

Having finished our examination of our Savior's discourse—we come this morning to the twofold response to that discourse—many rejected it, and some embraced it—many decided to stop following Him, and some determined to continue following Him—in short, our Savior's message was divisive—it caused a divide among His hearers...

And, my friends, this has always been, and always will be the case—the word of God separates, it divides—many reject it, and some believe it—the word of God sometimes separates families, and then it brings together people from various backgrounds—Jew, Gentile, slave, free, male, female, rich, poor, black, white, and brown...

- I. Many Disciples Return—vv60-66
- II. Some Disciples Remain—vv67-71

- I. Many Disciples Return—vv60-66

- A. Who returned

1. Twice (vv60 and 66), John speaks about "many disciples," v66—"From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more..."
2. The word "disciple" literally "a learner, pupil, or follower"—it becomes evident throughout our Savior's ministry He had many disciples...
3. These were temporary disciples, in that they "went back and walked with Him no more"—they went back to live without Him...
4. Apparently, they had left their former lives to follow Him—to watch the miracles and to hear the teaching...
5. V66—"From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more"—they went back to their former lives...
6. They simply went back to their life before Christ—they returned to life as it was before they became disciples...
7. Thus—the many who leave Christ, and walk with Him no longer, are not those who followed for the loaves and fish...
8. By disciples is meant those who've made some commitment to Christ—they've been with Him for some time...
9. These are people who've followed Christ for weeks, months, or more—they've walked with Him on a daily basis...
10. It's most likely that Christ personally knew many, if not most, of them—He invested time and effort in them...
11. We must ever remember brethren, our Savior was fully human, and as human, His heart no doubt felt this departure...
12. Remember, Isaiah describes Him as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" and then says why (at least in part)—"And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him..."

- B. Why they returned

1. The reason they left is basically twofold—[1] they did not believe (or understand), [2] they were not called...
2. [1] They did not believe (or understand), v60—"Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can understand it..."
3. Now—the first thing we need to settle is—what does John mean by the phrase—"when they HEARD THIS..."

4. Well—from v61 we find the statement(s) in question offended the Jews, v61—"He said to them, Does this offend you..."
5. In other words, whatever they meant by "hard saying"—it was offensive (or repulsive) to them esp as Jews...
6. I suggest to you, from our Savior's response in vv62-63—there were two things that esp offended these Jews...
7. [a] His teaching that He was from heaven (and thus divine), v62—"What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before..."
8. That is—if you are offended that I've described Myself as bread "come down from heaven"—what will you think if you saw Me return to heaven...
9. Thus—our Savior affirms that prior to His incarnation—He existed in heaven—this is another way of saying—He is divine...
10. There is coming a time when He will return to the place He came from—He came down from heaven, He shall return to heaven...
11. But—there's also in these words an indication, that He would return to heaven only after He's finished His work...
12. He has come to earth to do the will of the Father (v38)—and He will return to heaven, only after this is completed...
13. Thus—He not only foretells His ascension, but indirectly, He foretells His crucifixion and His resurrection...
14. Now—before I go further I want to say a few words on this title "the Son of Man"—this is the third time our Savior's used it in this discourse (vv27, 53, 62)...
15. As many of you know—the meaning or significance behind it is twofold—[i] it's an OT prophetic title for the Messiah...
16. [ii] It underscores His human nature—He is the Son of Man in a similar way He's the Son of God, both through generation...
17. He is eternally begotten or generated of the Father, and He is begotten or generated of man in His incarnation...
18. Thus—within v62, we have an affirmation of the two natures of Christ in one person—the Son of Man from heaven...
19. [b] His teaching about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, v63—"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life..."
20. Now—in coming to v63, I need to confess at the outset, there is not universal agreement among the commentators...
21. But—let me suggest that our Savior is largely clarifying what He's said before about eating or consuming His flesh...
22. Our Savior clarifies—whatever He meant and did not mean for them to—eat His flesh and drink His blood...
23. [i] V63—"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing"—life is communicated by the Spirit, not by literally eating His flesh...
24. Adam Clark—"These words contain a caution that the hearers should not understand his words in the strict literal sense, as if his body were really Bread, and as if his flesh and blood were really to be eaten and drank..."
25. According to v52, the Jews quarrelled among themselves, saying—"How can this Man give us His flesh to eat..."
26. That is—what they failed to understand (and were offended at) was our Savior's statement—"the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" (v51)...
27. The Jews, (as all men by nature), thought in terms of flesh and physical—they failed to understand things spiritually...
28. Our Savior clarifies—it is My Spirit that gives life, through a spiritual eating of My flesh and drinking My blood...
29. [ii] V63—"The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life"—this is how the Spirit gives life—through His word...

