

The Gospel of John (42); The Fourth Discourse: Jesus, the Bread of Life (4)

Introduction:

Let us turn once again to John 6. This teaching discourse of Jesus begins with verse 26 and continues until verse 71 at the end of the chapter. Today is the fourth Lord's Day in which we have given attention to this passage. When we began considering this episode several weeks ago, we proposed an outline of the contents, the outline that we have been using each Sunday. Here it is once again:

- I. Doing the work of God (6:26-29)
- II. God the Father sent Jesus to give eternal life to His elect. (6:30-40)
- III. The Father gives eternal life to the one who believes on His Son. (6:41-51)
- IV. No one has eternal life except through "feeding" upon Jesus Christ (6:52-59)
- V. Only those enabled by God's sovereign grace will believe on Jesus Christ unto eternal life (6:60-71)

We have already worked through the first two divisions of this outline. Today we will consider the third division contained in verses 41 through 51, which sets forth the theme that ***The Father gives eternal life to the one who believes on His Son.*** I pray that the Lord will enable us to see the extraordinary importance of what is before us. There can be no greater subject to consider. There can be no greater truth to understand and embrace wholly. This literally is a life and death issue for us; even an eternal life and eternal death matter. From our vantage point as fallen, sinful human beings, the issue set before us in these verses is the determiner of our eternal destiny.

In these verses we will consider today we have more clearly and fully set before us the full identity of Jesus as God incarnate, that He is one person with two natures--one divine and one human. . Now, the incarnation is a great mystery to us, one of those inexplicable teachings of the Scripture that we believe, that we do not doubt, but that we have difficulty understanding, yet alone explaining. But understanding and believing that Jesus is both God and Man in one person is one of the essentials of the Christian faith. This matter is the great portal (door) to enter everlasting life, life within the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus. Every true believer embraces this truth. God the Father Himself has taught every soul that truly comes to Him to believe this truth and embrace it. One cannot be a true Christian, if he or she does not believe in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, that He is both God and man in one person. The revelation of Jesus as a person with both divine and human natures is one of the major themes of this Fourth Gospel.

Let us read our passage before considering carefully its details. Here is John 6:41 through 51.

⁴¹The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." ⁴²And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

⁴³Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. ⁴⁴No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. ⁴⁶Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. ⁴⁷Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

The themes set forth here, that Jesus Christ “came down from heaven”, that God the Father is sovereign in bestowing salvation, that faith in Jesus Christ results in the gift of eternal life, are themes already introduced in our passage. What we have in these verses are these themes clarified and enhanced before us. As a result, these truths may be pressed more strongly upon your conscience, if you have not yet believed on Him. Or, these truths may enhance our understanding of our Lord and Savior more firmly, those of us who have already come to know Him savingly. Here we are reminded and reaffirmed that we are the objects of God’s loving, powerful work of grace toward us and in us. And so, let us consider that...

III. The Father gives eternal life to the one who believes on His Son. (6:41-51)

Last Lord’s Day we concluded with the words of our Lord recorded in verses 35 through 40. Let us read them again to give us our context:

³⁵And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. ³⁶But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. ³⁷All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

We read beginning in verse 41 that...

1. The crowd reacted to Jesus due to His claim of His preexistence in heaven (6:41-42).

In response to the words that Jesus had spoken to the crowd, there was a reaction against Jesus and a rejection of His claims. We read,

⁴¹The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, “I am the bread which came down from heaven.” ⁴²And they said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”

The crowd actually confirmed Jesus’ accusation of their depraved condition by their reaction to Him. He had declared that in spite of the very clear and undeniable evidence that God had laid before them, they had failed to believe on Him. He had said to them, “But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe” (6:36). We see that being an eye witness to the person of Jesus, even being in the presence of Him performing miracles, such as the miraculous feeding of the 5,000, will not produce true believers in Jesus Christ. Yes, it will gather a crowd. It will fascinate them and cause them to wonder at what they see. It may even result in them becoming quite enthusiastic, but superficial “followers” for a time, but for a sinner to see Jesus perform a miracle outside of him, will not produce true faith inside of him. True faith in Jesus Christ is the result of God doing a miracle of saving grace *within* a person, not of Him doing a miracle *outside* a person. A sinner needs God to create new life in him, whereby He draws that sinner to faith in Jesus Christ.

