The term “Gennesaret” referred to the Valley of Gennesaret (see map on page 12). It was on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee and was one of the most fertile areas in Israel. According to Wars of the Jews by Flavius Josephus Book 3, Chapter 10, Verse 8, the region of “Gennesareth” was also called “Capharnaum” by the local inhabitants. This fact eliminates any contradiction with John 6:17 which says the disciples had left for Capernaum. Josephus’ note does open possible questions of about when does the New Testament refer to “Capernaum” as the city and when does it refer to Capernaum as the district?

**Matthew 14:35-36** **And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched ~~him~~<sup>20</sup> were healed.**

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<sup>19</sup> John 19:30 “When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’”

**Mark 6:54-56** As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him it <sup>21</sup> were healed.

As soon as the people who had stayed behind heard that Jesus was back they began to crowd around Him. It is probable that many of the thousands who had witnessed the miracle outside of Bethsaida had made it back to Capernaum with the story of what had happened there. They only had to walk five miles. They didn't have to battle the winds in a boat as the disciples had.

**John 6:22-24** The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

Besides the crowd who greeted Jesus at Capernaum, there now joined them those who had remained behind at Bethsaida. They had followed Jesus' disciples down to the boat there at Bethsaida hoping to make him king by force. They had seen that Jesus hadn't boarded the boat with the disciples and had evidently spent the night there looking for him. When morning came they decided to return to Capernaum. Evidently, at that time there arrived many boats from Tiberius. These had evidently been blown from the south side of the lake at Tiberius to the north side during the night.<sup>22</sup> We are not told if they were manned or unmanned. At any rate these boats afforded a means of transportation back to Capernaum. They arrived to swell the huge crowds that were already gathering.

**John 6:25** When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

Since they had evidently spent most of the night looking for him near Bethsaida, this was their first question. Jesus didn't answer their question although His disciples must have been bursting to tell. Jesus needed to defuse the misplaced enthusiasm of this crowd who wanted to proclaim him king against His will.

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<sup>20</sup> There is no “him.” in the Greek. Every other translation omits the “him.”

<sup>21</sup> Here we have the Greek word αὐτός {au-to's} which can be translated “him, her, or it.” Here, clearly “it” is intended as the NRSV, NAS, and ASV have it.

<sup>22</sup> It is the contention of Edersheim that considering the distance from Tiberius (about 10 miles), these boats must have been driven to the northeast end of the Lake by the storm the night before by the wind which was contrary to the disciples who were rowing southwest.

**John 6:26 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.**

First Jesus had to show them the truth that their motivations were selfish and sinful. The “miraculous signs” were the same miracles that fed and healed them, but their true purpose was something much more. The miracles said, “Listen to Jesus’ message, He is from God.” His message was intended to feed the Spiritual emptiness inside of mankind, and to heal the Spiritual death that had its hold on them. However, the people were only interested in removing their physical hunger and infirmity, not their spiritual need.

**John 6:27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”**

The effects of the bread they had eaten lasted until breakfast. There was another kind of bread that only Jesus could provide. In fact, that was supposed to have been the message of the miracle. Jesus was the bread of life. If they would just eat that bread, its effects would last them for eternity.

The miracles were for the purpose of giving the seal of approval of God the Father to Christ’s message and works. That is still the main function of any miracle God sends.

**John 6:28-29 Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”**

Jesus had brought up the subject of work. The Jews, who were always trying to work their way to heaven, took up the subject eagerly. Jesus cut to the chase. The only “work” that saved was believing in Him and the “Work” He would finish for them.

