

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 129 – May 9th – John 6:1-21

Works frequently referenced in these notes on John

Barrett, CK	<i>The Gospel According to John</i> , London, SPCK, 1967
Beasley-Murray, GR	<i>John, Word Bible Commentary</i> , vol 36, Word Books, 1987
Carson, DA	<i>The Gospel According to John</i> , Leicester, IVP (Apollos), 1991

John 6:1-9

It is claimed by some that Ch 6 should stand between Chs 4 & 5 and that this improves the itinerary (see note on 5:1). As the gospel stands, Jesus is in Galilee (4:54), goes up to Jerusalem (5:1), crosses the sea of Galilee (6:1 – there being no indication that he has left Jerusalem); walks in Galilee, being unable to walk in Judea because the Jews were trying to kill him (7:1 – though he had not been in Jerusalem since 5:47). If the suggested transposition were made, the course of events would then be as follows: Jesus in Galilee (4:54), crosses the sea (6:1) goes up to Jerusalem (5:1) and returns for security to Galilee (7:1).

Barrett responds to such suggestions by stating, "It should be noted that the whole section 6:1-21 is very similar to the Marcan section 6:32-53, which contains (i) a crossing of the lake (cf. especially Mark 6:32 with John 6:1, ἀπῆλθον – ἀπῆλθεν), (ii) the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, (iii) an attempt by the disciples, who have left Jesus behind alone, to cross the lake, and (iv) the appearance to the disciples in the boat of Jesus, walking on the water. The whole incident is followed in Mark by an assembly of the people and a debate (Mark 6:54-6; 7:1-23), as in John. If, as is very probable, John was using the Marcan (or some very similar) tradition, and wished to insert the material at this point because on theological grounds he desired to present his discourse on the Bread of Life, the facts are explained without recourse to purely hypothetical reconstructions."

Carson comments on the feeding of 6:1-15 (the 5,000), "This is the only miracle during Jesus' ministry that is recorded in all four Gospels." He thinks that John was aware of Mark's account, "– not that he copied him slavishly, but that he was familiar with his record of the details. The differences are minor, and can usually be explained in terms of the themes John wishes to emphasise. At one point, John and Mark provide clarifying details that help to explain the other's text (cf. notes on 6:5, 15)."

Verse 1

Μετὰ ταῦτα ἀπῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Γαλιλαίας τῆς Τιβεριάδος.

πέραν prep with gen beyond, to the other side

θαλασσα, ης f sea

"The second genitive [τῆς Τιβεριάδος] is added as a further explanation of τῆς Γαλιλαίας. Cf. 21:1, τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Τιβεριάδος. This name for the lake of Galilee, which is not used elsewhere in the New Testament, was derived from Tiberias (cf. v.23), founded in A.D. 26 (or perhaps a few years earlier) by Herod Antipas and named in honour of the Emperor Tiberius... The effect of the two genitives is clumsy, and it is not surprising that a few MSS. omit τῆς Γαλιλαίας, while D Θ b e add εἰς τὰ μέρη before τῆς Τιβεριάδος– "across the sea of Galilee to the parts of Tiberias". The clumsy text is no doubt the original." Barrett.

Verse 2

ἠκολούθει δὲ αὐτῷ ὄχλος πολὺς, ὅτι ἐθεώρουν τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει ἐπὶ τῶν ἀσθενούντων.

ἠκολουθεω follow, accompany

ὄχλος, ου m crowd, multitude

πολὺς, πολλή, πολὺ gen πολλοῦ, ης, ου much, great

Cf. Mk 6:33-34.

θεωρεω see, observe

ἀσθενεω be sick, be ill

Verse 3

ἀνῆλθεν δὲ εἰς τὸ ὄρος Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ἐκεῖ ἐκάθητο μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ.

ἀνερχομαι go or come up

ὄρος, ους n mountain, hill

"The Greek τὸ ὄρος does not necessarily refer to a particular mountain or hillside, but may simply mean 'the hill country' or 'the high ground', referring to the area east of the lake and well known today as the Golan Heights." Carson.

ἐκεῖ there

καθημαι sit, sit down

Verse 4

ἦν δὲ ἐγγυς τὸ πάσχα, ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

ἐγγυς adv near

πάσχα n Passover

The second passover in John, cf. 2:13,23.