Now I would like us to take notice of a subtle modification of how John relates this story to us. The Holy Spirit moved John the writer of this Gospel to enhance the teachings of Jesus more clearly to his readers even as he sought to intensify the opposition to Jesus within the narrative. John does so in subtle ways, that only a careful reader might recognize. For example, in the narrated words to us of verse 41, John changed the identity of the opposers of Jesus from the broader term, “the people”¹ to the more specific term, “the Jews” (cf. v. 41). Up to this point John had been writing about the “people” or the “crowd, depending

¹ or, “the crowd” (ὁ ὄχλος)

on the English translation, but here he referred to them as “the Jews.” Here is a word about this slight change in the narrative.

An interesting change also occurs in the narrator’s title for the character that had been called “the crowd.” For the first time in this pericope—almost out of nowhere—the narrator calls Jesus’ interlocutors² “the Jews” (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι) and will maintain this title throughout the rest of the dialogue (cf. v. 52). There is no evidence of a change of scene or historical situation; in fact, quite the contrary, the dialogue attends to details and issues rooted in the earlier parts. The change in description must be viewed as having a literary (and rhetorical) function for the narrator. The Gospel frequently uses the title “the Jews” for leaders or spokespersons who are hostile to Jesus, very much fitting the tenor of this social challenge. But what is the specific nuance here?³

What John (actually the Holy Spirit) suggested is that by John describing these “Jews” as “murmuring” or “grumbling” in verse 43, he was drawing a parallel between these unbelieving Jews and the unbelieving Jews in the former days of Israel, of those Jews who had grumbled against Moses for having only given them the manna to eat (as well as for other aspects of his leadership). These “Jews” who refused to believe on Jesus, were as guilty as those former “Jews” in their rebellion against Moses. And so, just as those Jews failed to enter the Promised Land due to their unbelief, so these Jews, due to their unbelief in Jesus, would forfeit the joy and blessing of entering into the true Promised Land, even eternal life, the true rest for the people.

Now verses 41 and 42 reveal the real nature of the unbelief of these “Jews.” They refused to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was actually God incarnate. They refused to believe that He was the true, life-giving Bread *that God sent down to them*. They had understood well what Jesus was claiming for Himself. When Jesus declared that He “came down from heaven”, they knew that He was proclaiming His preexistence, that His claim was that He was in fact God. But their reaction was not one of faith, but one of unbelief as seen in their murmuring or grumbling. They complained. It is as though they were saying among themselves,

How could a man with whose family they were well acquainted make such a claim He did? How could He provide, much less be, the food of immortality? How could He be the bond of heaven and earth?⁴

They reasoned among themselves, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” **John Calvin** (1509-1564) wrote of these unbelievers:

The Jews therefore murmured concerning Him. The Evangelist explains the cause of the murmuring to have been, that the Jews were offended at the mean (simple and humble) condition of Christ’s human nature, and did not perceive in Him any thing Divine or heavenly. Yet He shows that they had a twofold obstruction. One they had framed for themselves out of a false opinion, when they said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?” Another arose from a wicked sentiment, that they did not think that Christ was the Son of God, because He came down to men clothed with our flesh. But we are guilty of excessive malignity, if we despise the Lord of glory because on our account He emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7), for this was rather an illustrious proof of His boundless love towards us, and of His wonderful grace. Besides, the Divine majesty of Christ was not so concealed under the mean (humble) and contemptible appearance of the flesh, as not to give out the rays of His brightness in a variety of ways; but those gross and stupid men wanted (were without) eyes to see His conspicuous glory.⁵

² Interlocutor: a person who takes part in a dialogue or conversation.