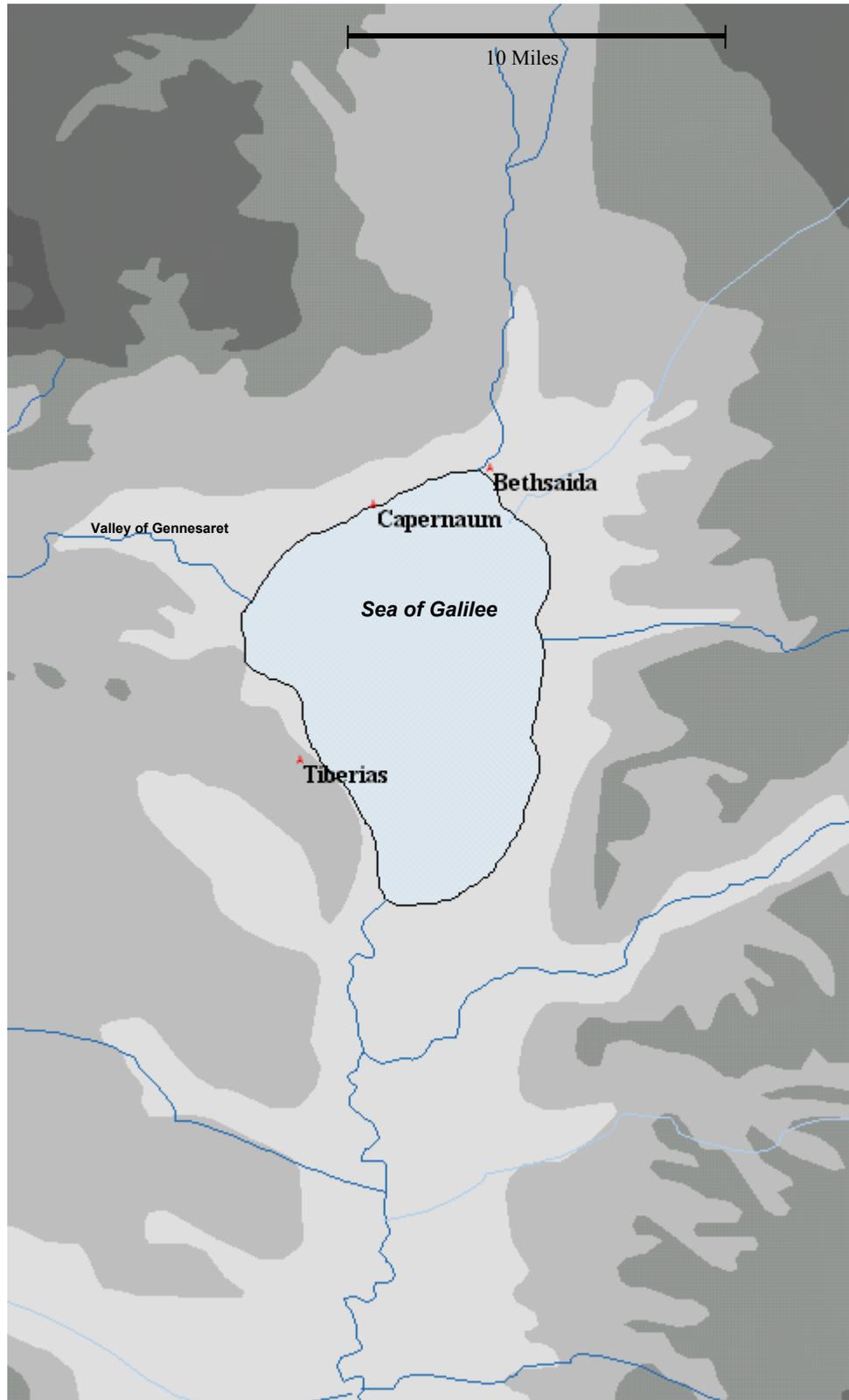
**John 6:30 So they asked him, “What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?**

They immediately discarded the miracles they had seen Jesus perform the previous evening. They wanted another one. If Jesus wouldn’t feed them again, He could at least entertain them.

**John 6:31 Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”<sup>23</sup>**

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<sup>23</sup> *Exodus 16:15 “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.”*



*Sea of Galilee*

They challenged Jesus to provide manna from heaven like Moses did. Then they would believe. Of course, the LORD had provided manna in the morning for the ancestors of those people for forty years and most of them never believed.

**John 6:32 Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.**

Jesus tried to get them to quit yearning for the days of Moses. They were living in a greater time. They were living in the time that the perishable manna of Moses’ day had only prophetically foreshadowed.

