

CHAPTER SIX

Inasmuch as the events of Chapter Six are coincident with the third Passover feast of Jesus' public ministry, we outline this chapter as the beginning of the third and final year of public ministry. Wescott summarizes the chapter as containing "the whole essence of the Lord's Galilean ministry." It decisively contrasts the true and false conceptions of the Messianic kingship; Christ's concept is universal and spiritual; the people's concept is local and material.

All four Gospels record the miracles of feeding the five thousand and walking on the sea. To afford the reader a more comprehensive view of the events we have reproduced a harmony of all four accounts taken from *The Gospels; The Unification of the Four Gospels*, by Thomas G. Deitz, published by Eerdmans.

The three discourses of this sixth chapter have been sorely perverted by the advocates of Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation and Sacramentalism. The serious Bible student would do well to abide by the Lord's own interpretation of these discourses on the "Bread of Life" as He gives it in verse 63.

We have outlined chapter six as follows:

II The Word Manifested to the Jews and Their Rejection of Him. 1:19-12:50 (cont.)

D. Public Ministry — Beginning of Third Year 6:1 - 12:50

1. The Bread of Life 6:1-71
 - a. Miracle of the loaves and fishes
6:1-13
 - b. Reaction of the multitudes
6:14-15
 - c. Walking upon the sea 6:16-21
 - d. The Mistaken search, 6:22-29
 - e. The Bread of Life I, 6:30-40
 - f. The Bread of Life II, 6:41-51
 - g. The Bread of Life III, 6:52-59
 - h. The Bread of Life explained, 6:60-65
 - i. The Twelve, their finest hour 6:66-71

THE UNIFICATION OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

by Thomas Deitz

The following harmony is a conflation of all four Gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) of the two miracles; feeding of the five thousand and walking on the sea:

“After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they beheld the signs which he did on them that were sick. And Jesus went up into the mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. Now the passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. And the apostles gather themselves together unto Jesus; and they told him all things, whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught. And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And he took them. And they went away in the boat to a city called Bethsaida to a desert place apart. And the people saw them going, and many knew them, and they ran together there on foot from all the cities, and outwent them.

Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, had compassion on them and he welcomed them, and spake to them of the kingdom of God, and began to teach them many things, And them that had need of healing he cured, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd.

And the day began to wear away; and the twelve came, and said unto him, The day is now far spent, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and country round about, and lodge, and get provisions: for we are here in a desert place. Jesus saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred shillings' worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little; But Jesus said unto them, They have no need to go away; give ye them to eat. How many loaves have ye? Go and see. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many? Now there was much grass in the place, And he commanded them that all should sit down by companies upon the grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties. And he took the five loaves

and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake the loaves; and he gave to the disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they all ate, and were filled. And when they were filled, he saith unto his disciples, Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost. And they took up broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes which remained over unto them that had eaten. And they that did eat were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

When therefore the people saw the sign which he did, they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world.

And straightway he constrained his disciples to enter into the boat, perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king, and to go before him unto the other side of Bethsaida, while he himself sendeth the multitude away. And after he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into the mountain apart to pray: and when even was come, he was there alone.

And when evening came, his disciples went down unto the sea; and they entered into a boat, and were going over the sea unto Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. And the sea was rising by reason of a great wind that blew. When therefore they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, the boat was in the midst of the sea and he alone on the land. And seeing them distressed in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them, about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking on the sea; and he would have passed by them; but they, when they saw him walking on the sea, supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw him, and were troubled. But he straightway spake with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the waters. And he said, Come. And Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters, to come to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and took hold of him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? They were willing therefore to receive him unto them into the boat, and the wind ceased. And they were sore amazed in themselves; for they understood not concerning the loaves, but their

heart was hardened. And they that were in the boat worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

And when they had crossed over, they came to the land unto Gennesaret, whither they were going, and moored to the shore. And when they were come out of the boat, straightway the people knew him, and ran round about that whole region, and began to carry about on their beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. And wheresoever he entered, into villages, or into cities, or into the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole."

MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES AND FISHES

Text 6:1-13

1 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.

2 And a great multitude followed him, because they beheld the signs which he did on them that were sick.

3 And Jesus went up into the mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

4 Now the passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

5 Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?

6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

7 Philip answered him, Two hundred shillings' worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little.

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

9 There is a lad here, who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many?

10 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.

11 Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down; likewise also of the fishes as much as they would.

12 And when they were filled, he saith unto his disciples, Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost.

13 So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces from the five barley loaves, which remained over unto them that had eaten.

Queries

- a. What are Jesus' reasons for feeding this multitude?
- b. Which passover is at hand?
- c. Why did Jesus command the left-overs to be gathered up?

Paraphrase

After the interval of a year of increasingly popular ministry in Galilee, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee (the Sea of Tiberias) to the eastern side. A great multitude was following Him because they were seeing the miracles which He was performing upon those who were sick. Jesus went up the hillside and there He sat down with His disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Jesus looked up, therefore, and seeing that a great multitude was coming unto Him, said to Philip, Where are we to purchase food that these people may eat? This He said to test Philip, for He Himself knew what He was about to do. Philip answered Him, A year's wages would not buy enough bread that everyone may receive even a small portion. But one of His disciples, Andrew — Simon Peter's brother, says to Him, There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are these among so many? Jesus said, Make all the people to sit down. Now there was much grass in that place and the men therefore (about five thousand in number) sat down. Jesus took the loaves, when He had given thanks, and He distributed to the people who were sitting down; likewise He distributed the small fish, as much as the people wanted. When they were all full, He said to His disciples, Gather up the fragments that are left over so that nothing may be wasted. So they gathered them up and they filled twelve hand-baskets with fragments left over by those who had eaten from the five barley loaves.

Summary

Jesus tests the faith and spirituality of a great throng of about fifteen thousand people, plus His twelve disciples, by providing a miraculous meal for all present.

Comment

John's indefinite note of time in verse 1 cannot be construed to mean the events of Chapter Six must follow immediately the events of Chapter Five. A whole year's ministry intervenes between chapters 5 and 6 including such events as:

1. Controversies about the Sabbath in Capernaum; Mt. 12; Mk. 2; Lk. 6
2. Sermon on the Mount; Mt. 5, 6, 7
3. Raising Widow of Nain's Son; Lk. 7
4. Healing demoniac at Gergesa; Mt. 8; Mk. 5; Lk. 8
5. Second visit to Nazareth; Mt. 13; Mk. 6
6. Twelve sent in pairs to preach; Mt. 10; Mk. 6; Lk. 9
7. Herod desires to have Jesus visit him; Mt. 14; Mk. 6; Lk. 9

See Map No. 3 page No. 170 for the Second Year, the popular year, of public ministry.

There are at least four things which led Jesus to seek retirement in a "desert (uninhabited) place," beyond the Sea of Galilee:

- a. The news of the death of John the Baptist
- b. The sudden, and probably evil, interest of Herod
- c. The return of the Twelve from intense evangelistic labors
- d. The great multitudes pressing upon Him continually

Jesus saw the tide of crisis mounting, and He wanted time alone with the Twelve to prepare them and Himself for the coming climax of His ministry (v. 60-71). He thus took the disciples in a boat to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee to a city called Bethsaida Julias (cf. Lk. 9:10; also Map No. 4, page No. 266). This city was at the northeast corner of the Sea of Tiberias. The sea of Galilee had many names:

- a. Sea of Chinnereth (Nu. 34:11; Deut. 3:17; Josh. 13:27).
- b. Sea of Chinnereth (Josh. 12:3; I Kings 15:20).
- c. Lake of Gennesaret (Lk. 5:1).
- d. Sea of Tiberias (Jn. 6:1).