³ Edward W. Klink, III, **John**. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2016), p. 334.

⁴ F. F. Bruce, **The Gospel of John** (William B. Eerdmans, 1983), p. 155.

⁵ John Calvin, **Calvin’s Commentaries**, Vol. XVII (Baker Book House, 1993), p. 245f.

If they had seen His glory rightly as the Son of God incarnate, they would have rejoiced, even celebrated His condescending love in that He humbled Himself to take upon our human nature, so that He could reveal God to us and redeem us from sin through His suffering and death. But instead, they derided Him and rejected Him in their unbelief. They refused to believe Him for who He was because they refused to believe both His words and the signs that His Father had done through Him.

By the way, when they said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?”, this does not mean that Joseph was still alive at the time of this event. This simply shows that the people of Capernaum knew that His parents were Joseph and Mary. But in their ‘justified’ reasoning, how, then, could He claim for Himself preexistence? As one wrote,

The audience’s language need not imply that Joseph was alive: it means ‘We know who this man’s parents were; how could He have come down from heaven?’ (That Jesus’ family was known in Capernaum has been indicated in 2:12.) John and his readers understand that the Capernaum congregation had no inkling of the mystery of the Incarnation—of the fact that Jesus, while He entered human life by a real birth, was at the same time the eternal Word.⁶

There is a sense of firm denial and rejection of Jesus’ claim by these “Jews.” Again, they said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?” Although in our English translation, the subject, “We know” is at the end of the question, in the Greek text the pronoun and verb, “We know” is set forth in an emphatic position. These people were absolutely convinced based on their first-hand knowledge, that the statement of Jesus could not be true; or at least, that is how they thought and felt.

They do not stop to question their assumptions that because Jesus was lowly, and because He was well known to them, therefore, He could not have been from heaven. They fasten their attention on His claim to have come from heaven, and not on that to give life.⁷

This is one of the greatest obstacles we face in order to bring a person to hear carefully and take seriously our claims that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. Society, with its so-called education system, has shaped people’s thinking, value system, and beliefs, which, along with the limitation of personal experience, results in people rejecting out of hand the things that do not coincide with their present perception. When you couple this with their spiritual ignorance and sinful resistance to admit error, and the out-and-out infidelity of their hearts, it results in them immediately dismissing your witness, or perhaps discrediting our claims, because they have entrenched beliefs and values that are the bedrock of their souls.

The only possible way that we will see victory in these matters is if we resort to the message and means that the Lord has appointed for us. But ultimately, of course, if a breakthrough is to happen, the Father Himself through Jesus Christ must break through and cast down those false understandings, those errors of thinking and believing, until they embrace Jesus Christ as He is presented in the Gospel. As the apostle wrote,

³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵*casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*, ⁶and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Cor. 10:3-6)

We labor in the realm of ideas and words, speaking the truth of God’s Word even as we try to identify that which is false and errant, attempting to correct the content of one’s faith, so that true faith may be placed

⁶ Bruce, p. 255f.

⁷ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (William B. Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 370f.

solely and wholly on Jesus Christ the Lord. There are many today, and many in the church, who do not desire this kind of Gospel ministry. "We only want to accentuate the positive." "We only want to win them with love and acceptance." "Love will win them in the end." But this is not the ministry of the Gospel. This does not describe the ministry of the Apostles or certainly of the Lord Jesus. Now granted, we purpose not to alienate people by caustic speech and harsh attitudes. It was foretold of our Savior:

He will not quarrel nor cry out,
Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.
A bruised reed He will not break,
And smoking flax He will not quench,
Till He sends forth justice to victory. (Matt. 12:19f, quoting Isaiah 42:1ff)

Jesus always welcomed the sincere inquirer and apparently most everyone thought Him to be approachable, even the children. But on the other hand, when set before the obstinate, He spoke the truth with clarity, with conviction, and with intensity.