**John 6:33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”**

The “true manna” was not “a thing.” The true manna was “a person.” The true manna was not just meant for the Jews. The true manna was meant to give life to the entire world.

**John 6:34 “Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread.”**

They still did not understand. The bread was standing in front of them. He was being offered to them.

**John 6:35 Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.**

Jesus made sure they understood He was talking about Himself. The concept that eating was a metaphor for faith shouldn’t have been unfamiliar to the Jews. Among other places, it is found in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 15:16: “When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.”

It was also implicit in the metaphor of the eating of any of the sacrifices, particularly Passover.<sup>24</sup>

**John 6:36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.**

As Jesus had already told them in, verse 26, that He knew that they had not believed in His Word. The miracles, for most of them, had left no impact on their souls.

**John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.**

The ones that the Father would give to Him were those who heard His message with belief. They would have eternal security in the life He would give them.

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<sup>24</sup> *It is also implicit in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine in the Church Age Communion.*

**John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.**

The path that Jesus was on was one that had been chosen for Him by the Father. He chose to obey. He had to trust in the Father for the outcome. In His humanity He did not have the benefit of omniscience. This limited aspect of Christ's power in His incarnation was revealed later in the Garden when He prayed:

Mark 14:36 “‘Abba, Father,’ he said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.’”

**John 6:39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.**

He repeated the promise that those who were His would be securely sealed to be raised again.

**John 6:40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”**

He repeated the promise that this eternal salvation would come through faith in Him.

**John 6:41 At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.”**

As Jesus had already known, most in the crowd just didn't get it. Most of them would never get it. They didn't want to get it.

**John 6:42 They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we ~~know~~ have known?”<sup>25</sup> How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”**

Instead of focusing on the authority that the miracles should have given His words, they started to pick on things they didn't understand.

**John 6:43-44 “Stop grumbling among yourselves,” Jesus answered. “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.**

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<sup>25</sup> *The Greek is εἶδω {ā'-dō}. It is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense describes an action which is viewed as having been completed in the past. The translation should be “have known.” It is clear that at this time Joseph was dead. Of His family, only Jesus' mother and his brothers and sisters were alive.*

Jesus understood that absent a sincere desire to know God, they would never understand. Their cold human comprehension was not enough. However, if they were willing, the Father (through the Spirit) would draw them and give them the Spiritual understanding needed to believe.

**John 6:45 It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’<sup>26</sup> Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.**

For them to understand, they had to be taught by the power of the Spirit of God. If they were willing to learn, they would inevitably come to Jesus.

**John 6:46 No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.**

Of all human beings that were ever born, only Jesus Christ, who was God Incarnate could understand God without the help of the Spirit. However, one of the main purposes of Jesus’ life and death was to help the Spirit reveal the nature of God to fallen mankind.

**John 6:47 I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.**

Yet again Jesus promised that eternal salvation came through faith in Him.

**John 6:48-50 I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die.**

The physical manna that they asked for was nothing compared to the true manna which was standing before them which was Jesus Christ.

**John 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”**

Jesus tried to make them understand the metaphor. His life and work were spiritual bread. Eating that spiritual bread could only be accomplished by faith.

**John 6:52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”**

For most of them Jesus’ explanation was useless. They were now beginning to get hostile. Instead of calling Him the personal “Jesus” as in verse 42, they were calling Him the impersonal “this man.” Undoubtedly, a large part of this argument originated among the religious leaders who had been hoping to discredit and kill Him for years.

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<sup>26</sup> *Isaiah 54:13*

**John 6:53-55** Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood <sup>27</sup> has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

He tried to make them understand that what He was offering them was far better than physical food. It was a spiritual food with everlasting consequences. They were not interested. He also drew an analogy to His blood in the drink offerings in their worship. As the bread stood for the righteous life of Christ, so also the wine stood for Christ’s death on the Cross. Even Jesus’ close disciples didn’t understand this, since they still didn’t understand or accept that He was destined to die.

