

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #32

John 6:52-71

A good honest doctor will threaten sick people who do not take their medicine with death. I have actually heard a doctor say to a person if you do not take this medicine you will die. The world is totally diseased by sin and it is our responsibility to threaten it with eternal death if people reject Jesus Christ. But if you do that, you will not be popular or considered to be a good caring minister.

We live in a country that basically says - you have the right to believe whatever you want to believe about God. You have freedom of religion. There are many people who actually believe that all religion is good and all is designed to take you to the same place. All religions are one big happy family and none are more right than another. Jesus Christ did not believe that, He did not teach that and that is part of the reason He was killed.

Make absolutely no mistake about this - **God will not cut you any slack when it comes to gaining eternal life. It will only come one way - by believing totally, completely and only on Jesus Christ.** If a person does not believe on Jesus Christ he will eternally die and burn. Jesus Christ stressed this point and He did not back away from people who disagreed with Him. He called it straight. He took them head on and never is that more evident than in John 6. The main point that we see is this:

JESUS CHRIST CONTINUALLY COMMUNICATED THE REALITY THAT RECEIVING HIM WAS THE ONLY MEANS OF HAVING ETERNAL LIFE AND HE COMMUNICATED THIS FOR THE MOST PART TO PEOPLE WHO REFUSED TO BELIEVE HIM BECAUSE THEY WERE THE NON-ELECT.

Jesus Christ did not view all religions as being good. He did not lessen His message to attract more people. He drove home His theme - believe on Him or you will not have eternal life. Now Jesus Christ is using a metaphor in this section of Scripture - the metaphor is eating bread.

The Jews were arguing that His miracle of feeding the 5000 men wasn't enough (v. 31) and that He said He was the bread of life who had come down out of heaven (v. 41). They wanted to see some Mosaic manna type miracle. So Christ took this opportunity to stress the fact that **the only way to have a relationship with God was to eat a bread and blood that was from Him.** Now the metaphor of eating the bread of life is equivalent to believing on Jesus Christ for salvation (6:47/51). The idea of eating Christ's flesh and drinking Christ's blood is the idea of having Christ in you through faith. **THIS HAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH A COMMUNION SERVICE.** Although the communion service is a sacred ordinance given by Jesus Christ to Paul to the Church (I Corinthians 11), this is not what this passage is about and this may be proved three ways: 1) The Lord's Supper had not yet been instituted; 2) The Lord is addressing primarily unbelievers and the Lord's Supper is only for believers; 3) The issue being discussed in this context is the eternal salvation of the lost and not the fellowship communion in the Church. We agree with many, such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Augustine that this has nothing to do with the Lord's Supper.

In order for one to have eternal life, one must be so united with Jesus Christ that what He accomplished by His broken body and shed blood is actually applied to your life. This only happens by faith, by receiving Him as personal Savior (1:12). **In this passage Christ also brings His blood into play because it will be the shedding of His blood that can take away sins.** Now Jesus responds to three different groups of people in these verses.

RESPONSE #1 – The response of Jesus to the arguing Jews. 6:52-59

Now the Jews began to argue about how one goes about eating the flesh of Jesus Christ (6:52). This very verse caused one person to say - see you should not interpret the Bible too literally. Actually just the opposite is proved here - you should interpret every word and context literally. If you read the context of John 6 you cannot help but see that it literally is teaching that you may eat of the bread of life by believing on Jesus Christ. This point is stated so many times, you would have to be as blind as a bat not to see it - 6:29, 35, 36, 40, 47. Had these people interpreted Christ's words literally, they would not be arguing about how to eat His flesh.

This actually is a very important question because one's eternal life hinges on the answer to it. The verb "argue" means they were fighting, quarreling, disputing with others of the same kind in a stand against Jesus Christ (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 280-281). If you present truth to someone not interested in receiving truth, you cause people to become angry. They murmur, and argue and want you gone.

Keep in mind that Christ had been preaching faith in Him alone is what can save one from sins. The Jews did not like this message, and now they were arguing about his metaphor of Him being the bread of life. It is interesting how Christ responds to the Jews. He does not change the metaphor or water down His teaching just because it makes them mad. As Dr. James Montgomery Boice said, He does not tone down the teaching just to make it more palatable (*Gospel of John*, Vol. 2, p. 524). In fact, He makes six emphatic points using the metaphor.

(Emphatic Point #1) - One cannot have life in oneself so one must get life by partaking of Jesus Christ. 6:53

Notice He begins with the "truly, truly" formula which indicates dogmatic certainty. He follows that up with a strong Greek conjunction "unless" which makes this very narrow with absolutely no flexibility. Now remember, they are arguing about the problem of eating Christ's flesh, so Jesus adds more fuel to things by adding you must also "drink" His blood.