30. By "spirit" here our Savior means "spiritual"—His words are spiritual in that, they communicate spiritual life to the soul...
31. In other words—there is a sense in which our Savior here explains, how His flesh is eaten and His blood drank...
32. His words are believed—they are received into the heart—for it's through His word that His Spirit gives life...
33. Now—let me simply say in passing—if the Spirit gives life through the word, then how important is the word...
34. Just as there is NO life apart from Christ, so there is NO life apart from His word—His words are words of life...
35. Put another way—the Spirit takes the word, in which Christ is revealed, and He communicates life to the soul...
36. [2] They were not called—this explains their unbelief (and lack of understanding)—from the divine perspective...
37. V64—"But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father..."
38. Now—I have mentioned several times in past weeks—the fact that our Savior weds together man's responsibility and God's sovereignty...
39. From one perspective, the reason they left Christ and returned home, was because THEY DID NOT BELIEVE...
40. From another perspective, the reason they didn't believe was because—the Father had never drawn them to Him...
41. Obs.1—Many people follow Christ temporarily—I think there's an important reason John twice uses the word MANY...
42. If you recall, our Savior uses this same word in two well-known verses, Matt.7:13—"wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it" v22—"Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord...and then I will declare to them, I never knew you..."
43. These verses, along with John 6, inform us that many people who make a profession, will not endure to the end...
44. Now—it's important keep in mind—the reason they go back to the world, is because they were never true believers...
45. V64—"But there are some of you who do not believe...v66 From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more..."
46. My friends—there are fewer chapters in the entire Bible, that more frequently affirms the saints final perseverance...
47. Over and over again, our Savior says—those who come to Him He will never cast out, but will raise up on the last day...
48. And yet—this chapter equally affirms that not every person who claims to be a disciple, continues as a disciple...
49. 1Jn.2:19—"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us..."
50. Matt.13:20-21—"But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles..."
51. Obs.2—Natural man is offended by the truth—our Savior's sayings were not hard to understand, as much as accept...
52. Though they complained His sayings were hard to understand (v60), our Savior describes them offended (v61)...
53. Rarely is the issue really a lack of understanding—instead it's usually a lack of willingness to accept the truth...
54. My friends—I think we need to be reminded of this—our Savior's sermon offended people, it drove them away...

55. Our Savior preached this sermon to a large crowd, and afterwards, the majority refused to follow Him any longer...
56. There is a sense in which—our Savior's sermon reduced the size of His followers, down to twelve (eleven)...
57. Let me clarify—while truth is offensive, we must be careful not to make that truth more offensive than it is...
58. Though our Savior's teaching was offensive, the manner in which He taught was simple and no doubt pleasant...
59. But—and this is the point—we ought not be surprised when people are turned-off or offended by the TRUTH...
60. For example—the truth about man's total depravity, God's sovereignty in salvation, Christ's identity as God's Son...
61. These are all truths that have been offensive to man, and brethren, simply put, they will remain offensive to man...
62. Obs.3—Christ knows those who are truly His, v64—"For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him..."
63. This of course is something that John's has mentioned several times already—Christ, as God, knows all things...
64. 2Tim.2:17-19—"Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: The Lord knows those who are His, and Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity..."

II. Some Disciples Remain—vv67-71

A. Who remained

1. V67—"Then Jesus said to the twelve, Do you also want to go away"—this was a unique group of disciples within the larger group...
2. These 12 were called as apostles—to uniquely dwell with Christ—to serve as foundation stones to the church...
3. Now—let me suggest that our Savior asks the 12 this question, not because He was uncertain of their answer...
4. No—He asks them for their own benefit—He wanted them to say it—He wanted them to openly acknowledge it...
5. For brethren—remember, as good Jews, it's possible that some of our Savior's statements were offensive to them...
6. Furthermore, it's likely the twelve knew some of the other disciples, and thus may have been tempted to leave...
7. Accordingly, our Savior asks them—"Do you also want to go away"—do you want to leave with the MANY...
8. Brethren—when God tests us, it's NOT for His benefit, but for ours—He wanted to challenge the 12 afresh...
9. This of course is true from the very beginning, when God asked Adam—"Adam, where are you (Gen.3:9)..."
10. God obviously knew where Adam was, but He wanted Adam to know where he was—His question was for Adam's benefit...
11. So too, our Savior's question to the twelve, was for the benefit of the twelve, that they would take their stand with Him...
12. That their faith and confidence in Him would be strengthened—that they would resolve to follow Him at all costs...