**John 6:56** **Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.**

The Temple had its bread and wine in its ceremonies and sacrifices. Later the Church would have the bread and the wine in Communion. In both rituals, eating and drinking stood for faith in the work of the Messiah or Christ. His work was the perfectly righteous life of His humanity. His sinless life qualified Him to die for sinful mankind. He could then impute His righteousness to those who believed in Him. This was the meaning of the bread <sup>28</sup> in both Temple and Church. His work was also His death (signified by His blood) at the Cross which removed the judgment for sin for all mankind. This was the meaning of the wine.

He promised that all who had appropriated His life and death by faith would remain in Him forever.

**John 6:57** **Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.**

Just as it was true that He was the promised Messiah sent by God the Father, it was also true that He was the one who was bringing the assurance of Eternal life.

**John 6:58** **This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.”**

He closed by returning to their original request for manna. As He stood there, He proclaimed that what He was offering them was far, far better.

**John 6:59** **He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.**

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<sup>27</sup> *Isaiah 33:15-17*

<sup>28</sup> *It was the meaning of the bread on the Table of Shewbread. It was also the meaning of the grain offerings in the Temple.*

Even Edersheim suggests that if Jesus was teaching in the synagogue it had to be Saturday or a Feast Day since those were the days that the Synagogues were open for teaching. Considering this was 29 AD, we know that Passover fell on Saturday of that year. We also know that the feeding of the 5,000 took place, according to John 6:4, near to Passover. Therefore, this discourse in the Synagogue took place on a Saturday which was also the Day of Preparation for Passover which would occur at twilight that evening. The episode on the sea the night before was exactly a year before the night of Jesus' arrest and trial and Peter's denial.

**John 6:60 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"**

Many of even Jesus' faithful disciples didn't understand what Jesus was saying although they should have been used to metaphors by now. He used them in most of His parables. Instead of understanding that He was talking about spiritual things, they seemed to think He was talking about actually swallowing His body and blood.<sup>29</sup>

**John 6:61-62 Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!"**

If they thought He was saying they needed to eat His literal body and blood, what would they do when His literal body ascended to heaven beyond their literal physical reach.

**John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.**

It was the work of the Spirit imputing Christ's righteousness that would make them righteous. His physical flesh had nothing to do with it. That work of the Spirit would be realized upon believing the Word of Christ.

**John 6:64 Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.**

Jesus knew that there were some (plural) who were just putting up a front. From among them would come the traitor prophesied by the prophecy in Psalms:

Psalms 55:12 "If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God."

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<sup>29</sup> *The Roman Catholic Church still struggles with this misapprehension about the meaning of the bread and the wine in communion.*

**John 6:65 He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”**

No person can understand the gospel of God unless the Spirit from the Father enlightens His soul. This can only happen if the person is truly seeking God.

**John 6:66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.**

Undoubtedly many of those that turned back were those who had wanted to make Jesus King by force the night before the Passover.

Robert Deffinbaugh’s statement on this passage is very apt: “Historically, the feeding of the 5,000 and the discourse on the Bread of Life was the turning of the tide of national sentiment away from Jesus as Messiah. With the death of John the Baptist, every eye was upon Jesus as his successor. But Jesus’ teaching made it clear that He did not come to conform to the popular thinking about Messiah.” R. Deffinbaugh, Highlights in the Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ, Lesson 11.

**John 6:67-69 “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”**

Even the Twelve were confused, but Peter spoke for them. Even if they didn’t fully understand what Jesus had said, they knew He was the only one who had the eternal truth. He was the Holy One of God.

**John 6:70-71 Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)**

Jesus knew that Simon Peter did not realize the Judas was still an unbeliever. Jesus made several statements like this in the next year warning about Judas’ coming betrayal. I think it was to forearm the disciples against disillusionment when the betrayal came. They needed to understand that Judas’ betrayal was always part of God’s plan and was not a surprise.<sup>30</sup> They also needed to understand that each of them would face the real possibility of betrayal by those who would pose as their friends.

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<sup>30</sup> *In a way, Judas Iscariot, who was in Jesus’ inner circle of twelve, was an echo of Satan, the great deceiver, who had served at the throne of God in eternity past and had still betrayed Him: Ezekiel 28:13b-14 “Your (Satan’s) settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones.”*