Now the verbs "eat" and "drink" are aorist tense, meaning you must only do this one time. You must believe on Jesus Christ at one point of time and if one doesn't, then he lives in a continual state of "having no life" (present tense). If you do eat or drink one time, you then live in a continual state of having eternal life which is illustrated by the present tense participles "eat" and "drink" in verses 54 and 56. So every person is in a continual state of either having no life or eternal life and the contingency factor is believing or not believing on Jesus Christ.

What Jesus says is that some how you must have some kind of relationship with Jesus Christ that will intimately link you with His broken body and shed blood. You cannot get life in any way by yourself. Your works will not give you life. But Christ's body and blood work can give you life.

God expects people to grasp the significance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This is precisely why there is a specific ordinance given to the Church called the Lord's Supper. Jesus is very clear in this verse you have "no life in yourselves." You do not inherit everlasting life by your works, by your religion or by your goodness. There is no possibility of you gaining life.

(Emphatic Point #2) - One who does intimately connect himself to the body and blood of Jesus Christ will have eternal life and a life resurrection. 6:54

Now I want you to notice the other verse in this context which mentions eternal life and resurrection - **verse 40**. Notice the way to get this life- see Christ for who He is and believe on Him. This is how you connect yourself intimately to Jesus Christ.

(Emphatic Point #3) - Jesus Christ's body and blood are the only elements that can truly give life. 6:55

Faith in Jesus Christ is the only true way to be saved from your sins. It is the only way to life. **Faith in Jesus Christ is the only true way to your salvation. Any other way is false!**

(Emphatic Point #4) - One who believes on Christ abides in Christ and Christ abides in Him. 6:56

There is a living union between you and Jesus Christ the very moment you believe in Him. The moment you believe on Jesus Christ you have an immediate and intimate connection to and with Jesus Christ. Now the context clearly connects this to the work of the Holy Spirit (v. 63). **Spirit baptism, which puts you into Christ, and Spirit indwelling, which puts Christ into you, occurs the very moment you believe (John 7:37-39).** These two events occur at one time and the emphasis Jesus is making here is not upon a personal feeling, but a Divinely revealed reality.

(Emphatic Point #5) - One who believes in Christ, God the Son, will have life with and from God the Father. 6:57

Any life connection that any person actually has with God the Father will be due to a relationship with God the Son. Life with the Father comes from having life from the Son and as Dr. John Calvin said, "The first source of life is in the Father" (John, Vol. 17, p. 268). The only way to get this life is to personally take Jesus Christ into your life. Spiritual life exists only in a union with Jesus Christ. God the Father gives you life and you unite with God the Son. This life connection with God is not because of us, it is because of Christ.

(Emphatic Point #6) - Jesus Christ is the living bread who can give eternal life which no physical bread can give. 6:58

The people who physically ate physical bread from heaven, manna, all died. That is the way it is for people who live under the law, they all die. But if you live in a union with Jesus Christ, you will have life. The person who spiritually eats the bread of life shall live forever. The Greek text is emphatic here in that Jesus Christ is "the bread, the specific bread which came down out from within heaven." Jesus Christ is the God-life, heavenly bread who is the only One who can give life. Moses never came down out of heaven, Jesus Christ did. Eternal life is not found in Moses.

Now carefully notice **verse 59**, Jesus is teaching these things in the synagogue in Capernaum. The synagogue, which should have been a wonderful place of worship for Jesus Christ, was a battlefield. It was all-out war when He was there teaching. Jesus is broadcasting this “life/death” message right in the face of the religious leaders. The reason He did this is this is the “truly, truly” truth.

RESPONSE #2 – The response of Jesus to many disciples. 6:60-66

When many of Christ’s own disciples heard this discussion - they said this is too difficult to even listen to. What is so difficult - believe on Jesus Christ, receive Jesus Christ and be so linked to His broken body and shed blood that you have eternal life. Christ’s own disciples were grumbling about His strong teaching. (Strong teaching does not tickle ears, it goes deep to the soul.)

Christ makes a series of statements to His disciples that will actually cause them to abandon Him (6:66). Jesus is not interested in watering down truth to make disciples feel good about themselves. He presents truth and if they don't like it - they can take off, which they do. A true Christ-like teacher will never change truth to appease hearers. He will present truth even if it offends hearers. There are five points He communicates:

(Point #1) - You are stumbling in your relationship with Me because of My teaching. 6:61

When you reject teaching that is true, or you think it is too difficult for you to figure out - you stumble over the truth. As teaching gets deeper, there are more dropouts. Martin Luther said ministers who preach the cross, must expect the offense of the cross. If all people always applaud your preaching, you have the right to be suspect of whether or not you are preaching truth. Do not miss this. The thing that will trip up your progress for God will be your response to God’s Word. At some point, you will be forced to decide, do I accept God’s Word or my own opinions. The tragedy for most here, is they stuck with their religious opinions.

(Point #2) - Would you believe My teaching if you saw Me ascending to the place where I was before? 6:62

There are a couple of ways we may contextually apply this: 1) You are grumbling right now about my teaching, but if I ascended to heaven right now, you would have no hope of redemption. 2) Do you think that you would believe what I say if you actually saw Me ascend?