But even while we witness to others of Jesus Christ with genuine concern and sincere persuasion, we realize that we are incapable of converting a soul to Jesus Christ. The Scriptures tell us that it is our impossible task to win the day against this opposition of unbelief that stems from one who has no spiritual life within him, one who is in addition held captive by the devil. And yet, out of our concern for their souls and our desire for the Lord to be glorified, we persist in speaking with that one we know needs Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. And as we do so, we pray and trust the Lord to win that soul to Himself, for unless He acts, it will not happen.

But thankfully, God has purposed to save His people by means of the message we proclaim. As Paul wrote of our message in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). When the Gospel is proclaimed rightly, and the Lord Himself is blessing its message, God Himself creates spiritual life in the hearers who are spiritually dead. The result and fruit of this divine impartation of spiritual life in a soul is a real, even burning desire to know God in truth, to learn from God's Word--the Holy Bible--, and to embrace everything they come to understand in His Word, including the identity of Jesus Christ as God incarnate-- God who took upon Himself man's nature.

This is work of sovereign grace converting sinners through the Gospel is attested everywhere in God's Word. When Peter was writing to Christians, he detailed the grace of God through the Word of God that had been operative in their lives:

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, ²³*having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God* which lives and abides forever, ²⁴because

"All flesh is as grass,
And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.
The grass withers,
And its flower falls away,
²⁵But the word of the LORD endures forever."

Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. (1 Pet. 1:22-25)

Paul also wrote of the power of God working through the Gospel to create spiritual life in dead, unresponsive sinners:

Therefore, having this ministry (of the Gospel) by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ²But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in

the sight of God. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world (satan) has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing *the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God*. ⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶*For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* (2 Cor. 4:1-6)

And Paul also wrote of God having saved those in the church at Thessalonica through the gospel:

"But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, ¹⁴*to which He called you by our gospel*, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 2:13f)

And so in verses 41 and 42 we see that the Jews reacted to Jesus of His claim to His preexistence in heaven. Next we read that...

2. Jesus reacted to the "Jews", rebuking them for their unbelief, while exalting the role of His Father in bringing souls to believe in Him (6:43-44).

⁴³Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. ⁴⁴No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Jesus was basically telling them that they were entirely wrong in the way that they were assessing what was true in the spiritual realm. Jesus first said, "Do not murmur among yourselves." What is harder than attempting to win an individual to the truth in Jesus Christ, is to try and win a gathering of people who are all in agreement and united against the truth that is in Jesus Christ. They were all wrong in their understanding of Jesus, but they were all in agreement with one another that they were right in their refusal to believe His claims. This is one reason why cults are so dangerous and it is difficult to win a person out of them. The one you are trying to reach for Christ is not just one, but is one from among many who agree with him or her. They stand in opposition to the truth that is in Jesus Christ. They murmur against the truth when they are together, agreeing with one another why our truth claims from the Scriptures are errant. It takes great grace for the Lord to pull someone out of that setting and bring him to reject his former understanding and those that he may have known and with whom he may have grown up. The Lord must so burden that soul with his sin and make him aware of the uselessness of that system of belief he formerly believed, in order for him to flee to another group who is teaching something entirely "new" and "foreign" to his thinking. But his soul's desperation that is brought about by the Lord himself, will cause him to flee as did "Christian" flee "the city of Destruction" in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Christian had been reading the Bible, and Evangelist had been instructing him what to do. Here is the account:

So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now, he had not run far from his own door, but his wife and children, perceiving it, began to cry after him to return; but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying, 'Life! Life! Eternal life!' (Luke 14:26). So he looked not behind him (Genesis 19:17), but fled towards the middle of the plain.