Mark 6:32-33 pictures for us the great Passover crowds catching a glimpse of Jesus and His Twelve disciples, and recognizing Him as the great Galilean miracle Worker. Upon which, more than fifteen thousand people began running along the northern seashore, and arrived ahead of Jesus at the eastern side of the sea.

Enthusiasm was high. It was Passover time, the great deliverance festival of all Jewry. A miracle-working Prophet had arisen in Galilee — He might even be *the* long-awaited hoped-for Prophet “like unto Moses” (Deut. 18:15).

He seems to have eluded the vast throngs momentarily as He goes up into the hillside and sits down with His disciples. Rest was the primary motive, but secondarily, perhaps, He wanted to give the Twelve a “birds-eye-view” of the great mass of people, preliminary to His test questions.

The mention of the feast and its specific name, Passover, is primarily to give a note of time. It may also be given in explanation of the great throngs of people. This is undoubtedly the *third* Passover in Jesus’ ministry — 2:13; 5:1; 6:4, and the fourth, 13:1.

Many commentators see a problem in verse 5, and its parallels in the Synoptics. They cannot harmonize the fact that Matthew and Luke, and especially Mark, say that the crowd arrived first (cf. Mt. 14:13-14; Mk. 6:33-34; Lk. 9:11), while John says Jesus arrived first. R. C. Foster, in his *Syllabus of the Life of Christ* Harmonizes the difficulty in this manner:

“Mark 6:33-34 explicitly affirms that the crowd outran the boat, and when Jesus and the apostles disembarked they found the crowd. Such a multitude — men, women, children; young and old; sturdy, and sick or crippled — would be strung out for miles by such a race. The vigorous ones outran the boat; Jesus saw the situation and picked a natural amphitheatre on the mountain side. By the time the weak stragglers arrived and the multitudes fully assembled, Jesus was seated with His disciples prepared to teach and heal. The accounts are wonderfully independent and harmonious.”

The Synoptics also include the Lord’s tender compassion as He beheld the great crowds coming toward Him. They were “as sheep not having a shepherd” (Mk. 6:34). They were not being led in spiritual paths by the religious leaders of the day. Jesus took this opportunity to heal many and teach them concerning the kingdom of God (cf. Lk. 9:11).

As the day began to “wear away” (Lk. 9:12), the Twelve came to Jesus, asking Him to stop teaching and to dismiss the multitudes that they might go into the villages and obtain food. But Jesus proposed an astounding question, intended to elicit an affirmation of faith and trust in His omnipotence. He turned to Philip with the question, “Whence are we to buy bread that these

may eat?" Why question *Philip*? As a matter of fact, there is no conclusive answer. The Lord was testing Philip's faith, but He was also testing the faith of the other eleven. It is manifestly ridiculous to grasp at only one or two incidents of Philip's life and give him a "matter-of-fact" personality.

Jesus questioned Philip directly, but the entire group indirectly (cf. Mt. 14:16; Mk. 6:36). He needed no help for this situation, for He knew all along what He was going to do. His questions to the disciples were test questions. It is amazing that not one of them could remember the previous miracles, e.g., raising the widow's son from a funeral bier; casting legions of demons out of a man; and even earlier and more appropriate, the changing of water into wine at Cana. Could they not even remember these and suggest that Jesus exercise His miraculous prerogatives to provide food? Perhaps their faith was staggered at the vision of fifteen thousand people.

Philip's answer in verse 7 was one, as Godet puts it, "of good common sense, but not of faith." Many followers of Christ since Philip have followed the road of "good common sense," allowing multitudes to go unfed by the true Bread of Life, when they should have taken the stand of daring-yet-trusting faith.

The "two hundred shillings" would be equivalent to nearly a year's wages! One shilling, or denarius, represented one day's wages. A year's wages would not purchase enough bread that each of the more than fifteen thousand might have even a very small amount! The situation was an impossible one in the eyes of Philip and the others.

There seems to be a considerable lapse of time between verses 7 and 8, for the Synoptics report Jesus as sending the disciples into the crowd to gather all the available food (cf. Mk. 6:36). They found a lad with barley loaves and two small fish. Andrew then stepped forward with the find, but he too, sees the situation to be impossible.

As Hendriksen points out, numerous sermons have been preached on the lad here, but John focuses our attention on the Lord of lords, not the lad.

The loaves were probably somewhat like American hamburger buns, only thinner and harder, while the fishes were probably small, sardine-like fish processed into pickled delicacies. Pickled fish from Galilee were renowned throughout the Empire.

Jesus then, verse 10, prepared the mass of people for the coming repast. He commanded that the people be made to assume

the customary position (half-way reclining) for eating. Mark adds (6:39-40) very picturesquely that they "reclined, garden beds, after garden beds (row after row of people in many colored costumes), by hundreds and fifties." Foster comments, "The lanes of green grass and the solid groups of people dressed in the gay colors of the East looked just like a flower garden . . ."

There are two apparent reasons for this seating in companies :

a. That there might be orderliness, no greediness and elbowing, nor confusion of any sort.

b. Probably to test the faith of the multitudes.

John says there were about five thousand men. Matthew 14:21 adds, "besides women and children." The Greek word which has been translated "number" is *arithmon*, and we have our English word "arithmetic" from it.

As was His customary practice, Jesus gave thanks before the meal. Then He distributed bread and fish to the assembled multitude. Immediately the curiosity seekers ask, "Where and how did the actual miracle take place?" Matthew 14:19 states that Jesus distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds. This is as descriptive as the Gospel writers become. All four are amazingly brief — certain indication of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures never place emphasis upon the mechanics of miracles, but upon their factuality and completeness. Every person there had as much as he could eat and some, it seems, took more than they could use, for there were broken fragments left over.

And so it is, in verse 12, that Jesus sends the disciples back among the rows of men and women to gather up the leftover fragments. What a lesson for the poor stewardship of present day followers of Jesus! The Lord not only taught good stewardship, but He also practiced it! The Creator of all abundance guarded against waste. Certainly it behooves us as dependent recipients of God's providential care to exercise good stewardship, and to guard against waste.

The disciples gathered up (v. 13) twelve *kophinos* (stout wicker baskets) full. These baskets were bottle-shaped, and no Jew ever travelled without his *kophinos*. By carrying his own food along with him he was not forced to shop in markets and touch (ceremonially) unclean persons and objects, and thus be forced to go through the tedious rites of purification overly much. Furthermore, the ceremonial cleanness of his food itself could be assured since he could carry it from his own table.

An interesting story is told in connection with this miracle. A Sunday School teacher was trying to convince her class of youngsters that there was no actual miracle performed by Jesus here at the sea of Galilee. "Children," she said, "you must realize that Jesus didn't actually provide bread and fish for the people to eat. They were really filled by His teaching." A small lad revealed heaven-sought faith when he said, "But what about the twelve baskets left over, Teacher?"

Quiz

1. How many of the Gospel writers record this miracle?
2. Is there an interval of time between chapters 5 and 6? If so, how much?
3. What did Jesus do and teach before providing food for the vast multitude (cf. Mk. 6:34)?
4. What sort of answer did Philip give Jesus?
5. How much bread is two hundred shillings worth?
6. Approximately how many people were fed?
7. What lesson is taught in this miracle regarding stewardship?

REACTION OF THE MULTITUDES

Text 6:14-15

14 When therefore the people saw the sign which he did, they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world.

15 Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain himself alone.

Queries

- a. Who is the prophet the people are looking for?
- b. Why would they resort to force?