We may certainly give an answer to this question, by asking another. Did Christ’s ascension cause a massive revival of belief? According to Acts 1:9 and 15, there were about 120 people who embraced Christ’s teaching. Seeing Him ascend, didn’t cause a massive evangelistic revival.

(Point #3) - The Spirit of God gives life through the presentation of the Word of God. 6:63

The Scriptures are living and active and the agent that makes the Scriptures alive is the Holy Spirit. No matter how deep the words are in meaning, the Spirit of God uses an accurate presentation of the Word to give life. Works of the flesh do not profit anyone.

By the way, if they would have been connected to the Holy Spirit, they would have understood the metaphor.

(Point #4) - There are some of you disciples who do not believe in Me. 6:64

Someone has wisely said, “all is not gold that glitters.” All do not really love Jesus Christ and God’s Word who shine forth like they do. There are always phony disciples in any true work of God. You can count on that. Unbelief hangs around for awhile, but eventually it surfaces and often in betrayal.

(Point #5) - No one can even come to Christ unless God the Father brings that person to Christ. 6:65-66

Don’t miss the theology of verse 65. It does not say no one “will” come to Christ apart from God the Father, it says no one “can” come apart from His Divine Election. Make sure you get this point, **no unbeliever desires to believe on Jesus Christ, his natural desire is to not believe on Jesus Christ. His natural desire is to proudly rely upon self and religion.**

These guys did not understand what Christ was talking about because the Father had not actually brought them to Christ. Christ has presented deep truth about His body and blood and about election and **notice verse 66 - as a result they withdrew**. The final straw was the doctrine of election. That cleared out the group and it can also clear people out of the church. There is nothing so discouraging to a real truth teacher than to have people you thought were with you abandon you. It is humiliating and you do take it personally.

Why? Why did they abandon Jesus Christ? Because He taught the truth and it went against the grain of what they believed. **He stressed faith only in Him and would not accept their works.** Jesus Christ was a “stone of stumbling” to these people, which is exactly what Isaiah predicted (Isaiah 8:14). So they left Him. As Dr. Warren Wiersbe said, they went back to their old life, old religion and their old hopeless situation (*Be Alive*, p. 82).

Sometimes even God’s people think about withdrawing from a commitment to Jesus Christ to go back to their old ways. Perhaps you are in that state of thinking right now. You are in a rut and you are thinking about withdrawing from your commitment to Christ. What is it that you are going to withdraw to? Your former life? Do you think that your former pursuits will end up making you happy? Did your former life that included your goals and ambitions and sins such as alcohol, drugs or sex ever make you more happy or fulfilled than Jesus Christ? I think not. It was your former life that brought you to Jesus Christ. If you abandon fellowship with Him you’ll go right back to being empty.

Let me make an important observation - **your willingness to listen to and embrace deep doctrinal truth, specifically about Jesus Christ, determines whether or not you have a real relationship with God.** People who do not have a real relationship with God will not embrace deep doctrine, they don’t want deep doctrine and they buck against it.

RESPONSE #3 – The response of Jesus to His twelve disciples. 6:67-71

When Christ saw many people take off - He said to the twelve, “Do you want to go with them?” **No one can be neutral when it comes to Jesus Christ and this question makes that clear.**

Peter spoke up, for all the twelve and he said where else would we go to learn about eternal life because you are the only One who has the words to teach us (6:68). **There is nowhere else to go to find eternal life for only Jesus Christ can give it.** Peter said we do believe in You that You are the Holy One of God. Carefully notice the chronology of verse 69, first you believe and then you come to know what you believe. It is belief that brings certainty. Unbelief is not certain of anything.

In verse 70, Christ makes a profound point - Yes, you have believed on Me because I chose . you. The Father sanctioned you coming to Me and I chose you and one of you that we chose is a devil. Of course Christ was speaking of Judas, who was one of the twelve chosen by Christ to betray Him, so He could have His body broken and blood shed.

The sovereignty of God is amazing here. Jesus is the bread of life and He must have His body broken and His blood shed to give us life. In order for Christ to be crucified, someone must betray Him. So a Sovereign choice was made that a devil-disciple would be permitted to travel with the other disciples. This devil-disciple would ultimately be used as a puppet in God's hands for the greatest blow the Devil ever suffered was when God the Son went to the cross for our sins. In fact, the choice of Judas was a fulfillment of the prophetic plan of God (John 17:12). Why would God permit a devil-disciple to travel with His precious Son and with the real disciples? The answer is to fulfill His Word and His program.

Judas traveled with Jesus Christ for over 3 years and He was an agent of Satan. We cannot overlook this fact. In any true work of God, we may expect there will always be a few Devil-agents. They may have been in the church 3 months, 3 years or 30 years. They have not truly come to terms with their sinfulness and have not really believed on Jesus Christ.