

John 6 Chapter Study

INTRO

Ch. 6 of John's Gospel has proven to be one of the biggest controversies surrounding the life & teaching of Jesus.

It sparked a massive controversy when Jesus first spoke these words 2,000 years ago.

Then, what He said here has become the basis of a controversy that has raged down through the centuries of church history.

While it would be presumptuous in the extreme to imagine we could solve the debate here tonight, we'll find some insights in the story that will help us come to peace & know that we're responding to all this the way the Lord would have us to.

The controversy begins with a miracle all 4 of the Gospels record – the feeding of the 5,000.

I. THE SIGNS Chs. 1-11

K. Feeding the 5,000 6:1-14

¹After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.

Ch. 5 ends with Jesus in Jerusalem.

He healed a lame man at the Pools of Bethesda on the Sabbath.

This raised the outrage of the Pharisees & scribes who attacked Him then began to plot his death.

Jesus boldly challenged them with the need to recognize not only His role a Messiah but His deity as well.

John now jumps forward in time & puts Jesus back in Galilee.

He takes a trip across the Lake of Gennesaret.

Since several of the disciples were fishermen who'd made their living on this lake, finding a boat and navigating across would not have been a problem.

Just to clarify, what the NT calls the 'Sea of Galilee' was known in that time as 'Gennesaret' which comes from the word for "harp" because the lake is roughly the shape of a harp.

It's a large fresh water lake in the heart of Galilee, the northern region of Israel. So it was also known as the "Sea of Galilee."

The largest city on the shore of Gennesaret was Tiberias, built by Herod the Great and named in honor of the Roman Emperor.

Sometimes, as we see here, the lake was named in reference to this city and center of Roman government of the North.

Tiberias continues to be the main city on the shore of Gennesaret.

It's where most of the hotels & stores are & where tours stay when visiting Galilee.

And while it's a beautiful location now, in the days of Jesus it was a mosquito-infested swamp.

For this reason, Herod was building a new capital several miles to the north in the hills above Gennesaret called Sepphoris.

2 Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased.

At this point in Jesus' ministry, He's wildly popular with the common people.

His teaching ministry was like a breath of fresh air, bringing much needed reform to the dead rules & regulation of the scribes & Pharisees.

Jesus spoke with an authority unlike the other teachers of the day.

As the people listened, they heard in Jesus' teaching the real heart & spirit behind the Law of Moses and the Word of the Prophets.

Coupled with His incredible teaching was the power of the miracles He performed so effortlessly. Every where He went people were healed of all kinds of diseases.

Those possessed by demons were delivered in the blink of an eye.

His fame spread far & wide & people from all over were coming to see & hear Him.

3 And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. **4** Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. **5** Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, **“Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”** **6** But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.

John tells us the setting was the season of Passover.

As Jesus' fame is at its peak, with massive crowds *already* seeking Him, the crowds swell to an even greater number as people make their way south to celebrate the feast at Passover.

They join the already large numbers who've gathered round Jesus there on a hill in Galilee.

Jesus looks out, sees the multitudes, turns to one of the disciples & asks *where* they can get enough bread to feed everyone.

He already had a plan but in training the disciples, there was a lesson to learn.

The first step in learning was to see the need & to realize that it went *beyond* their meager resources.

7 Philip answered Him, **“Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.”**

A denarius was roughly equal to about a day's wage & could buy a whole lot of bread.

But even 200 denarii wouldn't be enough to properly feed this group.

We can glean from this that there were a LOT of people there.

John tells us in v. 10 that the *men* numbered about 5,000.

Since only men were counted, & since these were families headed to Jerusalem, many scholars conclude that the multitude could have numbered as much as 10,000 to 12,000!

So Philip was right – 200 denarii wouldn't purchase enough bread.

8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him,

9 “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish,

but what are they among so many?"

It seems every time we see Andrew, he's bring people to Jesus.

Here he brings a lad with 5 small humble rolls & 2 small smoked fish.

Barley bread was coarse & cheap; the bread of the poor.

It was so humble it was made into the shape of little buns, like dinner rolls.

The fish were probably tilapia caught on Gennesaret. They would be dried & smoked.

How Andrew had discovered this little boy is not said, but it's not hard to imagine that as Jesus issued this challenge to the disciples, he tugged on Andrew's robe & showed him what he had.

