

THE RESPONSE TO THE BREAD OF LIFE DISCOURSE
(John 6:60-71)

³⁵ And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. ³⁷ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ³⁸ For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. ³⁹ And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up the last day.
John 6:35-39

In Chapter six of the Gospel of John we have seen the discourse which occurred between Jesus and the multitude of Jews whom he fed in the mountain area around Bethsaida and who followed him across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum. Jesus scolded them because they were following him only because they ate the bread and were filled. (v.26)

It is clear that the multitude were generally unbelievers. Their motives were purely physical. (v.26) They had a works mentality. (v.27) They would not believe without a sign. (v.30) They tempted Jesus to match the miracle of the manna. (v.31) Jesus called them unbelievers. (v.36) They murmured at him because he said he was the bread of life. (v.41) They denied that he had come down from heaven. (v.42) They fought among themselves about his sayings. (v.52) They interpreted his words literally, completely missing the spiritual meaning. (vs.34; 52)

Now Jesus taught some very substantial doctrine during this discourse. And let's review briefly.

1. Spiritual meat is far superior to physical meat. (v.37)

As necessary as physical meat is, the benefits are only temporary. Spiritual meat on the other hand, has eternal benefit. This truth is illustrated by the fact that the fathers ate manna in the wilderness and they ultimately died. (v.49) You can see that the manna kept them alive only for a short time. It had no lasting effect. On the other hand, if anyone eats the true bread, he will never hunger and never thirst (v.35) and will not die. (v.50)

2. The true bread (the spiritual meat) is none other than Jesus. (v.33; v.35)

The true bread is not a wafer, but it is a person. Life eternal is found in a person and under this figure, the person must be eaten. That is, you must partake of this person. He is life and you must take him in.

3. Partaking of the true bread is described by the words coming, (v.35, 37) eating his flesh and drinking his blood, (vs. 53) and believing. (v.40)

Obviously, the word "coming" is a figure of speech. Jesus didn't mean that you must come to Capernaum to be saved. It is not a physical coming. It is a spiritual coming. And like much of the Scripture when it uses figures, you must evaluate what is the true meaning of the figure.

Likewise, the phrases "eat his flesh" and "drink his blood" are figures of speech. Jesus didn't mean that you must get a knife and fork and take a slice of his flesh and eat it. Nor did he mean that you must draw his blood and drink it. And we must evaluate what it means to eat his flesh and drink his blood.

Fortunately for us, Jesus tells us exactly what he means in this discourse by coming and eating and drinking. All of these figures are summed up in a non-metaphorical term in verse 40. And that term is believe. "He

that believeth on him may have everlasting life.” This comports with all other Scripture on the matter. So, one comes to Jesus and eats his flesh and drinks his blood by believing in him.

4. Only the elect will come to Christ. (v.37)

There is an explanation for the varied response to the gospel. Some come and some don't come, and the explanation is that some are given to the Son and some are not.

5. All the elect will come to Christ. (v.37)

Not one of the elect will fail to come. When it says “*All that* the Father giveth me, it is the singular tense in the Greek. And it is the whole group of people that is in view. That whole class called the elect, they will come. All of the elect are an entity and they will come. When we all get to heaven, the elect will be there. The whole group will be there and each individual one will be there. There can be no failure along the way. God has elected them all. He has given them all to Christ. And they all will come.

6. The elect will come to Christ by the drawing power of God. (v.44)

This wondrous work of God in and upon the elect separates them from all others. God draws the elect but does not draw others. And when the elect enjoy the fruits of heaven for all eternity, not one of the elect will ever say, “I did it.” Rather, he will say, the Father drew me to Christ. All glory goes to God on account of the redeemed.

7. Those who are not drawn cannot come. (v.44)

Just as a fish cannot fly, neither of his own nature can a sinner come to Christ. A sinner's disposition is so hateful to God that he would rather die than come. He prefers a bar to a church. He prefers to curse God rather than bless him. He prefers the pleasures of sin to fellowship with Christ. And he will not come.

All of these doctrines were taught by Jesus in this discourse. And you are going to notice that the elect of God receive his doctrine joyfully, but the others reject it.

The response of the reprobates to the discourse

Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying: who can hear it?
John 6:60

When it says *disciples*, it does not mean the twelve disciples. You will notice in verse 67 that Jesus later spoke to the twelve. But here, “disciples” means those who were following him; those who outwardly adhered to him but who for the most part were not disciples inwardly.

