

John 6

7/28/2024

In chapter 6 of John's gospel we are presented with accounts of Jesus that take us from people wanting to take him by force and make him an earthly king, to prophesy about one of his own disciples betraying him leading to Jesus' death on a cross. Quite a perspective change about who people saw Jesus as.

In Jesus' prayer on the night he was betrayed Jesus prayed for His disciples - *"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."* (John 17:17)

And John opens his gospel account with these words about Jesus - *"In the beginning was the Word, and the was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome (understood) it."* (John 1:1-5)

The importance of having the truth of God's Word in our lives is expressed in many ways throughout Scripture. Here in John chapter 6 it is described as being akin to the very food that we eat which sustains our life.

This morning we will be doing a very brief overview of this chapter John 6 to see how John arranges this section of scripture to answer this question - who is Jesus?

The chapter begins with the feeding of over 5,000 people with little physical food. But despite this seeming impossible task all get fed. Their physical need get taken care of. After which John records the people want to make Jesus an earthly king. But this is not who he is to be, and so Jesus sends his disciples away from there in a boat, then Jesus himself departs from them.

Later that night we see Jesus walking on water, another miracle. As Jesus is passing by his disciples struggling to get across the lake they see him but don't recognize him at first. But when they do they invite him into their boat. The sea becomes calm and soon all arrive at their destination safe and sound.

The crowd of people Jesus had fed take notice that Jesus is no longer around and go looking for him. But not because of who he really is. Jesus recognizes why they were looking for him. That being to fulfill their physical need of food. Then Jesus has this conversation with them - *"Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."* Then they asked him, *"What must we do to do the works God requires?"* Jesus answered, *"The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."* So they asked him, *"What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"* Jesus said to them, *"Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."* "Sir," they said, *"always give us this bread."*

From the response of the people we could conclude that they were still viewing what Jesus had said from a physical standpoint. That this food Jesus is speaking of is physical in nature.

And this is where Jesus begins to tell them about the spiritual nature of the food when he says - I am the bread of life.

Then Jesus brings forth the details of this food in the form of a metaphor. A Metaphor here being defined as - a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.

This method of teaching is often used by Jesus and the writers of Scripture. A few examples are.

He is the light of the world.

He is living water.

Paul referring to the church as the body of Christ

Peter referring to us as living stones. etc.

But here in John how Jesus is about to describe himself causes his hearers some real problems in accepting him and what he has to say because of what they had learned from the law of Moses. And in particular Leviticus chapter 17 which we looked into in a recent lesson about flesh and blood.

In this section of Scripture, John chapter 6, Jesus is explaining that **having faith in God**, and thus His Son is as essential to us as the very food we eat to sustain our physical bodies. For without this food we would soon be dead. The Hebrew writer states it this way - **“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”** (Hebrews 11:6).

Using Paul’s example of the church being Christ’s body and Christ being the head of that body. In the physical sense should our head become separated from our body the result would soon be death. So it is in the spiritual body of Christ as well.

Now let us break down how Jesus describes this bread of life.

1. *Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*
(verse 35)

Here we become acquainted with the necessity of this food.

2. Belief is the next important part of this message from God - *“But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”* (Verses 36-40)

Here Jesus begins to describe some of what they are to believe and that it produces eternal life.

3. But they start to reject the message. To which Jesus responds - *“Stop grumbling among yourselves,” Jesus answered. “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from*

him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life.” (Verses 43-47)

Here Jesus refers to a promise from God spoken of through the prophet Isaiah - *“All your children will be taught by the Lord, and great will be their peace. (Isaiah 54:13).* And again Jesus speaks of the result of listening and responding, that being eternal life.

4. Next Jesus reiterates that He is the bread of life once again and provides a comparison of this bread with that which their forefathers ate in the desert. *“I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (Verses 48-51)*

5. But the people respond by arguing among themselves. *Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (Verse 52)*

It is a good thing that today those who call themselves Christians no longer argue among themselves about what Jesus has said! No sadly this still exists.

The following passage is a powerful warning and example of how failing to recognize what God has done through Christ turns out.

Luke 19:41-44 - “As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

6. Jesus’ response to their arguing among themselves - *“Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.”*
(verses 53-59)

Here we have the part of Jesus’ message that really causes his disciples to stumble.

Still today many have a hard time telling between what is straight forward literal statements and what is poetical, an analogy or metaphorical in Scripture. Christ being the only one among us who has been in Heaven can only describe things that are there to us in the form of things we have seen here on earth. Thus the description of bread that came down from Heaven.

The prophet Ezekiel was told to act out certain things in the physical world to demonstrate things to Israel. One of those things I recently spoke of from Ezekiel chapter 3 was that the prophet was told to physically eat a scroll. As Ezekiel ate the scroll in Ezekiel 3 we are to partake of the very Word of God that became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:14).

7. "On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"
(verse 60)

Remembering the words of Leviticus 17 - You shall not eat the blood for life is in the blood - Many of those hearing Jesus' words in this passage would have remembered Leviticus and that would make it hard for them to understand these words taken in a literal sense.

"Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them." From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God." Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)"

Verses 61-71 above close out this sixth chapter of John. The truth of the Gospel was and is hard for many to believe and understand in this fallen world.

I would like to close with the words of a preacher spoken some 300 years ago. He lists 4 important points to draw from this chapter concerning its message. These 4 points I think you will agree are still as relevant and important to understand today as they were back then.

'What is meant by *eating this flesh and drinking this blood*, which is so necessary and beneficial; it is certain that it means neither more nor less than believing in Christ. As we partake of meat and drink by eating and drinking, so we partake of Christ and his benefits by faith: and *believing in Christ* includes these four things, which *eating and drinking* do:—*First*, It implies an *appetite* to Christ. This spiritual eating and drinking begins with *hungering and thirsting* (Matthew 5:6), earnest and importunate desires after Christ, not willing to take up with any thing short of an interest in him: "Give me Christ or else I die." *Secondly*, An *application* of Christ to ourselves. Meat *looked upon* will not nourish us, but meat *fed upon*, and so made *our own*, and as it were *one with us*. We must so accept of Christ as to appropriate him to ourselves: *my Lord, and my God*, (John 20:28). *Thirdly*, A *delight* in Christ and his salvation. The doctrine of Christ crucified must be *meat and drink* to us, most pleasant and delightful. We must feast upon the dainties of the *New Testament in the blood of Christ*, taking as great a complacency in the methods which Infinite Wisdom has taken to redeem and save us as ever we did in the most needful supplies or grateful delights of nature. *Fourthly*, To *feed upon Christ* is to do all *in his name*, in union with him, and by virtue drawn from him; it is to live upon him as we do upon our meat. How our bodies are nourished by our food we cannot describe, but that they are so we know and find; so it is with this spiritual nourishment. Our Saviour was so well pleased with this metaphor (as very significant and expressive) that, when afterwards he would institute some outward sensible signs, by which to represent our *communicating* of the benefits of his death, he chose those of *eating and drinking*, and made them *sacramental* actions.'

The 4 points again are -

1. Appetite for Christ
2. Application of Christ to our lives
3. A delight in Christ and his salvation
4. To *feed upon Christ* is to do all *in his name*

And what are the 'sacramental actions' Matthew Henry spoke of which were later prescribed by our Lord?

Paul speaks of them -

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

(1st Corinthians 11:23-27)