ἑορτή, ἡς f festival, feast

Barrett says that John mentions the passover for theological rather than chronological reasons (the reference is not to be taken historically). He mentions the passover primarily because some of the words and actions of this chapter have a eucharistic significance, and the eucharist, like the Last Supper (13:1) must be understood in the context of the Jewish Passover.

Beasley-Murray similarly comments, "The statement as to the nearness of the Passover (v 4), the identification of Jesus as the prophet who should come (cf. Deut 18:15), and the discussion on the bread from heaven within the discourse (vv 31–33) combine to indicate that the feeding miracle is understood as falling within the fulfillment of the hope of a second Exodus. This flows together with the thought of the event as a celebration of the feast of the kingdom of God, promised in the Scriptures (Isa 25:6–9). The eschatological significance of the sign is thus doubly underscored, and is part of its fundamental connection with the Lord's Supper, which also is eschatologically oriented (cf. especially Luke 22:16, 18, 20, 29–30; within the discourse vv 39, 40, and esp. 54)."

Carson points out that, for the Jews, the Passover, "was a rallying point for intense, nationalistic zeal. This goes some way to explaining the fervour that tried to force Jesus to become king (cf. notes on v. 15)."

Verse 5

ἐπάρας οὖν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ θεασάμενος ὅτι πολλὸς ὄχλος ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγει πρὸς Φίλιππον· Πόθεν ἀγοράσωμεν ἄρτους ἵνα φάγωσιν οὗτοι;

ἐπάρας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s ἐπαίρω raise, lift up

For this expression see 4:35; 17:1 and cf. Lk 6:20; 16:23; 18:13.

θεασάμενος Verb, aor midd dep ptc, m nom s θεαομαι see, look at, observe

In Mark the disciples take the initiative and no disciple is mentioned by name. Barrett thinks that the addition of names is a sign of lateness, but this is contested by Metzger who argues that names may as often be omitted from later accounts as added.

Carson comments "In this instance Philip was the obvious person to ask: he came from the nearby town of Bethsaida (1:44). Specification of such details may therefore more reasonably be taken as evidence for the recollection of an eyewitness."

πόθεν interrog adv. from where, how

ἀγοράζω buy

ἄρτος, οὐ m bread, a loaf, food

φάγωσιν Verb, aor act subj, 3 pl ἐσθίω eat

Cf. the question of Moses in Num 11:13.

Verse 6

τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγεν πειράζων αὐτόν, αὐτὸς γὰρ ἦδει τί ἔμελλεν ποιεῖν.

πειράζω test, put to the test

ἦδει Verb, pluperf act indic, 3 s οἶδα know

μελλω be going, be about, intend

Verse 7

ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ Φίλιππος· Διακοσίων δηναρίων ἄρτοι οὐκ ἀρκοῦσιν αὐτοῖς ἵνα ἕκαστος βραχὺ τι λάβῃ.

ἀπεκρίθη Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s

ἀποκρίνομαι answer, reply, say

διακοσιοι, αι, α two hundred

δηνάριον, οὐ n denarius

Cf. Mk 6:37. The genitive is the genitive of price, "loaves to the value of..."

ἄρκεω be enough, be sufficient

ἕκαστος, η, ον each, every

βραχυς, εια, υ little, small; βραχυ τι a small amount

Verse 8

λέγει αὐτῷ εἷς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ, Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφὸς Σίμωνος Πέτρου·

εἷς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one, a

Verse 9

Ἔστιν παιδάριον ὧδε ὃς ἔχει πέντε ἄρτους κριθίνους καὶ δύο ὀψάρια· ἀλλὰ ταῦτα τί ἐστὶν εἰς τοσοῦτους;

παιδάριον, οὐ n boy

The word, a double diminutive, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The grammatical form does not require extreme youth; at Genesis 37:30 Joseph at the age of seventeen is described in the LXX as παιδάριον.

ὧδε adv here

πέντε (indeclinable) five

κριθίνος, η, ον made of barley

Cf. 2 Kings 4:42. Barley loaves were the cheap bread of the poorer classes.