The neighbors also came out to see him run (Jer. 20:10); and, as he ran, some mocked, others threatened, and some cried after him to return...⁸

The burden of the guilt of his own sin and his awareness and fear of God's certain judgment of all the world, moved him to flee his friends and even family in order to obtain salvation. Now we cannot produce this

⁸ Both parts 1 and 2 of the *Pilgrim's Progress* are on our website: <http://www.thewordoftruth.net/the-pilgrims-progress-part-1>

burden of sin upon the soul. This is a work of the Holy Spirit. But we are like Evangelist, pointing the soul to read what is in the Book. The Lord must do the true work within the soul.

Well again, Jesus told them that they would do well to stop murmuring among themselves. This attitude exhibited by them all would not bring benefit to any one of them. Their collective unbelief and resistance was unreasonable and damnable. Their murmuring about these matters was aggravating their condemnation, confirming them in their folly and error.

But then our Lord said further, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (6:44). Here the Lord Jesus spoke about the inability of fallen man to come unto Jesus Christ in faith. “No one can come unto Me.” They are unable to come, and the reason for their inability is their unwillingness. There is no power or desire in fallen man to come to faith in Jesus Christ so as to be saved from his sin and receive the gift of everlasting life. They are in sin and do not want delivered from it.

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900) wrote of the meaning and implication of John 6:44:

The general lesson of the sentence, apart from the connection, is one of vast importance. Our Lord lays down the great principal “that no man whatsoever can come to Christ by faith, and really believe in Him, unless God the Father draws him so to come, and incline his will to believe.” The nature of man since the fall is so corrupt and depraved, that even when Christ is made known and preached to him, he will not come to Him and believe in Him, without the special grace of God inclining his will and giving him a disposition to come. Moral (per)suasion and advice alone will not bring him. He must be “drawn.”

This is no doubt a very humbling truth, and one which in every age has called forth the hatred and opposition of man. The favorite notion of man is that he can do what he likes,--repent or not repent, believe or not believe, come to Christ or not to come, entirely at his own discretion. In fact man likes to think that his salvation is in his own power. Such notions are flatly contradictory to the text before us. The words of our Lord here are clear and unmistakable, and cannot be explained away.⁹

Take note closely the statement of verse 44. Here we read of the work of salvation that is carried out by both God the Father and by Jesus Christ, His Son. First, Jesus declared, “***No one can come to Me...***” The great need of sinners is to ***come*** to Jesus Christ. This means coming to Him in faith, depending on Him alone for the entire work of securing our salvation. Everyone and anyone must get to Him. Here the instruction is not to come to the Father, but to come to the Son. But then Jesus said, “No one can come to Me ***unless the Father who sent Me draws him.***” We must get to Christ, but the only way that will happen is if God the Father, who sent His Son to be our Savior, “draws” the sinner unto Christ. And then the Lord Jesus said of that one who is enabled by the Father to come to Christ in faith, that “***I will raise him up at the last day.***” . In other words, one day the Lord Jesus would bring forth that one from the grave in the resurrection of life.

3. Jesus called upon Scripture to substantiate His teaching regarding the sovereign grace of the Father in bringing sinners to salvation (6:45-46)

We read in **verses 45 and 46** our Lord’s words: “It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. ⁴⁶Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father.”

The Lord Jesus called upon the Holy Scriptures to substantiate His statement that only the Father could bring sinners to salvation. He quotes **Isaiah 54:13**, which reads this way:

“O you afflicted one,

⁹ J. C. Ryle, **Expository Thoughts on John**, vol. 1 (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, orig. 1869), p. 388.

Tossed with tempest, and not comforted,
 Behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems,
 And lay your foundations with sapphires.
¹²I will make your pinnacles of rubies,
 Your gates of crystal,
 And all your walls of precious stones.
¹³**All your children shall be taught by the LORD,**
 And great shall be the peace of your children.
¹⁴In righteousness you shall be established;
 You shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear;
 And from terror, for it shall not come near you.
¹⁵Indeed they shall surely assemble, but not because of Me.
 Whoever assembles against you shall fall for your sake. (Isa. 54:11-15)

Here is a prophecy of God restoring His people, Zion, unto Himself. This is the promise of the world-wide expansion of the kingdom of the Messiah.¹⁰ It is a word of God's promise that He will redeem His people, restoring them unto Himself. All of these "children", that is redeemed ones by the Lord, are "taught by the LORD." And in John 6:45 the Lord Jesus applies this verse to everyone who believes on Him for salvation. Every soul that truly believes on the Lord Jesus Christ was taught by God the Father to do so.

