

The Church of the Servant King

Survey of the Bible Series – The Gospel of John (SB_JN6C_Many Disciples Depart)

Introduction (John 6:60-71)

We concluded our last lesson with an analysis of Jesus' discourse to the multitudes in which He compared Himself to the bread that He had miraculously produced to feed them. The multitudes wanted to receive food perpetually from Jesus and demanded perpetual food as a sign that evidenced the fact that He was the Messiah. As Jesus concluded His discourse, His statements were designed to shock his hearers to the point that only those who were truly humble and who sought the Truth would remain. All others would leave without seeking the Truth – the meaning of His statements such as “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you?” We know that Jesus was not speaking in literal terms here, but He was using an analogy or an illustration for believing in Him (cf. v. 29). Jesus' intended result was evidently accomplished. The curiosity seekers were separated from those who were truly interested in following Him and learning the Truth.

Many Disciples Depart (6:60-71)

The word “disciple” means learner and refers to any follower of a teacher or mentor. It doesn't necessarily mean that the learner was a believer (see v. 64). Some disciples continued to demonstrate faith through their obedience (8:31 – “If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed”). A few of the disciples were apostles (2:11 cf. Matt 10:1-2). The context of a passage will determine the meaning.

Jesus' statements were especially difficult for a Jew. The Mosaic Law explicitly prohibited drinking the blood of an animal on penalty of being cut off from the congregation (Lev 17:10-14). Of course, Jesus was not referring to His literal flesh and blood. Jesus first indicated that His flesh was the “living bread” which came down from heaven and would be given for the life of the world (v. 51). Then He indicated that whoever did not eat of His flesh and drink His blood would not have eternal life (vv. 53-54). The “eating” to which Jesus referred was equivalent to belief in Him (v. 47 cf. v. 29, 40). To anyone but the hardened unbeliever, it would have been clear that Jesus was contrasting the spiritual dimension with the physical dimension in an attempt to wrest the unbeliever from the blindness that was all too evident in their statements within the dialogue. To the hardened heart, the gospel message, no matter how it is presented “is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Co 1:18).

If the disciples could not accept His instruction in which He drew an analogy between the physical bread for which they longed and the spiritual provision made through Him, they certainly would be astounded at His resurrection and ascension. This is one of several references to the Ascension in the Gospel of John (cf. 3:13; 8:21; 16:10; 17:11; 20:17) although the Ascension is not recorded in the Gospel. In addition, on the morning of His resurrection, Mary clung to the resurrected Jesus to keep Him from vanishing again and Jesus reassured her that He had not yet departed permanently to the Father (20:17). Jesus had indicated on at least two occasions recorded by John that He intended to one day depart to be with the Father (14:3; 17:11). The certainty of Jesus' resurrection and ascension was an especially important fact given the number of times in His discourse in John 6 that He mentions that He will resurrect believers in Him at the “last day” (v. 39, 44, 54) and eternal life or everlasting life (v. 27, 47, 50, 54, 58). The connection between Jesus' resurrection and ascension and the eternal life that He provides to those who have believed in Him is vitally related to John's purpose in writing the Gospel (20:31).

Jesus' reference to His betrayal (v. 64) is later connected to Judas (v. 71). It was Jesus' spiritual discernment that made Him aware of who would betray Him and the fact that there were unbelievers among His disciples.

Like Jesus' statement in verse 44 that "no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him," Jesus' statement in verse 65 that "no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father" has been used by Calvinist theologians to support their definition of the total depravity of man, unconditional election, and irresistible grace.¹ It requires one to eisegete or impose their own system of religion upon these passages in order to derive an interpretation that man is incapable of believing the gospel (i.e. total depravity) or that God selects a few (i.e. unconditional election) or that those who are drawn to God will be the elect (i.e. irresistible grace). Verse 65 probably explains what is meant by Jesus' statement in verse 44 that the Father draws men to Jesus. The Father draws (v. 44) by giving the opportunity to believe (v. 65).² The word "granted" (Gr. *didomi*) in verse 65 means "give." Verse 65 "is not a giving of the sinner to the Son, but a giving to the sinner (given *him*), making it possible for him to come to Christ."³ The context makes it perfectly clear that while the opportunity to believe is given to the unbeliever, it is the responsibility of the unbeliever who is being drawn to believe (e.g. Jn 6:35-36, 40). The Holy Spirit has a role to play in this drawing process (v. 63 cf. 1 Co 2:11, 14).

Once again in verses 68-69, we see a strong similarity between Peter's confession and the purpose of the Gospel of John (20:31). It appears that John is emphasizing his purpose and theme throughout the Gospel. This statement by Peter as representative of the Twelve highlights their commitment and their separation (with the exception of Judas) from those other disciples who were either non-spiritual or unbelievers. Even though their faith faltered at the trials and crucifixion of Jesus, it was an aberration or the stumbling of the immature believer and not a choice to change course and direction in their spiritual lives. In effect, Peter's statement committed the Twelve to a settled stand for Christ.

Principles and Applications

Principle: There is a vast difference between curiosity and "abiding" (v. 56 cf. 69) faith or trust.

Application: Are you just a curious believer or do you have the resolve that Peter expressed in v. 69? Are you trusting in Christ and objectively viewing your life from His perspective?

Principle: True discipleship involves yieldedness to the personal demands of a life that glorifies Christ and a personal spiritual participation in the death of Christ (Ro 12:1-2).

Application: Does your life reflect a death to selfish desires and deference to others?

¹ For an excellent rebuttal of the Calvinist position on this passage (Jn 6:37ff) with particular focus on verses 44 and 65, see Dave Hunt, *What Love is This? Calvinism's Misrepresentation of God* (Sisters, Oregon: Loyal Publishing, 2002), 329-346.

² *Ibid.*, 344.

³ *Ibid.*