Carson comments, "Some have seen in this detail an allusion to the miraculous feeding reported in 2 Kings 4:42-44: Jesus is a prophet greater than Elijah or Elisha."

δυο gen & acc δυο dat δυσιν two
ὄψαριον, ου n fish
τοσουτος, αυτη, ουτον / ουτο correlative adj
so much; pl so many

Verse 10

εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Ποιήσατε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀναπεσεῖν. ἦν δὲ χόρτος πολὺς ἐν τῷ τόπῳ. ἀνέπεσαν οὖν οἱ ἄνδρες τὸν ἀριθμὸν ὡς πεντακισχίλιοι.

ἀναπεσεῖν Verb, aor act infin ἀναπιτω sit,
sit at table
χορτος, ου m grass, vegetation
τοπος, ου m place

Confirms the note in v. 4 that it was spring.

ἄνηρ, ἄνδρος m man
ἀριθμος, ου m number, total

An accusative of specification.

πεντακισχίλιοι, αι, α five thousand

Cf. Mk 6:39-40. Carson comments, "The total number of the people may well have exceeded twenty thousand or more."

Verse 11

ἔλαβεν οὖν τοὺς ἄρτους ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ εὐχαριστήσας διέδωκεν τοῖς ἀνακειμένοις, ὁμοίως καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὄψαριων ὅσον ἠθελον.

ἔλαβεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s λαμβανω
εὐχαριστεω thank, give thanks
διέδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s διαδιδωμι
distribute, divide

The words and actions recall the last supper, cf. Mk 14:22; 1 Cor 11:23.

ἀνακειμαι be seated (at table)
ὁμοίως likewise, in the same way
ὄψαριον, ου n see v.9
ὅσος, η, ον correlative pronoun, as much as
θελω wish, will

"John stresses ... the lavishness of the supply: the people ate *as much as they wanted*, far outstripping the titbit that even two hundred *denarii* would have failed to supply (v. 7). So also the true bread from heaven who gives life to the world far outstrips the manna in the desert (vv. 30-33)." Carson.

Verse 12

ὡς δὲ ἐνεπλήσθησαν λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· Συναγάγετε τὰ περισσεύσαντα κλάσματα, ἵνα μή τι ἀπόληται.

ἐνεπλήσθησαν Verb, aor pass indic, 3 pl
ἐπι(μ)πλημι and ἐμπιπλω fill, satisfy

συναγάγετε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl
συναγω gather, gather together
περισσεύσαντα Verb, aor act ptc, n nom/acc
pl περισσευω be left over
κλάσμα, τος n fragment, piece
ἀπόληται Verb, aor midd subj ἀπολλυμι
destroy, lose; midd be lost, perish

Barrett, rather fancifully, suggests, "It seems not impossible that John is here speaking symbolically of the gathering of Christian disciples, with special reference to the eucharist, and of the will of Christ to preserve all from destruction (17:12; on ἀπολλυμαι see on 3:16)."

Carson says that the emphasis is on all having enough to eat. "This is the ample provision of the Lord who declares, 'My people will be filled with my bounty' (Jer 31:14)."

Verse 13

συνήγαγον οὖν, καὶ ἐγέμισαν δώδεκα κοφίνους κλασμάτων ἐκ τῶν πέντε ἄρτων τῶν κριθίνων ἃ ἐπερίσσευσαν τοῖς βεβρωκόσιν.

γεμίζω fill
δώδεκα twelve
κοφινος, ου m basket
κριθινος, η, ον see v.9
βεβρωκόσιν Verb, perf act ptc, m dat pl
βιβρωσκω eat

There is more left over at the end than was present at the beginning!

Verse 14

οἱ οὖν ἄνθρωποι ἰδόντες ὃ ἐποίησεν σημεῖον ἔλεγον ὅτι Οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

ἰδόντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl ὁραω
see

P⁷⁵ B it^a read ἃ ... σημεῖα, pl. instead of sing., due presumably to the influence of 6:2.

ἀληθως adv truly, in truth
προφητης, ου m prophet

Cf. Deut 18:15ff. "Several features of this chapter suggest that Jesus was the prophet 'like unto Moses'. He had given his people miraculous food, as Moses had fed his people in the wilderness (cf. 1 Cor. 10:3,16, where the food supplied by Moses is compared allegorically with the bread and wine of the Christian eucharist), and the comparison and contrast are worked out in detail in the discourse." Barrett.