Paraphrase

When the people saw the miracle which Jesus performed, they began saying, This is surely the Prophet who is to come into the world. Jesus knowing, therefore, that the people were about to come and seize Him in order that they might forcibly make Him king, withdrew again unto the mountain, Himself alone.

Summary

Enthusiasm grips the multitude. Jesus reads their hearts and sees their materialistic determination to violently force Him to be king.

Comment

When the people saw the sign and had satiated their hunger they immediately concluded, "This must surely be the promised Messiah-Prophet." All in the same day they had heard him speak of the kingdom of God on earth; many of them had seen and experienced His miraculous healing, and everyone had witnessed and partaken of the abundance of miraculously provided food. Some would recall His first sermon in Nazareth where He promised "release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind and liberty to the bruised."

Because of their carnal attitude, the miracle merely confirmed them in their false Messianic hopes, for they "interpreted it as a sign and pledge of the highest temporal prosperity under His rule . . ."

Goaded by visions of temporal glory and prosperity, the multitude decided to seize Him by force, if necessary, and proceed triumphantly to Jerusalem and the Passover. As before, Jesus read their hearts and knew beforehand what they were about to do.

The Synoptics tell us that Jesus first sent the Twelve away in a boat toward the western shore of the sea. Then, by the majesty and authority of His countenance and voice, He dismissed the multitudes, which were already showing signs of taking Him, and went farther into the mountain and began to pray (cf. Mt. 14:23; Mk. 6:45). Jesus prayed for about eight or nine hours. The carnal attitude of the people sorely distressed and tempted Him to avoid the cross. He also wanted to pray that the Twelve not become saturated with this materialistic vision of Israel's Saviour.

Quiz

1. Can you name three things the people had experienced which would cause them to be so enthusiastic?
2. How did Jesus take charge of the situation?
3. How long was Jesus in prayer?
4. Why and for whom would Jesus need to pray?

Text 6:16-21

16 And when evening came, his disciples went down unto the sea;

17 and they entered into a boat, and were going over the sea unto Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

18 And the sea was rising by reason of a great wind that blew.

19 When therefore they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they beheld Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the boat: and they were afraid.

20 But he saith unto them, It is I: be not afraid.

21 They were willing therefore to receive him into the boat: and straightway the boat was at the land whither they were going.

Queries

- a. Why was Jesus not with the disciples?
- b. Why were the disciples afraid?
- c. How did the boat get to land "straightway"?

Paraphrase

Late in the evening His disciples went down to the sea. And they took a boat and began to cross the sea toward Capernaum. As they were going, it became dark and still Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea then began to rise and become exceedingly rough because of a violent wind that was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles they saw Jesus walking on the water and coming toward the boat, and they were terrified. But Jesus said do not be afraid, It is I, Myself. Then they were willing for Him to come into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore toward which they had been rowing.

Summary

Jesus again manifests Himself as Lord of nature by walking on a storm-tossed sea. The disciples are overawed by this manifestation of the supernatural.

Comment

It was late evening, near dark, when the disciples finally embarked in a boat and began rowing for the western shore. They seemed to have been in no hurry to leave Jesus. He had to constrain them earlier to leave Him (cf. Mk. 6:45).

As they rowed darkness enveloped them and the winds began to blow violently and the waves pitched and tossed furiously. Travellers have described the storms on the Galilean Sea as storms of a most violent nature. The sea is surrounded on all sides by mountains, which makes the sea appear as the bottom of a huge bowl. When the winds begin to sweep down into the bowl-like hole, violent sea storms are the result.

They left the eastern shore about dusk, six or seven in the evening, and now it was about three or four a.m. the next morning (fourth watch, Mt. 14:25). Their progress was so slow that they had rowed only about 3 miles (25 or 30 furlongs) in approximately nine hours.

They were just about midway between the shores, for the Sea of Galilee is approximately six miles wide. Mark (Mk. 6:47-50) tells us that Jesus saw their predicament and came to them walking on the sea. Jesus wished to pass them by, but when they saw Him they thought they were seeing a ghost and they literally shrieked in terror. Before we smile at the superstitious fears of the disciples, let us consider what we would have felt and said had we been in the boat with them.

When Jesus came close enough to be recognized He shouted, "Do not be afraid, it is I, Myself." Matthew records the next incident — Peter's attempt to walk to Jesus on the water (Mt. 14:28-31).

It is worthy of note here to see the independence of the accounts of this miracle:

- a. Matthew alone mentions Peter's attempt to walk on the water (Mt. 14:28-31).
- b. Mark alone mentions Jesus seeing their distress while still on the mountain (Mk. 6:47-48).
- c. John alone mentions that it was dark (6:18) that they had rowed about 3 or 4 miles (6:19), and that the boat arrived "straightway" where they were going (6:21).

The infidelic theories of the liberal and radical scholars claim the Gospel writers were not inspired to write independent ac-

counts, but copied from one another. *But the facts say differently* — they wrote independently of one another.

Upon recognizing the figure and hearing His voice, the twelve were very glad to let Him come into the boat. Matthew again tells us that when He and Peter entered the boat the disciples worshipped Jesus (Mt. 14:33).

The "straightway" of verse 21 may mean either:

- a. The sea was calmed and the boat was rowed quickly to their destination, or,
- b. A miraculous immediate arrival of the boat at its destination was effected.

Mark (Mk. 6:53-56) shows us where they were going. They had started for Capernaum (6:17), but driven by sea and wind, they eventually landed at the plain of Gennesaret (cf. Map No. 4, page 267). Here the people ran to Him from all the region round about, carrying their sick to Him. "As many as touched Him were made whole."

Quiz

1. How did the violence of the storm affect the progress of the disciples in the boat?
2. How did Jesus know of their predicament?
3. What did the disciples do when they saw Jesus coming toward them?
4. What did Peter do when he recognized the Lord?
5. Name the three incidents reported independently by Matthew, Mark and John.
6. Where did the disciples and Jesus finally put to shore?

THE MISTAKEN SEARCH

Text 6:22-29

22 On the morrow the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, save one, and that Jesus entered not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples went away alone

23 (howbeit there came boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks):

24 when the multitude therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they themselves got into the boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

25 And when they found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?

26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled.

27 Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed.

28 They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God?

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

Queries

- a. What is the significance of the parenthetical statement of verse 23?
- b. How has God sealed the Son of man?
- c. How can belief be a work?

Paraphrase

The next day the multitude that remained on the other side of the sea realized that there was only one boat there, and that Jesus had not embarked in it with His disciples, but that His disciples had gone away by themselves (howbeit there were some boats, driven from Tiberias by the storm near to the place where they ate the bread and fish after the Lord had given thanks); and when the multitude saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats from Tiberias and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. When they found Jesus on the western side of the sea, they said to Him, Teacher, when did You come here? Jesus answered them, saying, I tell you most truly, you have been searching for Me not because you saw signs of deity in My miracles, but because you ate of the loaves and were satiated like cattle. Stop working for the temporal food, but work for the food which endures continually unto eternal life. The Son of man will give you this food, for God the Father has confirmed His deity and has put His seal of endorsement upon Him by the signs and miracles which He does. They said therefore to Him, What are we to do that we may be working the ordinances and laws of God? Jesus answered them, This is the work which God requires of you, that you trust and obey Him Whom God has sent.

Summary

The crowd, in their search the day following the miracle of the feeding, found Jesus and the disciples both gone. They crossed the sea in search of the miraculous meal-providing Prophet. The multitudes found Jesus only to hear Him accuse them of carnal motives in their search.