Here we see the authority of the Father to save everyone that He has chosen from eternity to be saved from sin and damnation. He will "teach" that sinner to come to faith in Jesus Christ. How does the Father teach a sinner in this way? He reveals to that sinner the truth of the person of Jesus Christ as both God and Man, who is the perfect Savior for wretched sinners. Do you recall what our Lord told Peter when He first recognized that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God? We read in Matthew 16:

¹³When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"
¹⁴So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."
¹⁵He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"
¹⁶Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
¹⁷Jesus answered and said to him, "**Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**" (Matt. 16:13-17)

To use the language of John 6:44, Peter was "drawn" by the Father, and of John 6:45, Peter was "taught" by the Father to faith in Jesus Christ.

This drawing and teaching of the Father speaks of God's *effectual call* of His elect unto their salvation. We saw this last Lord's Day earlier in our passage. In verse 37 we read our Lord's words, "All that the Father gives Me **will come to Me.**" And here in these verses we read the manner in which they come to Him. The Father *draws* and *teaches* them, resulting in them *coming* to Him. They *do not come* to Him and *then* He draws them. He draws them, teaching them, and as a result they come to Him. Salvation is wholly by and due to the grace of God, not by and due to the will of man.

John had written elsewhere about salvation that is consistent with what he recorded Jesus saying here. Back in John 1:12f we read, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." But then he further described this event of salvation: "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, **nor of the will of man, but of God.**" What John recorded of Jesus' words in John 6 is in accordance with what he wrote in John 1. God is sovereign in bringing His people unto their salvation.

¹⁰ Cf. Isaiah 54:1 with Galatians 4:27.

Our Lord Jesus then made this statement, **“Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father”** (6:46). People come to the Father by Him (through Christ) “drawing” and “teaching”, not through them “seeing” the Father, for that is not possible for finite human beings. Jesus said that no one has seen the Father, except “He who is from God.”

But what of the many instances in the Scriptures when people did see God? We read in the Old Testament that Isaiah “saw” God:

In the year that King Uzziah died, ***I saw the Lord sitting on a throne***, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. (Isa. 6:1)

We read earlier in Exodus 24 of Moses and a number of men who saw God:

⁹Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, ¹⁰***and they saw the God of Israel***. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. ¹¹But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. ***So they saw God***, and they ate and drank. (Exo. 24:9-11)

And then we can read that in the beginning Adam and Eve saw God. Genesis 2 that records that Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden in the cool of the day. We can rightly presume they “saw” God.

How do we reconcile these statements with what God Himself told Moses in Exodus 33 after Moses asked God to show Himself to him? There we read God’s words: “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.”

The answer must be that no one has ever “seen” God in the fulness of His essential glory. All “appearances” of God to people in the Scriptures were only temporal, local, representations of God. They did not see God in His fulness. God is infinite. In that sense there is no “fullness” of God for He is not limited to space or time. God is in His essence Spirit, and one cannot see the “invisible” God, for He is as our confession rightly describes Him:

The Lord our God is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of Himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; ***a most pure spirit, invisible, without body***, parts, or passions, Who only hath immortality, ***dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto***...¹¹

All of the visible manifestations of God to people in the Holy Scriptures are very limited representations or manifestations of God, but they are not truly God in His essence. They are commonly termed as anthropomorphisms, God appearing or being described in a manner so that we as humans may somewhat comprehend Him. This is the way that **Robert Reymond** (1932-2013) explained the spiritual nature of God:

