

## John 6:41-71

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

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

#### L. The Fourth Discourse – The Bread of Life (6:22-40)

#### Reactions and Responses (6:41-71)

Coming out of the Bread of Life discourse, Jesus encounters a little bit of resistance and confusion, both from the Jews (vv. 41-59) and His own disciples (vv. 60-71).

### **The Jews (vv. 41-59)**

The Jews, for their part, couldn't get past the idea that Jesus came down from heaven. After all, they reasoned, they could identify His parents! This Man speaks as if He is God in the flesh, and they could go visit His mother if they wanted to!

Jesus responds by continuing to elaborate upon what He had said earlier in the chapter. First, *no one can come to Me unless the Father . . . draws him* (v. 44; cf. vv. 37, 39). The economy between the Father and the Son is that the Father *gives* us to the Son. Between the Father and us, the Father *draws* us to the Son. When Jesus says *no one can come to Me unless*, we should take it to mean precisely that. The only way any of us believe and have eternal life is if the Father extends His grace to us (cf. Eph 2:4-9).

Second, once the Father *draws* us, we believe and have eternal life that cannot be taken away. Jesus again says *I will raise him up at the last day* (v. 44; cf. vv. 39-40, 54). This is the continued grace of God at work in our lives. If we were capable of losing our eternal life, if it was up to us to maintain our eternal life, each and every one of us surely would. To think otherwise is full of self-deceit! God is truly the Author of salvation, and we are wholly dependent upon Him every step of the way. The conduit of that grace is belief (v 47). What an oasis in the desert of religions that rely on works and self-improvement!

Returning to the bread metaphor, Jesus once again states that He is *the bread of life* (v. 48). Unlike the manna in the wilderness that came from heaven, when one partakes of this Bread from heaven, that one will not die. Of course, physical death is still on the table, but spiritual death is removed.<sup>1</sup> The Bread that accomplishes this is Jesus' flesh, *which I shall give for the life of the world* (v. 51). This causes the Jews more indigestion. Are people now to become cannibals? *How can this Man give us His flesh to eat* (v. 52)?

Jesus once again answers them, but He now leans into their difficult. Instead of clarifying what He meant, He continues on with the description in vv. 53-58. We kinda understand where the disciples are coming from if we peaked ahead to v. 60: *This is a hard saying; who can understand it?* Yet, essentially, what it comes down to is the symbolism that He ultimately will present at the Last Supper with the institution of the Bread and the Cup (cf. Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20).

To *eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood* is to partake in His propitiatory sacrifice on the cross. Jesus wasn't going to offer eternal life by some royal edict or decree. He wasn't going to set up a new sacrificial system or list of things to do or not do. Jesus was going to offer up His own body as a

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<sup>1</sup>Physical death is "the first death." Spiritual death, or eternal separation from God, is *the second death* (Rev 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8).

sacrifice, and it would be *given for you* (Luke 22:19). Likewise, His own blood was going to be shed. This blood would be the *blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins* (Matt 26:28). When we participate in His sacrifice through belief we *will live* (John 6:57) and *live forever* (v. 58). The Bread and the Cup that we celebrate today should cause us to reflect and remember upon that price paid for our sins.

### **The Disciples (vv. 60-71)**

Yet, as we know, the disciples themselves had a difficult time with what Jesus was saying. They didn't have the benefit of growing up in a church that celebrated the Bread and the Cup! This is old hat to us!

Jesus once again underscores the gracious work of the Triune God in eternal life. The Son is the sacrifice, the Bread. The Father is the one who *grants* someone to come to Jesus (v. 65, same word as in vv. 37, 39; although I like how the NIV translates it here as *enabled!*). And the Spirit is the One *who gives life* (v. 63); the One who affects that inward change in us. What role remains for us? Jesus says *the flesh profits nothing* (v. 63).<sup>2</sup>

Whether it was the hints of cannibalism, the confounding statements, the offense of grace, or the outright accusation that *some of you who do not believe* (v. 64), *from that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more* (v. 66). Jesus, turning to the twelve, asked them if they wanted to go away, as well (v. 67). Simon Peter answers for the group:

*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Peter knows, as do the rest, that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. He is the long-awaited One of which the Old Testament prophesied. There wasn't going to be anyone else to follow that was going to do what Jesus was doing and would do. As Peter would go on to say in Acts 4:12, *Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* It's Jesus or nothing!

Yet, the day and chapter close with Jesus' foreshadowing that *one of them is a devil* (v. 70). Jesus knew already that Judas *would betray Him*. It was going to happen, and events couldn't unfold any other way.

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<sup>2</sup>This parallels what we read in Ephesians. Eternal life is the work of the Father (1:3-6) *to the praise of the glory of His grace*; the Son (1:7-12) *to the praise of His glory*; and the Spirit (1:13-14) *to the praise of His glory*. As for us, the flesh? We *were dead in trespasses and sins* (2:1-3).