Comment

Where such a multitude found lodging during the stormy night we do not know. Perhaps the storm was localized upon the sea only and the great crowds slept under the stars. The next morning the people noticed three things:

- a. Only one boat remained (however, boats from Tiberias appeared later).
- b. Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples the night before, yet Jesus was nowhere to be found.
- c. The disciples had gone away alone and had not returned.

Evidently, some of the people did not go away when Jesus dismissed them. Perhaps the storm caused many to remain until it should pass.

Mention of the boats (v. 23) from Tiberias is interesting. Tiberias, of course, was a city on the western shore of the sea. The boats were probably blown across the sea during the storm since the wind was blowing from west to east, or, contrary to the direction the disciples were rowing. The multitude presumed Jesus to have gone away in the night in one of these boats.

When they realized that Jesus was not there, and that the disciples had not returned for Him, they got into the boats from Tiberias and began to search for Jesus. This multitude was determined to find Him and carry out their original plan to make Him king. Further, they did not wish to lose a "meal-ticket." The Jews, except for the rich, spent every waking moment toiling for the barest necessities — many were starving.

Finding Jesus on the western side of the sea, they began to question Him, "Teacher, when did You come over here? We were looking for You on the other side; how did You get over here?"

The Lord, with His omniscient and infinite discernment, reveals (v. 26) the carnal motivation behind their searching. They saw the miracles, but they did not see them as signs of His deity and the spiritual nature of His kingdom. They saw in the

miracles, rather, an era of sensory prosperity — “easy street” for Israel.

The multitudes sought Jesus because they had had their hunger satisfied. Like beasts of the field, they sought only to satisfy their physical desires — they walked by taste and sight, not by faith! In fact, the Greek word *echortasthete* here translated “were filled” means, literally, “to give fodder to animals.” They could not think of their souls for thinking of their stomachs. Some think it strange that these people, having heard Jesus speak of the kingdom of God and seen Him work the miracles of the previous day, should still have a materialistic attitude. It is even *more strange* that millions of men and women of the twentieth century in America should be obsessed with gaining only material values because:

- a. We have in the completed New Testament a better testimony to the deity of Jesus and the spiritual nature of His kingdom — better even than the knowledge of the eye-witnesses.
- b. We enjoy more freedom to search out and adhere to what is truth than the people of that day, for they were beset by religious intolerance and persecution.
- c. We are not sorely pressed with the burden of providing just the basic necessities as were most of the Jewish people.

Millions surely need the admonition of Jesus in Matthew 6:19-34 especially, “But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mt. 6:33).

Jesus tells the people (v. 27) they are spending their best energies on that which is temporal (cf. Isa. 55:1ff). Physical food satisfies only physical hunger. But man is also created with a hunger for spiritual satisfaction (cf. Mt. 5:6) which only spiritual food can satisfy. There are at least four things for which men hunger in the realm of the spiritual:

- a. Righteousness and justification before God
- b. The ultimate truth
- c. Life beyond the grave
- d. True unselfish love

Christ alone can supply satisfaction to the hungry spirits of men. He will show (John 6:30-65) what the true spiritual food is. For the present, He makes it plain that God has sealed Him to be the source of spiritual life. The word sealed means that God sent Him, and confirmed His commission through signs and

miracles. In Bible times the seal on a document was the sign of authority. If a document was impressed with King's seal, it was to be obeyed just as explicitly as any verbal order of the King. These Jews should have recognized the impressed seal of Jehovah-God in the miracles of Jesus and should have sought the spiritual kingdom which Jesus taught.

The people of Palestine, so long accustomed to the Pharisaic system of meritorious works, immediately seized upon Jesus' words and eagerly desired to know what works they might do to enjoy their illusioned era of material plenty. They expected Jesus to begin laying down rules and regulations by which they might earn prosperity.

In verse 29 Jesus reconciles all the teachings of the New Testament on faith and works. Westcott says, "This simple formula contains the complete solution of the relation of faith and works." But how is faith a *work*? Here are the answers of some highly respected and conservative scholars:

- a. ". . . the work of faith is the work of receiving the gift of God." (Hendriksen)
- b. "It is a true work as answering to man's will, but it issues in that which is not work." (Westcott)
- c. "Faith means a certain relationship with God . . . a relationship in which we give God the trust and the obedience and the submission which naturally arise from this new relationship." (Barclay)

Faith, then, becomes a work when man submits his will to the revealed will of God and acts in accord with the commandments of the will of God. What better explanation can we find of the relationship between faith and works than that of James 2:20-26: Saving faith must be manifested by obedience to the commands of God through His Son, even Jesus Christ!

Quiz

1. How would boats get from Tiberias to the eastern side of the sea?
2. What did the multitudes see in the miracle of the loaves?
3. In what manner did Jesus describe their desire to be fed?
4. Why is it strange that 20th century people should be obsessed with material ideals? Give three answers.
5. Name four things men hunger for in the spiritual realm.

6. How has God sealed Jesus?
7. How is believing in Christ a work? Cite Scriptures to prove your answer.

THE BREAD OF LIFE, I

Text 6:30-40

30 They said therefore unto him, What then doest thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe thee? what workest thou?

31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.

32 Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven.

33 For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

34 They said therefore unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

35 Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

36 But I said unto you, that ye have seen me, and yet believe not.

37 All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

38 For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39 And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.

40 For this is the will of my Father, that every one that be- holdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

Queries

- a. How could they have the audacity to ask Jesus to work a sign?
- b. What is the contrast between "manna" and the "true bread out of heaven"?
- c. Does verses 37-39 teach "eternal security"?

Paraphrase

Therefore they said to Him, What wonder do You perform that we may see it and believe in You? What can You do to compare with what our forefathers saw? They ate the heaven-sent manna, as the Scripture says, He gave them bread out of heaven to eat. Jesus then said to them, I tell you most solemnly, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, nor was the manna the genuine Bread from heaven. My Father gives you the genuine Bread out of heaven, for the genuine Bread of God is He Who comes down out of heaven and gives Life unto the world. They replied, Lord, give us this Bread forever more! Jesus answered them, I am the Bread of Life. He who surrenders and follows Me will never be hungry for spiritual sustenance, and he who trusts and obeys Me will never thirst for righteousness. But as I told you before, although you have seen me manifest the works of God, still you do not trust and obey Me. All whom My Father draws to Me will come unto Me and I will never refuse nor reject one of them who comes to Me because I have come down from heaven not to do My Own will, but to do the will of Him Who sent me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should not lose, through inability, any of those whom God has drawn unto Me. For this is also the will of My Father, that every one who continues to behold the Son with a trusting and obedient recognition should have eternal life; and that I should raise him up at the last day.

Summary

Jesus introduces Himself as the Bread of Life. He makes several claims to deity in answer to their misguided requests for a carnal sign. He further promises not to lose, through powerlessness or refusal, anyone drawn unto Him by the Father.

Comment

Why did the crowd ask for a sign? Had He not just given them one in the loaves and fishes? They seem to demand a sign directly from heaven. This is evident from Jesus' answer. The crowd did not mention any comparison with Moses, but Jesus read their thoughts. He had claimed to be greater than Moses, yet He had not caused manna to rain from heaven. His sign had been merely to take bread and fish already supplied and make more bread and more fish. "Moses gave us bread direct from

heaven — if You are greater than Moses, show us a sign directly from heaven.”

In verses 32 and 33, their evaluation is shown to be faulty. In the first place, it was not Moses who gave them the manna, but God through Moses. Secondly, the manna was perishable bread, feeding only the physical hunger, while the genuine Bread of God is the Son of God. He satisfies the hunger of the soul. He gives Life with a capital *L* to the world. The manna fed only the Jewish nation, and for only a limited time. The Bread of God feeds everyone who comes to Him for all eternity.