You will notice that many of the disciples found his discourse a “hard saying.” Now it is not that they found his words difficult to understand (as many interpret it). Rather, it means that they found his words disagreeable. They were offensive words. Jesus told them they were unbelievers. He told them to stop murmuring. (v.43) And he implied that they could not believe because they were not elect of God. (v.37) They also were offended by the notion that they must partake of Christ for eternal life. For the Jews never saw Christ in the law. They worshipped a religious system of works, never seeing that Christ was the end of the law. And so, they said, “This is a hard saying. This is an offensive saying.” (See v.61, *Doth this offend you?*)

Notice also, that they were murmuring against his doctrine.

When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?
John 6:61

This is how the reprobate react to the truth of God. They murmur and grumble at it. They strive amongst themselves over the words of God (v.52) because they cannot bear it? (v.60)

Have you ever tried to have a theological discussion with an unbeliever? Unless the Lord is drawing him, he is completely unable to grasp the truth. You might as well be talking a foreign language because he has no capacity to bear it. His darkened mind will not allow it and his preference for sin will not allow it. And at the end of the discussion he is offended.

What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?
John 6:62

Jesus here heaps offense upon offense. If they are offended that he claims to be the true bread come down from heaven, they will be utterly offended at the doctrine that he shall ascend back into heaven. They have already denied that he came down from heaven. (v.42) And now, Jesus implies that he is going back there.

Jesus was not shy about heaping hot coals upon their heads. He was not afraid of men. Neither was he afraid of offending them. Sometimes it seems that he intentionally antagonized them.

By the way, Jesus did not promise that they would see him ascend. But he does imply that he *will* ascend and he asks them hypothetically, “Would you be offended at that if you saw it?”

It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

John 6:63

In this verse there is a connection to the ascension of the previous verse. Of course, the Holy Spirit was to come after the ascension of Jesus. While Jesus was on the earth, the Holy Spirit was not come. But when Jesus ascended the Holy Spirit came to carry on the work of Christ on earth. And Jesus seems to be giving a hint of that arrangement here.

But the principle meaning of this verse is that the doctrine of Christ (his words) are Spirit generated words. His doctrine is life because it is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit of God. Spiritual things are better than fleshly things and his doctrine falls into the category of spiritual things.

But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

John 6:64

This verse reinforces the predestinarianism of Jesus’ teaching. You see, the elect will believe and the reprobate will not believe. And all of this was known by Jesus from the beginning. You see, there was never a chance that the elect would not believe. And there was never a chance that the reprobate would believe. “No man can come to me, except the Father draw him.” And this explains, from the divine perspective, why some did not believe and why some were offended at the truth.

And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father.

John 6:65

This is why Jesus made this statement. It was to explain the unbelief of the Jews.

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

John 6:66

Here we find that unbelievers will finally disavow the faith. It says that they went back. They went back where they came from. They went back to Judaism. They went back to the law. They went back to their sinful way of life. They went back into their ignorance. And they walked no more with him. That is, they left off from chasing him around the countryside. And they left off from trying to follow his teaching.

The response of the twelve to the discourse

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

John 6:67-69

We find here that the apostles had a very different reaction to the discourse than did the unbelieving Jews. And this illustrates the difference between the elect and the reprobate. Peter spoke on behalf of the apostles and he acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God. He also acknowledged that the doctrine of Christ were the words of eternal life. (v.67)

How different this was from the reaction of the Jews. The apostles didn't murmur. The apostles didn't challenge his credentials. They simply believed. (v.69)

Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

John 6:70, 71

Jesus seems to emphasize here the extreme danger of apostasy. He has already given adequate explanation for the apostasy of the multitude. They were not given to Christ by the Father. But what about the twelve? Jesus personally chose them and apostasy is even found in the ranks of the twelve disciples. Though Judas was chosen to walk the highways with Jesus, he was not chosen for eternal life. In the end it was shown that even Judas would go away.

This shows that apostasy is even possible within the ranks of the church. It is so easy to deceive ourselves and others. But, Christ can never be deceived. Notice that Jesus knew all along. Jesus knew when none of the apostles knew. Probably Judas didn't even know. But Jesus did. And the Father knew the ones that he had given to Christ.

Verse 68. Simon Peter answered him. With characteristic ardour and promptness. Peter was probably one of the oldest of the apostles, and it was his character to be first and most ardent in his professions.

To whom shall we go? This implied their firm conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he alone was able to save them. It is one of Peter's noble confessions--the instinctive promptings of a pious heart and of ardent love. There was no one else who could teach them. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the scribes were corrupt, and unable to guide them aright; and, though the doctrines of Jesus were mysterious, yet they were the only doctrines that could instruct and save them.