The second thing God’s *spiritual* nature means is that He is non-corporeal (He does not have a body). This may be demonstrated from Luke 24:36-43, where, in response to the disciples’ assessment that He was “a spirit,” Jesus said: “Look at My hands and My feet. It is I Myself! Touch Me and see; for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see Me have” (v. 39). But what does it mean for God, as spirit, to be non-corporeal? It means that *no* property of matter may be ascribed to Him. He has no extension in space, no weight, no mass, no bulk, no parts, no form, no taste, no smell, He is invisible (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16) and, being one in essence and without parts, is indivisible (this last term denotes what some theologians refer to as His “simplicity”).¹²

¹¹ **The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689**, Art. 2, Par. 1.

¹² Robert L. Reymond, ***A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*** (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), p. 167.

We know, therefore, that human-like descriptions of God in the Holy Scriptures are not actual revelations of the essence of God, but they are analogies by which we can somewhat know what God the infinite Creator is like, even though we are very limited, being finite, mortal, physical creatures. Therefore, when we read in the Scriptures of the “eyes of the Lord” (Psa. 34:15), “His strong arm” (Jer. 21:5), His “stretched out hand” (Exo. 7:5), “His face” (Num. 26:5), “His feet” (Exo. 24:10), we understand these depictions as God condescending to us to reveal Himself to us in a manner that we can know Him and relate to Him. This is necessary for us, just as our Lord Jesus declared, “*Not that anyone has seen the Father.*”

But then the Lord Jesus claimed in that very statement that He had “seen” the Father, and that He was the only one who had ever done so. Again, Jesus said,

“Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, *except He who is from God; He has seen the Father.*” (John 6:45f)

Jesus Christ only has “seen” God the Father in His infinite, eternal, spirit essence. How can this be? For Jesus was not just a man born of Mary, for “is from God” (v. 46). Here is a very, very clear statement that Jesus Christ Himself is eternal God. Only the eternal Son of God can fully see God the Father.” No one else can. No one else ever has. But because Jesus Himself is fully God and because Jesus Christ is fully man, one of us, He alone can reveal or manifest what the Father is really like. He is the best representation of God that we have, for He is God. This is what the writer to the Hebrew Christians declared:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ²has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; ³who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. (Heb. 1:1-4)

Jesus Christ is the Supreme Revelator of God, for He is God. When we see Jesus, we see most clearly and fully what God the Father is like. And we can only truly know the Father through Jesus Christ who alone mediates the true and full presence of God to us. This is why Jesus could answer the request of Philip that he show them the Father. We read of this in **John 14:6ff**:

⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”

⁹Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. (John 14:6-11)

Only an infinite One can truly and fully “see” an infinite One. Only Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has truly and fully “seen” God the Father, for Jesus Christ is not merely a man, He is God incarnate. In His divine nature, Jesus is just as His Father, the

one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of Himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto...¹³

¹³ Again, **The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689**, Art. 2, Par. 1.

4. Jesus declared that the one who believes in Him has everlasting life. (6:47-51)

Jesus said further,

⁴⁷Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

Let us look closely at Jesus’ statement of **verse 47**. He said, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.”** He first begins with the words, “Most assuredly.” We have seen this a number of times already in John’s Gospel. And as we pointed out before, this New King James translation is actually of the two Greek words of Jesus, “ἀμὴν ἀμὴν” (“Amen, Amen”). It is translated in the KJV as “Verily, verily”, in the English Standard Version (ESV) as “truly, truly”, and in the NIV translation, “Very truly.” This double worded exclamation is only in John’s Gospel, and it occurs a total of 25 times. (I have lost count of how many we have now encountered in our study.)

By the beginning of this sentence with the doubling of this word, “Truly”, the Lord Jesus was giving great weight to what He was about to declare to this gathering. What was it He said? **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.”** Consider very carefully exactly what He was declaring and what He was not declaring.

