

John 6: 43-71

The Jews were somewhat nervous when a large crowd entered the synagogue in Capernaum.

As far as they knew, they were perfect strangers, and yet the teacher seemed to recognize them.

Oh, He knew them all right, for this was the same crowd who had wanted to take **"him by force."**

And although they had cooled down somewhat, it was still quite evident that they had something on their mind.

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It all began when a great number of people from the surrounding cities had been attracted to the **"miracles which he did on them that were diseased."**

They had followed Jesus into the wilderness where, according to Mark's gospel, He **"began to teach them many things."**

Surely those **"many things"** must have included the glories of the coming kingdom and the Messiah who would rule over them.

However, it was all forgotten when Jesus performed a miracle unlike any they had ever seen.

It had been an act of compassion, pure and simple, but it brought out the worst in them.

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Naturally, the members of the synagogue knew nothing about this.

However, as they listened to the discussion, the word *manna* kept coming up.

Certainly, that was an appropriate subject for a synagogue, but it almost seemed the two parties were not in agreement. At first they could follow the discussion, at least to some degree, but then the teacher's words puzzled them.

Was He telling one of His parables?

"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Whatever the strangers had in mind, it was now apparent that they weren't making any headway.

And, obviously, Jesus wasn't making any headway either.

And then the Teacher turned to them.

John 6:38-40 **"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 again at the last day.

40: And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

Unlike the first group, these men weren't mesmerized by the possibility of free food, but they had their own objections.

V 41-42 "The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

42: And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and

**mother we know? how is it then that he
saith, I came down from heaven?"**

Certainly, that might have been a legitimate
hang up for others, but not these men.
Jesus had spent a lot of time in their city
teaching the word of God and performing
many mighty works far beyond any that
their prophets had ever accomplished.
However, in their eyes, He was just the son
of Mary --- **"how is it then that he
saith, I came down from heaven?"**

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Would Jesus change His illustration before
He lost this second crowd?

No, He wouldn't, nor should He.

Actually, manna is a beautiful and
appropriate type of the Son of God.
Manna came from heaven, being supplied by
God Himself.

Its purpose was to meet the physical needs of the people, and it did that admirably.

In fact, had God not provided this special food, they would have starved.

And now Jesus had *come down* from heaven, and, as in the case of the manna, He was the gift of God --- **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."**

Yes, Jesus is God's **"unspeakable gift"** sent down from heaven to supply man's spiritual need.

Without Him, the entire human race would be lost.

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No, there was nothing wrong with Jesus' illustration or His application.

And just like the sheep fold illustration which He used in one of His parables, manna was something they all knew about.

Once again, Jesus was using the familiar as a springboard to propel them into the unfamiliar.

But they weren't jumping. "--- **Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?"**

V 43-46 **"Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. 44: No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. 45: It is written in the prophets, And**

they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

46: Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father."

In a very real sense, all of them had been **"taught of God."**

Yes, they had known the Scriptures from their youth.

And now they were being taught by the Son of God.

If they were His sheep, they would certainly hear His voice.

So, in spite of their objections, Jesus continued talking about **"the bread of God"** that came down from heaven.

V 47-51 **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting**

life.

48: I am that bread of life.

49: Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50: This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

51: I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

These were wonderful words, weren't they?

And wouldn't you think they would be

interested in "**everlasting life**?"

However, the longer He talked, the more they

shook their heads. "--- **How can this man give us his flesh to eat?**"

Once again, Jesus was using a physical illustration to teach a spiritual lesson, but they were hung up on His example.

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And that wasn't the first time that Jesus had experienced such a reaction from so-called spiritual men.

Remember Nicodemus?

He was deeply religious, and he was definitely a seeker.

However, when Jesus talked to him about the necessity of a spiritual birth, he answered --- **"How can a man be born when he is old?"**

No, he just couldn't get his mind around anything that wasn't a natural birth, and neither could these Jews --- **"Is**

**not this Jesus, the son of Joseph,
whose father and mother we know?"**

And even when Jesus enlarged upon His
example, they continued to murmur ---
**"How can this man give us his flesh to
eat?"**

1 Corinthians 15:46 says **"The first man is
of the earth, earthy,"** and so are all
his sons.

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I don't suppose it was too surprising when
the materialistic crowd missed His
meaning, but what about these men?
Jesus had found them in the synagogue, so we
would assume they were much more
spiritual than the others.