Verse 15

Ἰησοῦς οὖν γνοὺς ὅτι μέλλουσιν ἔρχεσθαι καὶ
ἀρπάζειν αὐτὸν ἵνα ποιήσωσιν βασιλέα
ἀνεχώρησεν πάλιν εἰς τὸ ὄρος αὐτὸς μόνος.

γνοὺς Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s γινώσκω
μελλῶ see v.6

ἀρπάζω take by force, carry off

βασιλέα Noun, acc s βασιλεὺς, εὼς m king

"The kingship of Jesus is one of the main themes of the Johannine Passion Narrative (see on 18:33ff). There Jesus asserts that his kingship is not of this world (18:36); the kingship offered him here is one which he must renounce. Cf. his rejection of the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, in the Q temptation narrative (Matt 4:8 = Luke 4:5)." Barrett.

Carson comments, "The juxtaposition of v. 14 and v. 15 presupposes that the people who think that Jesus may well be the eschatological *Prophet* (v. 14) understand this Prophet's role to be simultaneously kingly. If the first prophet, Moses, had led the people out of slavery to Egypt, surely the second would help them escape servitude to Rome."

ἀναχωρεῶ withdraw, go away

ἄ* with OL MSS vg etc, read φεύγει, 'flees,' instead of ἀνεχώρησεν, 'withdrew.' The UBS committee considered that the support for the former reading is too slender for its adoption (Metzger, 211–12), but most modern commentators hold that the common reading is an obvious softening of φεύγει (so, e.g., Hoskyns, Bultmann, Barrett, Brown, Beasley-Murray).

πάλιν again, once more

ὄρος, οὐς n mountain, hill

μόνος, η, ον adj only, alone

Verses 1-15 – Postscript

Carson comments, "Mark and John are mutually supportive: each makes clear certain features of the other's account. Mark points out that just before the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus sent the twelve on a training mission throughout Galilee. The results were so spectacular that Herod Antipas was terribly upset, and wondered if John the Baptist, whom he had beheaded, had come back to life (Mk 6:7-30). In the light of his popularity with the crowds, Jesus had crossed over to the east bank of the lake, along with his disciples, in order to gain some respite from their pursuing attentions, and perhaps also to escape Herod's jurisdiction. But the surging crowd ran around the north end of the lake and met Jesus on the east bank: escaping from Herod was easier than escaping from the crowd. Jesus taught them and fed them, for 'he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd' (Mk 6:34). This does not so much mean that Jesus viewed them as a congregation without a pastor, as that he saw them as an army without a general (1 Ki 22:17). He well knew that the wrong sort of 'king' would not only divert them from the things that really mattered, but could lead them into a conflict with Rome from which they could not escape without a disastrous beating. All of this background, made clear in Mark, explains John 6:15. John does not bother to provide more details, most likely because they were largely irrelevant when he wrote: Jerusalem had already fallen, and the political setting was vastly different from when Jesus ministered and Mark wrote. Yet, ironically, it is John, not Mark, that preserves the conclusion that Jesus knew the people were going to try to make him king by force – a fitting capstone for, and corroboration of, Mark's account, and a compelling explanation of Mark 6:45.

"The real nature of Jesus' kingship becomes a major issue in the passion narrative (18:33ff.). The truth of the matter is that Jesus' kingdom was like no other (18:36). Jesus himself knew that the way his kingdom would triumph would not be by beating the enemy in siege warfare, but by dying and rising from the dead; 'he would go to Jerusalem not to wield the spear and bring the judgment, but to receive the spear thrust and bear the judgment' (Clowney). Perhaps he recognised in the mob's enthusiastic but unwelcome attention the same temptation that he had confronted in the wilderness (Mt 4:8-10; Lk 4:5-8). And so he fled, abandoning the crowd and (according to Mark) sending even his own disciples away, back across the lake, perhaps in fear that they too might become contaminated by the crowd's irrepressible but misguided enthusiasm."