First, what Jesus was not declaring by these words: Jesus was not teaching that if a person puts forth a **single** act of faith, that He is then granted eternal life. This is very important. What then was He saying? He was declaring that the one who is **continually believing** has everlasting life. The error of decisionism is a gross error, but a common assumption believed and practiced by most evangelicals. People are told that if they but place their faith in Jesus in a one-time decision for Christ, they are then and there given everlasting life. This way of teaching and manner of evangelistic preaching began in the 19th century, and can be traced to the evangelistic ministry of (the heretic) **Charles Finney** (1792-1875). It has continued until this day, being promoted and popularized through “crusade evangelism”, poorly written Gospel tracts, and well-meaning, but errant “soul-winners.” Please do not misunderstand, the first moment we believed, God justified us through faith alone. But that does not mean all that is required of people is a single act of faith. It is not an **act** of faith, but a **life** of faith that is true of the true Christian. “For God so loved the world that whosoever **believes** on Him, will not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “He who **believes** in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36). And here, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.”** These are all present tense verbs in the Greek text and the English translations; the emphasis is on continual believing, not a one-time act of faith. This is one of the major reasons for nominal Christianity that characterizes many so-called evangelical churches. People think that they are saved, that they have eternal life, because at some point in the past they made a “decision” for Christ. Granted, there was a specific time when you came to faith (but even that specific time and place may be elusive to you), but do not give any weight to any “decision” you made in the past.

And so, the question we would pose to you today: “Are you a believer in Jesus Christ?” “Do you believe on Him **now**, as we have set Him forth in the Holy Scriptures? “Are you **presently** trusting Him alone as your Lord and Savior?” Then take to heart our Lord’s promise, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.”** True saving faith is a **continuing** faith. True saving faith is that which overcomes the world in that the true believer continues to believe regardless of the trials or troubles that he encounters. This is because his abiding, overcoming, enduring, life-long faith is a divinely wrought faith in his soul by the grace of God.

The Lord Jesus, in driving this matter home to His hearers, repeats what He had declared of Himself earlier in verse 36, **“I am the bread of life”** (v. 48). He again compared and contrasted Himself with what Moses had given the Israelites in the wilderness long before. He said, **“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not**

die.” I would argue that here, too, He is not speaking of a one-time meal of “feeding” upon Him, but rather it is a life time of believing, a lifetime of “feeding” upon Him that characterizes the believer who has everlasting life.

And then again, He speaks of His divine nature. “I am the living bread *which came down from heaven.*” To feed on Him rightly is to believe that He is God who took upon Himself our human nature. We have faith in the One who is both God and man to save us from our sin.

He declared further, “*If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.*” As we feed on Him, which means that we are continually believing on Him, we are brought to have a true eternal relationship with God so as to enjoy His life-giving and strengthening presence.

Now this last statement of Jesus certainly “got a rise”¹⁴ from “the Jews.” “This man is talking cannibalism!” It must have immediately struck a sensitive nerve with these people. But could there be a better way that Jesus could have put forth what was involved in truly believing on Him?” It would be to believe on Him though all the world would regard you as foolish or deranged for doing so! But we will consider the reaction of these people to our Lord’s words next Lord’s Day, Lord willing.

The question we will pose in conclusion today: Do you believe on the Lord Jesus? Do you believe on Him as He Himself claimed to be and proved to be through so many different ways on so many different occasions? Then confess Him as such. Tell somebody, “I am a believer. Jesus Christ is Lord, but more, Jesus Christ is *my* Lord, and I *am believing* on Him alone for salvation from my sin and for the eternal life that He gives me.” And if that is true of you, do not just confess Him to another, but confess Him before us all in baptism! That is the best biblical way by which we are commanded to confess Christ openly. The Lord Himself gave this blessed promise, but dire warning:

“Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.” (Matt. 10:32f)

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God,
be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim. 1:17)

¹⁴ A metaphor borrowed from the art of fly fishing; “getting a rise” is having a trout rise to take your dry fly floating on the surface. Spring is almost here...