



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 6:15-24 Commentary New American Standard Bible

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [*International Bible Study Commentary*](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [*International Bible Study Forum*](#).

(John 6:15) So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

The two most important acts by Jesus on the mountain that meant most to the crowd were His healings (for which they followed Him) and His unexpected and miraculous feeding of 5,000 people (or more) using five barley loaves and two fish (which moved them to want to make Jesus their king by the use of force). The teaching that John recorded during this time related to Jesus teaching His

disciples by testing and example. Jesus probably also taught the crowd that had gathered, for He “came into the world to testify to the truth” (see John 18:37). Jesus was their King sent from God the Father, but the crowd seemed more interested in wanting Jesus to be the kind of king that would overthrow their oppressors (the Roman Empire) and restore their prosperity. In response, Jesus went back up the mountain where He customarily prayed to His heavenly Father. Those who profess to be Christians might ask themselves in what ways they are different from the crowd that wanted to make Jesus a king in their way.

(John 6:16) Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea,

John gives us a more abbreviated version of the disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee than the versions we find in Matthew 14:22-33 and Mark 6:45-56. John saw no need to record everything in Matthew and Mark, and he did not record Jesus’ instructions to His disciples in Matthew 14:22, which reads, “Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.” Jesus’ disciples did not decide to simply abandon Jesus on the shore and go alone across the sea; rather, they followed Jesus’ directions. Jesus probably sent them on ahead to teach them more about His character and nature, which Mark 6:51-52, implies when writing about the results of their journey: “Then Jesus got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not

understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.” They needed to learn more about and trust more Jesus’ compassionate love for them (character) and Jesus’ power as the Son of God and King of the universe (nature).

(John 6:17) and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

The disciples obeyed Jesus and started across to Capernaum (located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee) where the royal official lived whose son Jesus healed and where Jesus lived during His Galilean ministry. John made clear that by the time they departed, Jesus had not come to them. Before coming to them, Jesus dismissed the crowd and then went up the mountain to pray. John emphasized that the disciples were alone in the boat without Jesus, not that they expected to see Jesus walking on the water to join them in the boat.

(John 6:18) The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing.

The disciples who were fishermen, such as Peter, Andrew, James and John, had sailed or rowed their boats through storms before. Prior to the experience John related here (reported also in Matthew 14:22-33), we know from Matthew 8:23-27 that once when a storm arose Jesus was asleep in the boat and so great was the windstorm that the

boat began to fill with water. After the disciples woke Jesus, He stilled the storm, and in Matthew 8:27, we read. “They were amazed, saying, ‘What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?’” (see also Luke 8:22-25). In this situation, the disciples might have begun to think, “If only Jesus were with us, He could still this storm!”

(John 6:19) Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they *saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened.

Jesus would not abandon His disciples to the waves and the wind. Jesus did not still the storm from the mountain top as He could have done easily. Rather, Jesus wanted them to remember that He loved them and would care for them always, even if that meant walking on the water through a storm to help them. When Jesus prayed to His heavenly Father, in John 17:12, Jesus told His Father, “While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.” John’s account of Jesus walking on the water illustrated one of the ways Jesus protected His disciples. On March 8, 2020, God-willing, we will study John 6:39, which reads, “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.” Jesus was determined not to lose any of His disciples in a storm.

After rowing about three or four miles, the disciples, exhausted and afraid because of the storm, were terrified when they saw someone walking on the sea toward their boat. In Matthew 14:26, we learn why they were terrified, “When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out in fear.”

(John 6:20) But He *said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.”

Jesus needed to speak only a few words. Jesus’ presence calmed their fears and assured them that they had not seen a ghost; rather, He had come to their aid. John did not teach about Peter walking on the water after he saw Jesus (Matthew had already written about Peter doubting and needing more faith). By demonstration, John achieved His purpose which he clearly stated in John 20:31, “These are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.” Matthew 14:33, summarized the disciples’ reaction: “And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’”

(John 6:21) So they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

When the disciples learned that they had not seen a ghost, but Jesus coming to cast out all their fears and save them, they became willing and wanted to take Him into the boat. The very moment they took Jesus into the boat, the boat

reached land where they were going. In a moment, Jesus got them exactly where they needed to be and met their needs. The moment we truly receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, as God's Messiah, as the Son of God as revealed in the Bible, Jesus gives us the power and right to become children of God—immediately we receive the gift of eternal life.

(John 6:22) The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone.

The crowd knew that Jesus had worked a miracle and had fed them with enough food left over for His disciples; therefore, the crowd wanted to make Jesus their king by force. They probably wanted to do so even more the next day. Jesus had sent His disciples on the ahead of Him by boat to Capernaum. Then, unseen by the crowd, Jesus had walked on water, gotten into their boat, and traveled with them to the other side of the sea. The crowd did not know where Jesus had gone or how He had left them.

(John 6:23) There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

Tiberias was about 6 miles south of Capernaum on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Those who arrived from Tiberias soon learned that Jesus had fed a large crowd

there after saying a prayer, which John described as giving thanks. They probably also learned that the people Jesus had fed wanted to make Him their king. Those Jesus had fed may have recruited some who had newly arrived from Tiberias to take them to Capernaum to search for Jesus. Capernaum was located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

(John 6:24) So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus.

After searching diligently for Jesus, the crowd got into the newly arrived boats from Tiberias and went to Capernaum in Galilee (where Jesus had made His new home). They were probably motivated to find Jesus because of the free food that He had given them. The free food that He gave them was easier to get than food from fishing, from harvesting grain, or from baking bread. With Jesus' abilities, they knew they would not need to work or pay taxes to the Romans again, so they wanted to make Jesus their king.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do you think the crowd wanted to use force to make Jesus king?
2. Why do you think Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself?

3. Do you think the disciples right or wrong to leave Jesus and start across the sea to Capernaum by themselves? Why or why not?

4. What may have the disciples learned after they had gone three or four miles?

5. Why do you think the crowd left for Capernaum to look for Jesus?

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