Verse 34 betrays these Galileans as being so eager to fulfill their materialistic desires that they do not sense the divine mysteriousness of Jesus' answer, and they hastily interpret Him to mean literal bread.

The multitude is eager to get something from Christ, and He offers them Himself. This (v. 35) is one of the great “I am” claims of Jesus. He has also said:

- a. *I am* the Light of the world (Jn. 8:12)
- b. *I am* the Door (Jn. 10:7, 9)
- c. *I am* the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:11, 14)
- d. *I am* the Resurrection and the Life (Jn. 11:25)
- e. *I am* the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn. 14:6)
- f. *I am* the true Vine (Jn. 15:1, 5)

Christ claims to be, as the Bread of Life, the sustainer of all heavenly life. He communicates life to all who partake of Him. Compare all the other life-sustaining elements spoken of in the Scriptures:

- a. The Tree of Life (Gen. 2:9; 3:22, 24; Prov. 3:18; Rev. 2:7; 22:2)
- b. The Water of Life (Jn. 4:14; 7:38-39; Rev. 21:6; 22:1)
- c. Word of Life (I Jn. 1:1; Jn. 6:63, 68)

Notice the parallelism of “coming to me” and “believing on me.” To come to Jesus is to follow Him in trust and obedience. Jesus only introduces Himself as the Bread of Life here — the process of assimilation is explained later.

In verse 36 Jesus refers His listeners to His previous soul-searching statement in verse 26. Although they had seen the miracle and its evident sign that He was deity, they would not surrender to His spiritual kingdom and His rule over their hearts. Their spiritual understanding had been darkened by materialism. They had seen Him work many miracles in Galilee,

even to the raising of the widow's dead son (cf. Map No. 3, page 170).

But the unbelief of the multitudes, both in Judea and now here in Galilee, will not bring disaster and loss to those few who do trust and obey Him. His cause will not suffer ruin, neither will His followers be defeated. They will conquer through His victory. He and His are not dependent upon public favor or support, but are supplied with divinely eternal Power.

Verse 37 also considers the question, "How does God give anyone to Jesus?"

- a. He draws them to Himself and His Son by His love which has been shed abroad in our hearts (cf. Rom. 5:5; Jn. 3:16).
- b. He gives them to the Son through His drawing, and their own free choice. That the freedom of choice is man's prerogative is evident from *all other Scripture and this context*. Man exercises this prerogative until the end of his life on earth. Even after having become a member of the body of Christ (the church) he continually chooses to remain in the fold, or is consequently lost. In exercising this choice, man must continually "show his faith by his works" (cf. Jas. 2:18).

Jesus will never refuse or reject any who come to Him and abide in Him (cf. Jn. 15:1-10). Man's rejection by God is caused by man's rejection of God.

The reason Jesus will not cast any out is that He has come to be baptized (immersed) in the will of the Father. Not only so, but He has also sacrificed the glories of heaven, and has come down to earth to accomplish the Father's will.

In verses 39 and 40 Jesus explains the "will of the Father" more fully. God foreknows who will believe and who will reject, in the sense of foreknowing what men will do. He sees all time as present. He foreknows who will be faithful and, by grace, gives the faithful to Jesus. But these verses are far from teaching any such notions as "once in grace, always in grace." Quite to the contrary, the emphasis here is upon Jesus' *ability* and *willingness* to save that soul, which of its own free will continues committed to Him. The emphasis is not upon an "irresistible grace." Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all those that abide in Him of their own volition. There definitely is the possibility of falling from grace and being eternally lost — even after having

come into covenant relationship with God through Jesus (cf. Jn. 17:12; Acts 8:14-24; Gal. 5:4). If there is no possibility of the elect ever falling from grace, why were *all* of the epistles of the New Testament written to warn the elect from falling from grace?! Such doctrines as "irresistable salvation" and "eternal security" are not taught in the New Testament!

The true interpretation of this particular passage can only mean that Jesus keeps only those who remain faithful, from being lost. The Greek participles *theoron* and *pisteuon* (beholding and believing) are in the present tense and can only mean continuing action. One must continue to behold and obey in order that Jesus may keep him from being lost.

Quiz

1. Why did the multitudes ask for a sign in order that they might believe? What did they think about the sign He had just given them?
2. Name five "I am" claims of Jesus.
3. What is another way of saying, "he that cometh to me"?
4. How does God "give" men to Jesus?
5. Does John 6:39 teach "once saved, never lost"?

THE BREAD OF LIFE, II

Text 6:41-51

41 The Jews therefore murmured concerning him, because he said, I am the bread which came down out of heaven.

42 And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how doth he now say, I am come down out of heaven?

43 Jesus answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

44 No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day.

45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me.

46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he that is from God, he hath seen the Father.

47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life.

48 I am the bread of life.

49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

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

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

Queries

- a. Why did these people call Joseph Jesus' father?
- b. If only those whom the Father draws can come to Jesus, how do we know who is drawn?
- c. How is it possible for Christ's flesh to be the Bread of Life? How may man eat of it?

Paraphrase

Because Jesus said, I am the Bread which came down out of heaven, the Jews muttered among themselves, saying, Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, Whose father and mother we know? How then can He say, I have come down out of heaven? Jesus answered them, Stop muttering one to another among yourselves. The reason you cannot accept My claims is because of your trust in human knowledge and wisdom, for no one is able to come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him; and those drawn to Me by My Father I will raise up in the last day. Men will be drawn to me, as the prophets said, in this manner: And they shall all be taught of God. Everyone who has heard the Word of God and has learned in his heart is coming to Me. This, of course, does not imply that any mortal has ever seen God face to face. He Who comes from the Father has seen Him. I tell you most emphatically, He who is trusting and obeying Me is now possessing eternal life. I am the Bread of Life — I am the source of eternal life. The fathers you so eagerly referred to before, ate the manna in the wilderness; yet they died. But this is the Bread that comes down out of heaven, so that anyone may eat of it and never die. I am this living Bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live forever. The Bread that I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.

Summary

Again the Jews display their utter lack of spiritual insight. The way to spiritual knowledge is to be drawn of God unto His Son; the way to be drawn is to hear and learn the Word of God. The heaven-sent Food which gives eternal life is the atoning death of Christ. Men appropriate this Food by trusting and obeying the Son of God.

Comment

From the moment Jesus had declared Himself to be sent from the heavenly presence of God, the Jews began to mutter among themselves. One after another was saying, "Isn't this Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Joseph the carpenter? why, we know His mother and father! How can He be from heaven? Preposterous!" They were judging by human standards; they rejected Jesus because:

- a. They judged things by human values and external standards
- b. They were too eager to express their opinions and argue, while they were not at all interested in God's revealed will.
- c. They listened, but would not learn (cf. Jn. 5:39-42).

These Jews sound just like our self-styled "modernists" of today who still stumble over the claims of Jesus to be heaven-sent. Today's skeptics also "know" Joseph (or some other mortal) to be the father of Jesus. The Galileans said this before (cf. Mt. 13:56; Mk. 6:3). Most conservative scholars see strong inference for the virgin birth here. These Jews were well aware that, when Jesus claimed to be sent from heaven, He was claiming supernatural birth into this world. When they muttered about "Knowing His father and mother" the inference is strong that Jesus may even have mentioned His virgin birth—at least He implied it. The Fourth Gospel complements the Synoptics in the doctrine of the virgin birth (cf. Introduction, page 14).