B. Why they remained

1. V68—"But Simon Peter answered Him, 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..."
2. Though Peter intended to speak for all twelve—it's obvious from vv70-71—he actually spoke only for eleven...
3. V70—"Jesus answered them, Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve..."
4. Now—the first thing that needs clarifying is—the choice referenced in v70, is an election unto service not salvation...
5. All twelve, including Judas Iscariot, were chosen to serve as apostles, even though Judas was a son of perdition...
6. Lk.6:13—"And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles..."
7. I think our Savior is saying this—just as there were many from the larger number of disciples who left Him, there was one within the twelve that would betray Him...
8. In other words—even though Judas was chosen to great privilege—He would misuse that privilege and betray Christ...
9. Thus—in calling Judas a devil, our Savior means—he was the moral offspring and instrument of the devil...
10. Now—before I come to the two reasons why the disciples remained with Christ, I want to answer the question—why would our Savior select Judas as one of His disciples (apostles), if He knew He would betray Him...
11. [a] To fulfill OT Scripture, Jn.17:12—"Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled (Acts 1:20; Ps.69:25; 109:8..."
12. [b] To provide a warning—that is—by elevating Judas to apostle, we are reminded, great gifts doesn't mean true grace...
13. V71—"He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve..."
14. My friends—simply put—it should never surprise us when men of high office in the church—fall away from the faith...
15. Furthermore, we are reminded—a person can have great religious privileges, great light, and yet be a devil...
16. A.W. Pink—"The example of Judas shows us how near a man may come to Christ and yet be lost. It shows us that outward nearness to Christ, external contact with the things of God, is not sufficient. It reveals the fact that a man may witness the most stupendous marvels, may hear the most spiritual teaching, may company with the most godly characters, and yet himself never be born again..."
17. [c] To illustrate His sovereignty—this I suggest is the most important reason—nothing happens apart from His will...
18. Many disciples have left Him, and even one of the twelve is a devil who will betray Him—but He chose him...
19. That is—our Savior wants us to know that He stands sovereign over all things, even the growing resistance against Him...
20. Many disciples refused to believe on Christ and left Him—one of His apostles refused to believe and betrayed Him...
21. And yet—all of these events, yes, even including Judas, did not take Him by surprise, for He's sovereign over all things...
22. Now—His sovereignty is seen in many ways—He will save those given to Him from the Father, no one can come unless the Father draws them, and He chose an apostle, who He knew would betray Him, and was a devil...
23. Peter provides two reasons why he and the other disciples, continued to follow Christ, and refused to leave Him...
24. [1] Because of what Christ has, v68—"But Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life..."
25. By "words of eternal life" he means the gospel of God—words that when blessed by the Spirit give life eternal...

26. Perhaps I could put it like this—Lord, where else can we go? You alone have purchased or secured eternal life...
27. Who else has a message wherein sinners are forgiven, reconciled to God, and are given the hope of eternal life...
28. It seems likely Peter is thinking of what our Savior just said—"The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life..."
29. My friends—what a wonderful way to describe the Gospel of Christ—"You have the words of eternal life..."
30. [2] Because of who Christ is, v69—"Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God..."
31. These disciples had come to believe and know who He was—He was the Christ, the Son of the living God...
32. He was the Christ (the Messiah)—the Promised One—the Anointed One—God's Prophet, Priest, and King...
33. He was the Son of the living God—He's from heaven—He's equal with the Father—His eternally begotten Son...
34. Obs.1—The word of God divides—if this broader passage teaches anything, it teaches the gospel divides people...
35. Truth always divides, it's inevitable—whenever the gospel is preached, some will believe it and others reject it...
36. Thus—the truth will do one of two things—it will drive people away or it will bring them together in unity...
37. My friends, put another way—the truth not only unites but it divides—it separates as well as, brings together...
38. Matt.10:34-36—"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his *own* household..."
39. 1Cor.1:22-24—"For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God..."
40. 2Cor.2:15-16—"For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things..."
41. Obs.2—Christians continue in the truth—this is how we know to which of these two categories of disciples we belong...
42. Christians are not offended at Christ and His word—they embrace and believe every part of God's Holy word...
43. Jn.8:31-32—"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free..."
44. To abide in His word is to continue believing it—to continue embracing it, regardless of opposition and resistance...
45. Obs.3—Christians have no other place to go—that is—they've come to see, only Christ can meet their true needs...
46. Where else can they go—can they go to Muhammad—can they go to Buddha—can they go to the Virgin Mary...
47. Can they go to themselves, their own merits and deeds—can they go to this world, with its supposed wisdom...
48. Hymn—"I have decided to follow Jesus; no turning back, no turning back. Though none go with me, I still will follow; though none go with me, I still will follow; though none go with me, I still will follow; no turning back, no turning back..."