Andrew was touched by the boy's generosity & pointed him out to Jesus, knowing He too would be pleased.

This was precisely the kind of offering Jesus was looking for . . .

10 Then Jesus said, **"Make the people sit down."** Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

The hillsides of that area are gently rolling & covered with grass, making a perfect setting.

Why did Jesus tell the people to sit down?

He was fulfilling Psalm 23 – "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters."

11 And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed *them* to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. **12** So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, **"Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost."** **13** Therefore they gathered *them* up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. **14** Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, **"This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."**

The skeptics & critics say that what really happened was that when the crowd saw the generosity of this young lad, they all brought out their own provisions which they had hidden away.

If that were the case, Jesus & the disciples would have never concerned themselves with feeding the multitude. They would have known the people had their own provisions.

Another group of skeptics say that this was like a communion service & all everyone got was a tiny little crumb of bread & scrap of fish.

But John is clear – he says in vs. 11 & 12 that everyone ate as much as they wanted, till they were filled up, gluttoned, stuffed.

This miracle was evident to the entire multitude.

In fact, it was so remarkable it led to what follows.

Another proof this was a miracle was the 12 baskets of fragments collected by the disciples.

As we've noted in our study of this miracle in the other gospels, the number 12 would not have been lost on the crowd.

Remember, this multitude was composed of Jews on their way to the Passover in Jerusalem.

12 was to them a number identified with one thing – the *tribes of Israel*.

Jesus was making it clear that He was indeed the Messiah.

If they would receive Him, He would take care of all their needs, just as He had that day.

This point was not lost on them; they got it. But they responded to it wrongly as we'll see in v. 15.

There's a lesson for us to learn from this miracle, the same lesson Jesus wanted the disciples to learn. We'll see what that is this coming Sunday.

L. Jesus Walks on Water 6:15-21

15Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.

The crowd got so excited by this miracle they decided it was time for Jesus to secure the position & power that was rightfully His as Messiah-King.

Discussion began about a popular draft to secure Him the throne.

And if Jesus didn't want to promote Himself, well, that was okay, they would do it for Him.

There had already been numerous false messiahs who'd rallied their supporters to attack some Roman garrison, trying to incite a wide-scale insurrection in Israel. Some of the crowd began to agitate for just such an insurrection.

Rallying behind someone like Jesus who was able to *inspire* through His words & *empower* through His miracles, surely Rome didn't stand a chance.

Knowing what we do about the might of Rome, this might seem like a rather foolish wish.

What you need to know is that just a few decades after this, the Jews *succeeded* in expelling the Romans from the land.

Sure they returned with a massive force & put down the revolt, but it took them several years & cost them heavily in troops & wealth.

Jesus was indeed King, but His kingdom was not of this world.

He would not allow Himself to be made the political pawn of some power-hungry zealots.

So when the movement began to install Him as leader of the insurrection, He sent the disciples down to the shore while He went up into the hills alone.

It was early evening & with the light failing, the people didn't see where He went.

16Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, **17**got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. **18**Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing. **19**So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid. **20**But He said to them, **"It is I; do**

not be afraid.” ²¹**Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.**

The other gospels give us more details about this story that allow us to glean some rich lessons.

John *abbreviates* the story, & by so doing conveys a whole *different* lesson.

It's this = Jesus is MORE!

He's much, much more than you & I know.

No matter how well we know Jesus, there's more we don't know.

And it's His desire for us to know that more, *evermore*.

Consider what the disciples have seen so far . . .

Jesus fed between 10 & 12,000 from 5 rolls & 2 little fish till they were stuffed.

Then, when the crowd wanted to make Him into the King of Israel, He split, frustrating their plans.

The disciples were very much in sympathy *with the crowd* at that point.

So Jesus' response would bring some confusion.

Think about it from the disciples' perspective.

All your life you've been told when Messiah comes He'll take the helm of Israel.

As the royal descendant of David, the Messiah is the rightful heir to the throne.

As the anointed of God, He'll possess divine favor & will lead the armies of Israel in victory over their oppressors.

The golden age of David & Solomon will be restored in an era of peace & prosperity the likes of which will dazzle the world.

This is what the people *expected* of the Messiah & the Kingdom He would bring.