In verses 44 and 45 Jesus explains the reason for their failure to grasp the significance of His teaching. Then He shows them the way to true spiritual knowledge and wisdom. There can be no true knowledge of God apart from His revealed Word. Some may gain partial knowledge of God through nature (cf. Rom. 1:19-20). To know God in the inward man, however, one must hear His Word and learn of Him. Thousands *hear* God's Word but never *learn* it! It is as Jesus said, men must will to do God's will in order to really *learn* of God (cf. Jn. 7:17).

The major discussion of these two verses (44-45) today, however, centers in the *manner* of God's drawing men unto Jesus. There is no excuse for all the abuse and misinterpretation to which these verses have been subjected. Jesus interprets His statement concerning the "drawing" with preciseness and lucidness. Men and women are drawn to Him through God's revealed Word. The drawing power comes from a knowledge of God's purposes culminating in the "lifting up of the Son of man." R. C. Foster's comments on these verses are very appropriate here:

"The coming is man's part; the drawing is God's part; both work together. God draws men to Jesus by the death of Jesus on the cross. 'If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me.' No man can come to Jesus as Saviour and King in the full sense until God has by His divine plan provided the mysterious drawing power of the cross. The statement of Jesus seems to be in sympathy for the crowd in their rejection of Him. They do not understand His spiritual message, but when He has been crucified before them and the gospel of the cross proclaimed if they do not come to Him then, there is no hope. The drawing is to be done by hearing 'from the Father,' i.e., hearing the Word of God and learning the Way of Life. The drawing cannot be irresistible, otherwise man would be but a machine and no one could choose whether or not He should come to Jesus. No one could accept and obey for himself, if he could not resist the drawing. No man could 'come' to God if he could not also 'refuse to come.' Jesus cites the teaching of God in the Old Testament as the very thing which should have helped to draw them and to cause them to come to Him."

The quotation from the Old Testament is not specific, but general (cf. Isa. 54:13; 60:2-3; Jer. 31:33-34; Joel 2:28; Mic. 4:2; Zeph. 3:9; Mal. 1:11).

Although we may learn of God through the Son Who has come from the Father's very bosom, we still do not fully comprehend His purposes and actions, for we are limited by finite restraints and physical hindrances (cf. I Jn. 4:12, 20). Someday, however, we shall see God face to face (cf. I Jn. 3:2). But until then we must behold Him by faith and trust in the incarnate Son.

In verses 47-51 Jesus shows further that coming to God is done through faith in the Son. He is the Bread of Life. We are told that we must eat of the Bread of Life. How are we to

do this? Verse 51 is the key. The act which truly makes Jesus the Bread of Life is His atoning death upon the cross. This atonement was done willingly (He *gave* His flesh. cf. Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2; Mt. 20:28). To believe (trust, adhere to, obey) is man's way to eat the Bread of Life. The Scriptures teach burial in baptism to be the culminating act where man appropriates the blood of Christ and His atoning death to man's sins (Rom. 6:1-11; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:10-13; Titus 3:4-7).

Quiz

1. What is the significance of the statement of the Jews, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph . . . ?" What is implied?
2. How does one learn of God?
3. How may we know the true interpretation of verses 44-45?
4. What is the drawing power of God (cf. Jn. 3:14; 8:28; 12:32; I Cor. 1:23-24)?
5. Is this drawing able to be resisted? Explain.
6. While we are in this world, how do we behold God?
7. How are we to eat the Bread of Life? How do we appropriate Christ's blood to our sins?

THE BREAD OF LIFE, III

Text 6:52-59

52 The Jews therefore strove one with another, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

53 Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves.

54 He that 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 abideth in me, and I in him.

57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me.

58 This is the bread which came down out of heaven: not as the fathers ate, and died; he that eateth this bread shall live for ever.

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

Queries

- a. Why did Jesus speak so emphatically of eating His flesh and drinking His blood?
- b. Where, besides verse 56, does Jesus tell how we may abide in Him, and He in us?
- c. What is a synagogue, and where in Capernaum?

Paraphrase

The Jews argued angrily with one another, saying, How can He give us His flesh to eat? Jesus replied, I assure you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you have no Life in yourselves. The one trusting wholeheartedly in the saving efficacy of My death is the one eating My flesh and drinking My blood, and he possesses eternal life. This is true, for My body and blood sacrificed for the world's sin is the genuine food and drink for the soul of man. He who feeds on this spiritual food and drink dwells continually in Me and I also dwell in him. Just as the Father of Life sent Me, and I live by abiding in the Father, even so whoever continues to feed on Me shall live through Me. This is the Bread which came down from heaven. It is not like the manna of which your forefathers ate and died. To the contrary, he who eats the Bread from heaven shall live forever. He said these things in a synagogue while He was teaching in Capernaum.

Summary

Westcott summarizes this section in one sentence: "The personal appropriation of the incarnate Son." In verses 41-51 the question of the Jews was the Personage of Jesus, "Is this not the son of Joseph?" Jesus answered that question. Now the question of the Jews (v. 52-59) is, "How does He communicate to us this life which He claims to offer?" Jesus answers in figurative language: men must take His life into the very center and core of their hearts; men must eat the spiritual dynamic which He alone is able to provide.

Comment

The crowd is a little nauseated (cf. v. 60-61) at the literal implication, which they themselves attach to His words. Their objection is open and argumentative. Unbelief always takes offense at the truth. He is demanding that every man who

desires eternal life must eat His flesh. Over and over (cf. v. 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58) He repeats the demand that men must eat His flesh and drink His blood. Why is Jesus so emphatic? What does He mean? Can it be that He means a literal eating of flesh and blood? Impossible! Yet, ever since Jesus uttered these words men have misinterpreted and wrested them to suit their purposes and schemes. The Transubstantiationists pervert this context to support their absurd doctrine of the actual presence of the flesh and the blood of Christ in the Loaf and the cup. They contend that one must literally partake of the flesh and blood of Jesus, and they, therefore, sacrifice the body of Jesus anew each week at the Mass. The book of Hebrews is plain as to the heretical nature of such a practice (cf. Heb. 10:10, 12). The sacrifice made of Christ's body at Calvary was "once for all."

The Sacramentalists also pervert this passage. According to the Sacramentalists, this passage demands unflinching observance of the Lord's supper. They make the Sacrament the means of life. According to this teaching, the Christian, by absenting himself from the Lord's Table, cuts himself off from any contact with the saving blood of Jesus Christ. Carried to its logical conclusion, this doctrine is equally as heretical as the Roman Catholic's transubstantiation. The Sacramentalist theory comes very near the Roman system of meritorious works.

None of these false doctrines would prevail today if religious leaders would read this context and apply only the very basic rules of Hermeneutics. A first principle in the interpretation of any book is: "Let an author's own explanation of his meaning take precedence over any other interpretation." Jesus Himself explains exactly what He means by "eating" His flesh and "drinking" His blood when He says, "It is the *spirit* that giveth life; the *flesh* profiteth nothing: *the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life.*" (Jn. 6:63) (Italics mine). It would profit us nothing to eat the literal flesh and blood of Jesus, even if it were possible. We appropriate the flesh and blood of Jesus (Life) when we partake of His humanity and His divinity by abiding in all the words of Jesus and His apostles.

The absolute necessity of living by abiding in God's Word is the point of emphasis here, not the literal flesh. The message Jesus seeks to deliver here is that He is the Word of God manifest in the flesh, and that this multitude must divorce their minds from seeking only the physical bread, and turn to the

heavenly Bread of Life (cf. Mt. 4:4). The great apostle Paul says it so clearly, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me." (Gal. 2:20).