Shouldn't they have looked beyond the
obvious and understood what Jesus was
telling them?

Actually, it's not all that uncommon for religious men to misinterpret Jesus' words.

One glaring example of this is the way His words, spoken at the Last Supper, have been so grossly misinterpreted.

Matthew 26:26-28 **"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 27: And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; 28: For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."**

When Jesus spoke these words, He was seated in front of His disciples.

Yes, He was there in the flesh, and they
were looking upon His physical body.

So, when He picked up the bread and said
"Take, eat; this is my body," it should
have been quite evident that He was
speaking symbolically.

And, of course, the same holds true for the
wine.

And yet these very words have been used to
teach the doctrine of trans-
substantiation.

That's the doctrine that insists that the
elements actually *become* the body and
blood of the Lord Jesus.

And people have been martyred for
disagreeing with that view.

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It was the same here when the Jews said **"How
can this man give us his flesh to eat?"**

Obviously, He was using a physical illustration to teach a spiritual lesson, but they took Him literally.

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So what did Jesus mean when He said, "**Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.**"

He was using a type of terminology which would impress upon them the intimacy that must exist between Himself and His follower.

Yes, if we want to reap the benefits of eternal life, we must be in Christ and He must be in us.

And that's exactly what happens when we are born again.

Our relationship with our Saviour is much more than that superficial connection

that exists between a regular leader
and his followers.

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Consider the special relationship that He
desired, between Himself and the 12
disciples.

He talked about that on the way to the
Garden.

John 15:4 **"Abide in me, and I in you. As the
branch cannot bear fruit of itself,
except it abide in the vine; no more
can ye, except ye abide in me.**

**5: I am the vine, ye are the branches:
He that abideth in me, and I in him,
the same bringeth forth much fruit: for
without me ye can do nothing."**

Notice Jesus' words, **"Abide in me, and I in
you."**

What better example could He have used, than
the vine and the branches?

If I asked you to cut off a branch without
removing a single piece of the vine,
you couldn't do it.

No, they are so intimately joined that it is
impossible to separate the one from the
other.

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And then, think about the new relationship
that came into being on the day of
Pentecost.

There has never been another relationship
like that.

In fact, the Holy Spirit has used the human
body to describe this unique union.

Ephesians 4:15-16 **"But speaking the truth in
love, may grow up into him in all
things, which is the head, even Christ:**

16: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Scripture also describes this mystical union as the connection between Christ and His bride.

And by the way, Christian marriage is supposed to be a picture of that relationship.

Ephesians 5:30-32 **"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.**
31: For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32: This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

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So, whether it is the branch and vine relationship, or in the case of the church, the body and bride relationship, the thought is always the same. It is the merging of Christ and His followers.

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So with all of that in mind, what better example could Christ have used when speaking to those Jews than the process of eating and drinking? --- **"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."**

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Physically speaking, we are what we eat.
The meat and potatoes on our plate become
the flesh and bones of our body, and by
the way, so does the pop and chips.
Yes, we are what we eat.

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I heard about a traveling evangelist who was
visiting a little country church.
After the service, a farmer invited him over
for dinner.
The farmer's wife had cooked fried chicken,
and it was so good that the evangelist
kind of forgot himself.
Actually, he ate far more than would be
consistent with good manners.
Well, the farmer was quite shocked, but he
held his tongue.

As the meal progressed, a rooster hopped up on the fence just outside the window, and began to crow.

"Well," said the evangelist, "that's a proud fellow."

"He should be," said the farmer. "He's just seen two of his sons enter the ministry."

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So, even though it was a little unusual, Jesus had used the perfect example to illustrate His point, and He continued to use it.

John 6:53-59 "--- **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.**

54: Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will

raise him up at the last day.

55: For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56: He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

57: As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58: This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

59: These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum."

V 56 "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

That was it, wasn't it?

That's the kind of relationship He was talking about.

However, as 1 Corinthians 2:14 says **"--- the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."**

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

Certainly the Jews in Capernaum should have heard it.

Jesus had spoken to them as none other man had spoken, and they had seen miracles that none other man could perform.

But they remained unconvinced.

He was just the son of Mary.

For them, and no doubt for the other crowd,
Jesus' words were the litmus test that
showed that they were not His sheep.