The disciples *thought* they were the ones Jesus had selected to become the chief officials in His royal court in the restored Kingdom.

They *thought* Jesus was merely making the rounds, gauging support for His reign, determining who would make good choices for key positions.

They *expected* that at any time, Jesus would throw off the humble trappings of an itinerant rabbi & embrace His Messianic role & mission as they conceived it.

To give you an idea of just how firmly they held to this belief . . .

In Acts 1, after the resurrection, as Jesus was preparing to ascend into heaven & was saying His last words,

They **STILL** expected Him to get on with *their idea* of what His role as Messiah was all about.

They asked Him, "Lord, will you at THIS TIME restore the Kingdom to Israel?"

So as they watched Him turn 5 loaves & 2 fish into a massive feast with 12 baskets left over – they fully expected the moment had arrived when Jesus would step into the role of glorious King of Israel.

When they heard certain elements in the crowd begin to call for this & began planning for it, they probably rejoiced.

They may have thought Jesus was *waiting* for this – for the people to "get it" & to agitate for Him to take the throne.

They expected Jesus to say, "Well it's about time! Let's get on with the real

program.”
But this is what Jesus said or did.
He did just about the exact **OPPOSITE!**
He split & sent them away from the eager crowd – putting the kibosh on any plans to draft him into being King.
This was terribly disappointing for the disciples. Jesus wasn’t fulfilling *their expectations*.

We *all* know the disappointment of dashed expectations.
And like the disciples, most of us have probably had times of disappointment with God.
He didn’t come through as we expected.
He didn’t measure up to what we thought was the right thing.
I’ve talked with several people over the years who fell away from God because of disappointment with Him.
They believed God for the healing of a sick loved one who died.
Their disappointment led to a loss of faith.
Right now, because of the release of *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* on Friday, everyone’s talking about CS Lewis and *The Chronicles of Narnia*.
It’s in all the papers, websites, & magazines.
CS Lewis is regarded by many as the premier Christian apologist of the 20th Century.
His defense of the Faith helped to bring about the conversion of thousands, including not a few intellectuals.
Yet “Jack” as he liked to be called, had his own bitter season of disappointment with God.
His wife, Joy, came down with cancer & after a brief battle, it went into remission.
Then, it returned with a vengeance & led to an excruciating death that severely shook Lewis’ confidence in God.
Maybe you’re someone who’s been *disappointed* with God.
You believed Him for something but He didn’t come through according to *your expectation*.
The healing of a loved one. The restoration of your marriage.
The return of a prodigal child. Deliverance from financial ruin.
Whatever it was, God didn’t live up to *your expectations*.
Don’t miss the lesson of this passage – for the disappointed disciples in the boat, Are now *apart* from Him, rowing in a fierce storm that threatens to swamp them.
Yet they’re there *at Jesus’ bidding*.
To fresh disappointment is added a seeming lack of His presence, & the presence of a storm that presents the very real possibility of death.
This is what being a follower of Jesus has led to!
But into the very middle of it – comes Jesus, walking on the water.
And suddenly, the disappointment and fear they had had toward the circumstances around them were consumed in the revelation of one who can walk on waves.

In a flash, they realized – JESUS IS MORE!

He isn't *less* than they had *hoped* – He is infinitely **MORE** than they could have *imagined*!

He isn't just some monarch over a petty middle eastern nation – He's the Lord of Heaven & Earth.

He isn't the One who *abandoned them*, He's the One who *comes to them* in their time of need.

He isn't a *victim* of the storm – He uses it as the stage to reveal His greatness.

As they receive Jesus into the boat, v. 21 suggests that time & space collapse so that their journey across the lake is instantly finished.

This just seals the lesson Jesus wants them to learn – that He is God of Creation itself; time & space are in His hand.

Don't miss the lesson here – Jesus is more!

As the disciples stepped out of the boat onto the shore of Capernaum, they saw a *different* Jesus than the One they'd left on the other side of the lake.

Oh, *He* was the same, but *not* in their understanding!

Their disappointment with Him as an earthly king was replaced with a fervent awe of Him as Lord over Creation.

Jesus is More!

He is more than we know.

In fact, some of what we know about Jesus isn't accurate.

God knows that what we know about Him is the most important thing about us.

So He will not allow us to live long with goofy ideas about Him.