To eat and to drink is to assimilate something external to oneself, digest it and make it a part of one's very being. That is what Paul does by living in faith. There is much more to eating and drinking the flesh and blood of the Son of man than partaking of the Lord's Supper, for even that observance, regardless of how often, may be done unto condemnation unless accompanied with proper attitudes of faith and love and obedience. "*Besides,*" as Barnes says, "*there is no evidence that he (Jesus) had any reference in this passage to the Lord's Supper.*"

By assimilating His sacrificed body to our spiritual life, we abide in Him (v. 56). To abide in Him is to continue in His commandments, to participate in the benefits of His death, and to bear fruit. Check all the following references to abiding in Him:

- a. Love and obey (Jn. 14:15-17; 14:21; 14:23; 15:10).
- b. Bear fruit (Jn. 15:1-6).
- c. Dwell in unity (Jn. 17:21-23).
- d. Walk as Jesus walked (I Jn. 2:6).
- e. Love one another (I Jn. 2:10; 3:17-18; 4:12-13).
- f. Let the apostle's words abide in us (I Jn. 2:24).
- g. Refrain from continuing in sin (I Jn. 3:6-9).
- h. Keep His commandments (I Jn. 3:24).
- i. Confess Jesus as the Son of God (I Jn. 4:15).
- j. Abide (continue, dwell) in love (I Jn. 4:16).

A very few early manuscripts add, at the end of verse 56, this gloss: "even as the Father is in me and I in the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, unless ye receive the body of the Son of man as the bread of life ye have not life in him." Most of our earliest and best manuscripts (Aleph, B, etc.), however, omit this gloss. It is very interesting to note that the latest great manuscript on the Fourth Gospel (Bodmer Papyrus, P. 66) also omits this gloss: more evidence for the purity of our present text.

Verse 57 reads much the same as 5:26. The Son, being One with the Father, "has life in Himself." Because He has life we may be partakers of that life, if we eat Him. The food which Christ gives is His Incarnation. The "bread which came

down out of heaven" is the humanity of Christ. The best explanation for the reason behind Jesus' taking the form of flesh and blood is found in Hebrews 2:14-18. Christ's participation in our nature was necessary in order that He might conquer death. His Incarnation is not only the means of our salvation, but an example for our daily profession (cf. Phil. 2:5-8). It is well to note here that the word *trogen* (the one eating) is in the present tense and must be translated "the one continuing to eat me . . ." etc. Assimilation of the Bread of Life must be continuous.

In verses 33 and 35 Jesus stated that He was the genuine Bread from heaven, as contrasted with the transitory manna which was only the type. The temporal nature of the manna is emphasized again here in verse 58.

Among the ruins of Tell-Hum, one of the given sites of Capernaum, an explorer found what remains of a once elegant synagogue. Upon one of the stone blocks of the former synagogue he found an engraving of a pot of manna. Westcott remarks, "This very symbol may have been before the eyes of those who heard the Lord's words." Jesus taught in other synagogues in other villages and cities (cf. Lk. 4:16; Mt. 12:9).

Quiz

1. Give some Scriptural reasons why Transubstantiation is a false doctrine.
2. Why is the theory of the Sacramentalists wrong?
3. How should Jesus' words be interpreted?
4. What do you think Jesus means by eating and drinking?
5. Is there any evidence that Jesus is speaking of the Lord's Supper in this passage?
6. Name at least five ways of abiding in Christ.
7. Why, according to Hebrews 2:14-18, did Jesus take upon Himself the form of flesh and blood?

THE BREAD OF LIFE, EXPLAINED

Text 6:60-65

60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?

61 But Jesus knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at this, said unto them, Doth this cause you to stumble?

62 What then if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before?

63 It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life.

64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who it was that should betray him.

65 And he said, For this cause have I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of the Father.

Queries

- a. What was hard about Jesus' saying?
- b. Why did Jesus mention His future ascension?
- c. How do words give life?

Paraphrase

Now when the great crowds of Galilean followers heard this, many of them said, This saying is offensive and hard to tolerate. Who can be expected to accept such teaching? But Jesus, knowing within Himself that these disciples were protesting concerning His teaching, said to them, Are you stumbling and entrapping yourselves over my teaching? What then will be your reaction should you see the Son of man ascending to heaven where He was before? Eating My flesh would gain you nothing; the Spirit is that which makes alive. The words that I have spoken unto you, they are Spirit and they are Life. But some of you still refuse to trust and obey Me, for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe and who it was that should betray Him. And He said, On account of this have I told you that no one can come to Me unless he is drawn unto Me by the Father.

Summary

The Jews openly express their repugnance to Jesus' teaching. He, in turn, explains the real meaning behind His figurative discourse of eating His flesh. The *words* of Jesus are to be assimilated unto life—not His literal flesh. All of this serves to emphasize the fact that only the spiritually-minded (those drawn by the Father) can come to Jesus.

Comment

The Greek word translated "hard" is *skleros*, and does not mean "hard to understand," but "hard to accept, intolerable,

exacting." It was not that this multitude of Galilean disciples had failed to understand the implications of Jesus' words. They were murmuring and protesting because they *did* understand Him to a certain degree. They understood Him to be saying, throughout the discourse, that He was the Messiah, and His kingdom was one of the Spirit, of self surrender and obedience to God's Word. They were disgusted with Him because He said, in essence, "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (cf. Rom. 14:17).

We quote here some excellent comments by Barclay in his *Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of John*, Volume 1, page 234.

"Here we come upon a truth that re-emerges in every age. Time and again it is not the intellectual difficulty of accepting Christ which keeps men from becoming Christians; it is the height of Christ's moral demand . . . The real difficulty of Christianity is two-fold. It demands an act of surrender to Christ, an acceptance of Him as the final authority; and it demands a moral standard wherein only the pure in heart may see God . . . The disciples were well aware that Jesus had claimed to be the very life and mind of God come down to earth; their difficulty was to accept that that was true, with all the implications which are in it. And to this day many a man's refusal of Christ comes, not because Christ puzzles and baffles his intellect, but because Christ challenges and condemns his life."

Some commentators find in verse 62 a promise of Jesus intended to clarify His claims and teachings. In other words, when He is resurrected and ascended, then these disciples will have a guarantee of all His claims to be the Bread out of Heaven, and an explanation of all His teachings concerning eating and drinking His flesh and blood. The context, however, seems to indicate otherwise. They have taken offence at His presentation of Himself as having descended out of Heaven, and that He is the Bread of life which must be eaten. "What then will be your reaction," says Jesus, "if you see and be taught that the Son of man ascends to heaven where He was before?" We know very well what their reaction was. They stumbled, took offence and hardened their hearts (cf. Acts 7:55-58).

Verse 63 is the *key* to this entire discourse on the Bread of Life. We present here two great commentators' paraphrases of this passage:

Albert Barnes: "My doctrine is spiritual; it is fitted to quicken and nourish the soul. It is from heaven. Your doctrine or your views are earthly, and may be called flesh, or fleshly, as pertaining only to the support of the body. You place a great value on the doctrine that Moses fed the body; yet that did not permanently profit, for your fathers are dead. You seek also food from me, but your views are gross and earthly."

William Hendriksen: "My flesh as such cannot benefit you; stop thinking that I was asking you literally to eat my body or literally to drink my blood. It is my spirit, my person, in the act of giving my body to be broken and my blood to be shed, that bestows and sustains life, even everlasting life."