V 61-65 **"When Jesus knew in himself that his
disciples murmured at it, he said unto
them, Doth this offend you?**

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

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

He had put His finger on the problem, hadn't
He? --- **"the words that I speak unto
you, they are spirit, and they are
life."**

V 64-65 **"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." (Yes, He had the same foreknowledge that His Heavenly Father had.)

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

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For many, that day and that teaching was the turning point in their lives.

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

No, they never came back.

His miracles were set aside, or simply rationalized away.

They went back to life as usual, just as if their Messiah had never come.

They were not His sheep.

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But the 12 disciples were His sheep.

I don't think they completely understood His illustration either, but they knew who their Shepherd was. **"--- the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name."**

John 6:67-69 **"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?"**

68: Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

69: And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Peter's response was quite typical of the man, straightforward and direct --- **"to whom shall we go?"**

And really, that's the crux of the matter,
isn't it?

It would be a good question for the sinner
to ask before he squanders another
chance to accept Jesus.

"To whom shall we go?"--- any thing else
will be a leap in the dark.

Indeed, it is a good question for the
backslider to ask.

---**"To whom shall** I go?"

The world will deceive me, and sin will
destroy me.

Yes, no one is so foolish, as the individual
who leaves **"the fountain of living
waters"** and hews himself **"out cisterns,
broken cisterns, that can hold no
water."**

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So, Peter's question, and even his answer,
(for he supplied his own answer), was a
good one --- **"to whom shall we go? thou
hast the words of eternal life."**

I'm sure Peter thought he was speaking on
the behalf of all of the disciples, but
Jesus had to make one slight
correction.

V 70-71 "--- **Have not I chosen you twelve,
and one of you is a devil?**

**71: He spake of Judas Iscariot the son
of Simon: for he it was that should
betray him, being one of the twelve."**

Yes, even in that very select group, Satan
had his man.

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We could finish the lesson right here, for
we have come to the end of the chapter.

However, it might be good to spend a little time talking about man's free will, and even God's sovereignty.

A good understanding of both these subjects is vital today because a Calvinist doctrine, which is both unscriptural and harmful, is creeping into many evangelical churches.

I say *harmful* because it insists that man's destiny is irrevocably sealed.

Not surprisingly, this notion is very detrimental to the spreading of the gospel.

If man doesn't have a free will, then the great commission is essentially futile.

Remember Jesus' words in Mark 16:15 **"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"**.

Obviously, this command presupposes both the free will of man and the all sufficiency of God's grace.

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We touched on the subject of free will in our last lesson.

I felt that was necessary because some of Jesus' words about His Heavenly Father giving Him certain individuals might have been misunderstood.

Actually, God can give His Son the sheep of His flock because they both know, and have always known, who will accept God's offer of mercy.

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However, we shouldn't throw out the baby with the bath water.

Because Calvinists also use God's sovereignty to support their teachings,

we tend to shy away from that wonderful truth.

By so doing, we are missing much of the joy that God intended for the church.

Yes, by His sovereign grace, God has crafted many blessings for the bride of Christ, which are both steadfast and eternal.

For more details, we can turn to Ephesians

1:3-6 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure

of his will,

6: To the praise of the glory of his
grace, wherein he hath made us accepted
in the beloved."

"What shall we then say to these things? If
God be for us, who can be against us?"

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I would like to conclude this lesson by
returning once more to the synagogue in
Capernaum.

As we have already noted, Jesus has the same
foreknowledge that His Heavenly Father
has.

Consequently, He already knew what the
reaction to His teaching would be.

How did that affect His message?

Actually, it didn't affect it at all.

In spite of their opposition and eventual
rejection, Jesus gave them the same

opportunity to accept the Bread of Life
that He would have given anyone else.

No, His foreknowledge didn't affect His
great commission.

And when these men stand before Him at the
Great White Throne judgment, they won't
be able to say, *You never told us.*

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In Matthew 7:14, Jesus said "--- **strait is
the gate, and narrow is the way, which
leadeth unto life, and few there be
that find it.**"

That's right, many of the people we tell
about Christ will not believe, but that
doesn't mean they shouldn't hear.

No, everyone should hear.

It's Christ's command: "--- **Go ye into all
the world, and preach the gospel to
every creature.**"

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Ecclesiastes 11:6 "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."