No, He will disappoint us where we *need* to be disappointed, because our views & expectations of God are too puny.

He will break us of those hopes that are too petty to do Him justice.

When you find yourself disappointed with God – realize the problem is not with Him but with YOU!

Jesus is MORE.

Alone in the midst of a dark storm at sea is what it may take for God to prove to you He *is* more.

M. Jesus, the Living Bread 6:22-71

1. The people seek Him 6:22-27

22On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone— **23**however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks— **24**when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. **25**And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?” **26** Jesus answered them and said,

“Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.”

The next day, as the crowd which had been fed got up & began looking for Jesus they realized He was gone.

Seeing the boat the disciples had used gone, they assumed they'd returned to their home at Capernaum & followed.

When they arrived, as v. 59 says, they found Him in the synagogue & asked Jesus when He'd arrived. [Pic]

Jesus doesn't bother answering their question; He deals instead with *why they've* come.

They came, not because of full hearts that believed but rather, full bellies they wanted to keep relieved = of hunger.

Jesus was a meal ticket.

27 Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

Jesus knew the motivation behind His popularity.

The common people were seeking Him, not because they supported Him in His mission of redemption but because of He was a handy guy to have around.

He said really cool stuff, healed them of disease, and fed them.

They were still zeroed in on the idea that He was an earthly king who would take care of His subjects, like all good kings are supposed to.

But they were thinking in purely materialistic terms.

All that they wanted out of Jesus was provision for the here & now; the spiritual and eternal was totally absent from their hearts & minds.

Jesus came to bring in a spiritual kingdom that is higher & greater than any earthly kingdom.

2. The works of God are to believe 6:28-40

22 Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”

As Jesus tries to get them to start thinking spiritually, they respond by asking an important question – “Okay, we get it!” they say, “What does God *require* of us? What shall we do so that we can merit God's favor?”

29 Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

They thought there was some specific commandment to keep that would secure God's approval.

In fact, we know that the rabbis & scribes were locked in a fierce debate about which commandment was the most important.

We see this in the story of the time when one of them came to Jesus to ask which was the greatest commandment.

They believed that one of the laws summed up all the rest and if they could just find and concentrate on that one, then they would earn God's blessing.

That's what the crowd asks - what's the one thing we need to do?

Jesus said – “Believe in Me!”

You see, they already all believed He was the Messiah, the Special One sent by God.

So when He said, “**This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent**” they understood He was referring to Himself.

That’s made clear by the next verse . . .

30 Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?”

You see – they *understood* that He was calling them to place abiding trust in Him as the means of gaining God’s approval.

Now – this was a radical claim!

Abraham & Moses were esteemed by the Jews as the greatest men to have ever loved.

Isaac, Jacob, Elijah & Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, & Daniel – all of these were considered radical men of God who’d been vessels of His message through the ages.

But not one of them had come *close* to saying what God required was to but abiding trust in them.

It’s this one statement that separates Jesus from all those who came before & all who came after Him.

What Jesus says here is also the key for understanding all that follows in this chapter.

Jesus said that the essence of what God requires of man is to believe in Him.

Not to just believe what He says or does, but to believe **IN** Him; that is to put one complete reliance on Him.

Let’s say you’re on vacation in South America and want to visit a secluded cave in the rain forest.

You have no idea how to get there but know it’s real because you’ve talked with people who’ve been there.

You go to the tour center at a resort in Rio de Janeiro and ask for directions.

If the woman behind the counter just hands you a map with instructions, you’d have to believe her if you set off on your own.

But let’s say she says, “I can’t just give you a map and Instructions, I have to **SHOW** you how to get there. I’ve been there dozens of times and it’s no problem, but you’ll have to go with me.”

Now, you don’t just believe her – by following her you are trusting **IN** her.

Your belief has moved from trust in the accuracy of a map & directions to a person.

And it is that trust that will see you brought safely to your destination.

That’s what Jesus is saying here.

He isn’t just a good moral teacher who hands us a map to heaven & gives us the rules on how to get there.

He’s the guide who **TAKES** us there as we trust **IN Him**.

He’s the door, the very access into eternal life.

Now – they understood this is what He was saying & it rocked their world.

So they said – “Wow, that’s huge! You’re gonna’ have to back it up with a

sign!”

Then they suggest one -

31 Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

These Bozos!