The more one reads this entire passage, the more he begins to see that these disciples said one thing and thought another. It seems almost certain that they did not really believe Jesus to mean literal eating and drinking flesh and blood. This was a Hebrew way of saying "abiding in the words and commands of another" long before Christ said it here. They knew what Jesus meant. When they expressed horror (v. 52) at eating His flesh, it probably was a clever dodge of the real issue.

One thing is certain. Jesus makes the meaning of His entire discourse plain enough in verse 63 that "he who runs may read." The entire body of doctrine of Christ is the source of life eternal.

- a. His words shall judge us (Jn. 12:48).
- b. His commandment is life eternal (Jn. 12:50).
- c. His word is able to build up and give an inheritance among the saints (Acts 20:32).
- d. His word is able to save our souls (Jas. 1:21).
- e. His word gives us a new birth (I Pet. 1:22-23).

The passage in Romans 8:1-17 offers itself as an excellent commentary of Jesus' words in verse 63. The summation of this passage in Romans can be made by quoting just two verses: "for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God," (Rom. 8:13-14). We are led by the Spirit, of course, when we are led by the words of Christ and the apostles.

For Jesus' power to read the hearts and minds of men, see our comments on 2:23-25. This power is expressed again here in verse 64.

And in verse 65 Jesus again expresses the fact, as He has before in this same discourse (v. 37, 44) that men cannot come to Him unless they are spiritually drawn by the Father and by submission of their own wills (cf. our comments on vs. 37, and 44).

Quiz

1. What did the disciples mean by saying, "This is a *hard* saying, Who can hear it?"
2. What is the major barrier for most people to overcome before accepting Christ? Is it intellectual?
3. Did the Jews take offence at the teaching of the Ascension of Christ? Give a Scriptural example.
4. What is so outstanding about verse 63 in this discourse?
5. Give at least three Scriptural references to show that the Word of God is the way to Life.
6. What connection does Romans 8:1-17 have with John 6:63?
7. Does verse 63 show the falseness of Transubstantiation and Sacramentalism? How?

THE TWELVE — THEIR FINEST HOUR

Text 6:66-71

66 Upon this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

67 Jesus said therefore unto the twelve, Would ye also go away?

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

69 And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God.

70 Jesus answered them, Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?

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

Queries

- a. Why did Jesus question the twelve?
- b. What is the significance of Peter's answer?
- c. Why does Jesus mention the betrayer?

Paraphrase

On account of this, many of His disciples left Him and returned to their former way of living and thinking. Then Jesus said to the twelve, You do not also wish to leave Me, do you? But Simon Peter, answering for the group, said, Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words which lead unto eternal life. And we have learned to believe and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God. And Jesus answered them, Did I not expressly choose you as the Twelve? And yet, I know that one of you is a minister of the devil. He was speaking of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, for this Judas was about to betray Him, even though he was one of the Twelve.

Summary

This is the "moment of truth" for the Twelve. The superficial disciples have been tried, and have judged themselves unfit for His kingdom. However, for the Twelve (excluding Judas), this is their "finest hour."

Comment

Most of the scholars agree that the phrase "After this" introducing verse 66, is a phrase which shows result as well as passage of time. The preceding discourse was not easily tolerated by the multitudes, and a further result of the sermon on the Bread of Life was the defection of many of His Galilean disciples. These "many disciples" were both "fair-weather friends," and disciples of Jesus. They followed Him as long as they thought He was going to give them bread on their tables. But at the first intimation of the spiritual and moral food—the cross and self-surrender on their part—they turned their backs on Jesus. The inference of the original language here helps us to interpret their actions even more fully. They not only ceased following Jesus, but they "gave up what they had gained with Him, and . . . reoccupied their old places." Before, they had called Him Rabbi and Lord (cf. 6:25, 34), but now they disclaimed Him even as unfit to listen to. They had attached themselves to His "band-wagon"—they had put their hands to the plow without first counting the cost. Now, having turned back, they judged themselves unfit for the kingdom of God (cf. Lk. 6:62). The very same attitude prevails today. There are far too many today who, having started with Jesus, have failed to count the cost and are now inactive church-members. (cf. Lk. 14:25-35).

Then the Lord challenges His chosen Twelve in a most direct manner. What a test this must have been for them! Up to this moment Jesus was the "Man of the hour" in Galilee. To be one of His personally-chosen inner-circle was to enjoy a certain amount of prestige in Galilee. To be one of the Twelve, and to see the great popularity of its leader was to have great expectations. But now the Man of Galilee is losing His following and His prestige at one crucial moment when thousands are turning disgustedly away.

What were the emotions of the Twelve — fear, hate, disgust and shame? Were they also on the verge of deserting the Lord? Indeed not! Peter, probably because of his age and personality, speaks for the Twelve a classic confession full of faith and devotion to Jesus. Although undoubtedly puzzled and distressed by the mysterious words of Jesus, Peter is convinced that Jesus alone has the words leading unto eternal life. We quote here Professor R. C. Foster's comments on verses 68 and 69:

"When we meet things in Scripture irreconcilable with our reason, what should be our conclusion? Peter has summed up the true attitude of the Christian. God has not promised to satisfy our curiosity or all our intellectual problems, but He rather demands that we walk by faith when we cannot see the way. We should use our reason and all intellectual gifts in endeavoring to understand, but we should not desert Christ because we find difficulties. If we cast aside the Bible just where is the Book of God to be found that will lead us to eternal life?"

The perfect tenses of the verbs "have believed" and "have come to know" show that Peter's answer was one of an understanding born of a clear perception . . . through progressive experience. We must know the Lord before we can believe Him. Faith is not born of emotion. We must have knowledge of His life, His claims, and the evidence by which He establishes the validity of His claims. We must then weigh this evidence and make a decision as to whether we shall trust Him or reject Him. This does not mean, however, that we are to reject Jesus and His words when we cannot understand every thing He says. As with the Twelve, we have more than sufficient evidence to prove Jesus' identity as the Son of God. The confession of Peter as compared with the rejection by the multitude emphasizes further the axiom that rejection of Christ is generally on moral grounds and not intellectual.

Peter's impulsiveness and over-confidence, shown by his instantaneous confession on behalf of the whole company, receives a check by Jesus as it does at other times. The Lord cautions him here, as in Matt. 16:23, John 20:15-22; Mark 14:29-30, not to be too confident, for one of the Twelve did not share his faith and trust.

The question is always raised, in connection with verses 70 and 71: "If Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, why did He choose him?" We can only answer, "It was within God's Infinite wisdom, will and plan for the redemption of the world." More than that, we can only speculate. One thing is certain: God did not compel Judas to betray Christ. Jesus tried repeatedly to turn Judas from his evil scheme by warning him that He was aware of his intentions.

Judas is carefully described here as the son of Simon, called Iscariot (a man of Kerioth) probably an area of Judah (cf. Josh. 15:25). This distinguishes him from the other Judas, also one of the Twelve.

Thus this Sixth Chapter has been fitly called "The Great Galilean Crisis" for here the great multitudes of Galilean disciples come to the moment of truth, and fail the test. On the other hand, for the chosen apostles (except Judas), this is their finest hour. They are also put into the crucible, but come out purified. This is the turning point in Jesus' public ministry. Henceforth He will (except for occasional emotional outbursts such as at the Triumphal Entry) be unpopular, criticized, and hunted like an animal throughout all Judea.

Quiz

1. What caused the many disciples to desert Jesus?
2. Why would this be such a big test for the Twelve?
3. How should we react to sayings of Jesus which are difficult to understand?
4. What brought Peter to say, "we have come to know"?
5. How was Peter's display of overconfidence checked by Jesus here?
6. Why is John 6 entitled, "The Great Galilean Crisis"?