Verse 16

Ὡς δὲ ὄψια ἐγένετο κατέβησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν,

ὄψια, ας f evening
καταβαινῶ come or go down, descend

Verse 17

καὶ ἐμβάντες εἰς πλοῖον ἤρχοντο πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης εἰς Καφαρναούμ. καὶ σκοτία ἦδη ἐγγόνει καὶ οὐπω ἐληλύθει πρὸς αὐτοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς,

ἐμβάντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl
ἐμβαινῶ get into, embark
πλοῖον, ου n boat, ship

"The durative, or perhaps the conative, force of the imperfect [ἤρχοντο] must be given weight: 'they were on their way', or perhaps, 'they were trying to go.'" Barrett.

περαν prep with gen across, to the other side

Capernaum was on the west side of the lake, hence the feeding probably took place on the east side, in a territory predominantly Gentile.

σκοτία, ας f darkness
ἦδη adv now, already
ἐγγόνει Verb, pluperf act indic, 3 s γινομαι
οὐπω not yet
ἐληλύθει Verb, pluperf act indic, 3 s ἐρχομαι

"The words *By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them*, though doubtless prosaically true, may also be symbolically laden: as in 3:2; 13:30, the darkness of night and the absence of Jesus are powerfully linked." Carson.

Verse 18

ἦ τε θάλασσα ἀνέμου μεγάλου πνέοντος διεγείρετο.

τε enclitic particle and, and so
ἀνεμος, ου m wind
μεγας, μεγαλη, μεγα large, great
πνεω blow (of wind)

There is abundant evidence for the suddenness with which storms hit lake Galilee. Carson comments, "The Sea of Galilee lies about six hundred feet below sea level. Cool air from the south-eastern tablelands can rush in to displace the warm moist air over the lake, churning up the water in a violent squall."

διεγείρετο Verb, imperf pass indic, 3 s
διεγειρω wake up, grow rough (of sea)

Verse 19

ἐληλακότες οὖν ὡς σταδίου εἴκοσι πέντε ἢ τριάκοντα θεωροῦσιν τὸν Ἰησοῦν περιπατοῦντα ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἐγγὺς τοῦ πλοίου γινόμενον, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν.

ἐληλακότες Verb, perf act ptc, m nom pl
ἐλαυνω row
σταδιοι, ων m (pl) stades, furlongs (about 200 metres)
εἴκοσι twenty
πεντε (indeclinable) five
ἦ or
τριακοντα thirty

The lake is 109 stadia long (12.5 miles) and 61 wide (7 miles) at its greatest breadth. Cf. Mk 6:47, 'in the middle of the lake.'

θεωρεω see, observe, notice
περιπατεω walk, walk about
ἐγγυς adv near
φοβεομαι fear, be afraid (of)

"He may have had in mind Job 9:8, but more obviously Ps 77:16, 19, which speaks of God coming in powerful theophany to the aid of his people at the Exodus: 'The waters saw thee, O God, they saw thee and writhed in anguish... Thy path was through the sea, thy way through mighty waters...' The Evangelist was describing an event in which he saw Jesus as the revelation of God coming to his disciples in distress – *in the second Exodus!*" Beasley-Murray.

Verse 20

ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐτοῖς· Ἐγώ εἰμι, μὴ φοβεῖσθε.

The use of Ἐγώ εἰμι here "bears no necessary theological baggage: it is the perfectly normal way to say 'It is I' – a point made clear when it appears on the lips of the man born blind after he is healed (9:9)." Carson.

Verse 21

ἤθελον οὖν λαβεῖν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ πλοῖον, καὶ
εὐθέως ἐγένετο τὸ πλοῖον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἰς ἣν
ὑπήγον.

θελω wish, will

λαβεῖν Verb, aor act infin λαμβανω

γη, γης f earth, land

ὑπαγω go

Barrett and Sanders suggest that the καὶ here is adversative and that the sense is, 'they wished to take him into the boat, but found immediately that they had reached the shore.' Sanders takes this to mean that there is no miracle in vv 15-21. Barrett says that it is more probable that John is recording a second miracle. Carson suggests there may here be "an allusion to Psalm 107:23-32 (especially v. 30, 'and he guided them to their desired haven')."