Why did Jesus say they’d sought after & followed Him to Capernaum?

Because of their *bellies*.

Now they suggest that just as Moses had given Israel bread everyday during the Exodus, Jesus do the same.

In other words – “One mass feeding is nice & enough to move us to make you the king. But if you want us to trust in you for eternal life, well, that’s gonna’ cost a bit more – like , how about a *daily feast?*”

32 Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

The people had said Moses had given their ancestors manna.

Jesus *corrected* them – no where does the Word say Moses had given them manna; that was something God did graciously.

Moses had to collect his daily portion like everyone else.

But then Jesus returns to the point He’d made earlier – they needed to get off their preoccupation with the material & begin to think *spiritually*.

They already had all the evidence they needed to come to a right conclusion about Who He was & the kind of faith they ought to have invested in Him.

Their real need was not for more barley bread – it was for He Who God had sent them – His Son!

34 Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.” 35 And 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.

There it is. He makes it crystal clear.

But even as He spoke these words, the crowd stiffened & began to resist.

So Jesus moved on to rebuke them . . .

36 But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 This 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. 40 And 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.”

As Jesus’ eyes scanned the people assembled there, He knew who was hardening & who was softening in response to Him.

Just as the same sun that melts wax, hardens clay, the words that were leading

some to faith in Him were resulting in the resistance of the lost. Jesus knows who belongs to Him & will make sure His work is completed in them.

3. Partaking of Christ 6:41-59

41 The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, “I am the bread which came down from heaven.”

Remember that John uses the phrase, “the Jews” to refer, not to the common people, but to the religious leaders.

Some of them were there & listening as Jesus spoke to the assembled crowd.

42 And 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’?”

Jesus had grown up in this region and his family was well known.

They found it preposterous that the Messiah could come from a family they knew.

So they laughed & mocked Jesus privately.

43 Jesus therefore answered and said to them, “Do not murmur among yourselves.

They thought their snide remarks were shared with each other quietly – but Jesus nailed them. Then He repeated what He’d said before . . .

44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

No one comes to faith in God on the basis of pure reason, logic, intellect or cleverness.

It takes the sovereign work of God’s Spirit bringing conviction of sin & awareness of the sufficiency of Jesus to atone for sin to bring about salvation.

45 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.

Every man, woman & child will at some point in life know the work of the Spirit pressing him the need of salvation and faith in Christ.

Those who yield to that influence instead of rejecting it will come to saving faith in Jesus.

46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. **47** Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.

Or more accurately we could translate v. 47 this way –

“Mark this well as I am saying it to you: The one continuously believing in me, is also possessing eternal life.”

This word “everlasting/eternal” means much more than just *endless*.

The eternal life we get through faith in Jesus isn’t just an open ended version of the earthly life we got from our parents.

Eternal life is a whole new realm of existence.

We enter that realm through Faith in Christ.

And, what Jesus says here means we enjoy it, *we live in it* by on-going faith in Him.

You can have a whole new life right now – when you abide in a place of continual & unreserved trust in Jesus living takes on a whole new meaning, purpose, and direction.

48 I am the bread of life. **49** Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

Even though manna was miracle bread, it was only meant to sustain physical life. All those who'd eaten it and died of old age.

50 This is the bread

As Jesus says this, He's pointing to Himself.

50 This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. **51** I 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."

This is where the trouble begins. But it's resolved by keeping in mind Jesus' real point in all this – He wants them to understand that HE is the answer to their need.

They must come to a faith not just in His words but IN HIM – In His Person! He will give His very body so that faith IN Him *can* be realized.

But – this presented an idea so radical it stumbled many who heard Him.

52 The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us *His* flesh to eat?"

Since Jesus has been speaking of bread, they jump to the conclusion He means they have to literally eat Him.

That's **NOT** what He means. But He uses their question as a way to reinforce the idea that what He **IS** calling them to is a radical intimacy with Him unlike any relationship with God they've had before.

53 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. **54** Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. **55** For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. **56** He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. **57** As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. **58** This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." **59** These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

God made it utterly clear in the law that the occult practice of human sacrifice & drinking blood was strictly forbidden. [Lev. 3:17 7:25-27 17:10-14 Gen 9:14] So there was no possible way Jesus could have meant this *literally*.

What He was pointing to was the offering He would make of Himself on the

cross where His body would be torn & His blood spilled for the remission of sins.

Here He calls for people to partake of this by a personal identification with Him in faith.

Remember that in that time, eating with someone was the most intimate of social customs.

If you shared a meal with someone it was seen as becoming one with them because the same food that was becoming a part of you was also becoming a part of me, so as we draw from the same plate, we are in a spiritual sense becoming one with each other.

It is from that idiom Jesus is drawing here, but making it even *more personal*, for the meal is Himself – not in a literal sense but in a spiritual application of identification and intimacy.

Again, the key to understand all this is to keep in mind what Jesus said in v. 29 – what God requires is to believe in His Son.

All Jesus is doing in these vs. is explains just what that believing means – it means to identify totally WITH Jesus, to immerse ourselves in Him.

4. The reaction of the disciples 6:60-71

60 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this*, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”

Yep! It was hard because they were thinking in *material*, in *physical* terms.

61 When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you? **62** What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?”

The disciples might be offended at Jesus’ words here, but it’s better to admit they just don’t get it & hang in there, than to turn away now & end up busted later when Jesus sits in judgment.

63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life.

Here’s another clue that Jesus was not speaking literally about eating His flesh & drinking His blood. All this was to be understood & applied spiritually.

64 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.

V. 60 refers to *many* disciples.

Besides the official 12 Jesus had selected as His official followers, there was a wider group of people who’d attached themselves to Jesus.

It was at this point that many of them turned away. Jesus knew they would.

They were following Him for the wrong reasons and what He’d just said would be a convenient time for them to bow out.

There will always be those who join us for a season who seem to be legit disciples and followers of Jesus.

But there will come a time when something comes up that proves their motive in following isn’t pure or right.

And they will use that hardship, that trial, that conflict, that whatever as the excuse for backing out and turning away.

65 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.”** **66** From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

67 Then Jesus said to the twelve, **“Do you also want to go away?”**

“What about you guys? Are you like the rest? Are you going to bail now?”

Of course Jesus knew they wouldn't – He knew they would stay, but notice that He opens the door.

He does so because Jesus never, ever uses force or coercion on us as His followers.

He motivates by love and only love.

What a needed reminder as we consider those we're following as we follow Christ.

68 But Simon Peter answered Him, **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69** Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Peter doesn't understand any better than anyone else what Jesus has meant by the previous words, but he's come to know something the others ought to have considered – Not getting what Jesus says doesn't point up a problem with Jesus, it points up a problem with us!

Peter says in effect, “We might not get what you've just said, but what we do get is that YOU are the answer to the only question that matters. So we'll hang in there and trust that in Your good time it will all become clear.”

70 Jesus answered them, **“Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?”** **71** He spoke of Judas Iscariot, *the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.*

The remaining of the 12 proved the very thing Jesus had just said; that He knew those who really belonged to Him & He would not lose a single one.

But even among the 12 there was one, Judas, who would eventually fall away.

Though God was patient with Judas & showered him with untold grace, he would still turn away because he too failed to do what Jesus spoke of in this chapter - really believe in Him.

Where this ch. has presented a problem in church history has been in the debate over *transubstantiation*.

Transubstantiation is the belief that at the words of a duly authorized priest, the bread of communion turns into the actual body of Christ and the wine of the cup turns into the literal blood of Christ.

Then in a wooden & literalistic application of Jesus' words in vs. 53-55 it's partaking of the elements that accrues to the partaker eternal life.

This is why the celebration of the Mass or Communion is so important in some churches, because they believe that real, tangible grace is granted to someone by taking the literal body & blood of Christ.

A careful review of what Jesus says in this ch. makes this understanding

unnecessary.

What adds to our conviction is that no where in the rest of the NT do we see Jesus then giving His flesh & blood for such consumption.

No where in the books of Acts do we see the early church practicing such a rite.

And no where in the NT letters do we find such a thing regulated or promoted. A careful review of the earliest church documents shows that the first Christians celebrated communion often, but never with the idea that they were eating the actual body & blood of Christ.

The bread was symbolic of His body, the wine was a picture of His blood.

And these things were merely tools to be used as *memorials* to the offering of Christ Who now comes to us in the Spirit, takes us into Himself even as we take Him into our hearts by faith.