



Brown Community Group Discussion Guide

John Chapter 6 - Lesson 2

November 26, 2017

I. Lesson Review:

The 6th chapter of John is one of the most extensive theological discussions of the bible concerning “spiritual bread” and Jesus being the “Bread of Life”. It is widely considered **a theological masterpiece** with a few simple points made in a longer more elaborate discussion.

Last week we covered:

1. The miracle feeding of the “5000” and Jesus being the “Bread of Life”
2. Walling on water and theological analogies to the saving of the Jews from Egypt
3. Jesus establishing himself as the Bread of Life and God being the ultimate source

Today we will be expanding our deep theological teachings with verses 36-71. We will be looking at this in several sections:

- Verses 35-51 Jesus firmly established himself as the Bread of Life and its eternal significance
- Verses 52-65 Jesus discusses “Eating his flesh and Drinking his blood” relative to salvation
- Verses 66-71 Ability to choose and salvation decisions by his followers

II. The Nature of the Bread of Life, Vs 35-51

³⁵ Then Jesus declared, **“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”**³⁶ But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. ³⁷ All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ 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. ⁴⁰ **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.”** ⁴¹ At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, **“I am the bread that came down from heaven.”** ⁴² They said, **“Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven?’”** ⁴³ **“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. 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.”**

Having led the crowd past their longing for physical bread, Jesus now clarified the personal nature of true spiritual sustenance with the unequivocal declaration, **I am the bread of life**. This position of both giver and gift had been anticipated in verses 27 and 29, but here it is the ultimate expression by means of “I AM”, which directly identifies Jesus with the nature of God.

The Jews had likened the wisdom of God mediated by the study of the Law to bread (Proverbs 9:5- The arrogant cannot stand in your presence), but Jesus dared to put himself above those realities as the one who could nourish and satisfy the needs of man. **This was a bold and incredible statement at that time for the people.**

There are two main theological themes in this chapter 6 that we need to keep in mind as we read these verses, which are:

1. Jesus coming down to man to do God's will
2. Man "coming to" to Jesus in faith

The concept of "coming to" Jesus indicates that the human response to the divine initiative involves not some chore to be completed (Vs 27) but a vital companionship to be cultivated. At this point, the people were challenged to reach a third climactic level in their understanding of bread:

1. At first, they wanted physical bread that was provided every day like the manna of old
2. With all physical bread perishing, they then asked for an endless supply of "true bread"
3. Jesus now explains that they do not need the Bread of Life "always", over and over again, because he who eats this kind of bread shall not hunger any more.

Discussion on Believing and Choice

Despite the ultimate offer, many in the crowd would not accept Jesus free offer of salvation. Even with the evidence of his Godly life and miraculous signs of his power, ***they would not believe***. Such rejection did not finally frustrate Jesus, however he did set human freedom in the context of divine sovereignty.

Furthermore, however unpromising from it seemed from a human perspective, Jesus was unwilling to cast a one of them out, for he had come not to do his own will but the will of the one who sent him.

It is critical to understand ***the word "looks"*** in verse 40. It is related to both belief and unbelief. Friends and foe alike saw the earthly life of Jesus. Regarding his miraculous signs, there was no argument over what actually happened. God did not play favorites and "disclose" his truth only to certain people, while others could not see it. The tangible evidence was there to see by all, whether one believed or not.

On the other hand, men assign meaning and understanding to everything they see in light of the perspective they view life. Some looked upon Jesus only with surface sight through the spectacles of tradition. Others looked at the same evidence and beheld a glory visible only to the eyes of true faith. In a balanced fashion, all men are led to believe on the basis of what they see and hear. Man is not merely an earthly being limited to sensory perceptions nor is he a merely spiritual being dependent on faith perceptions.

Jesus, however, assumed that divine revelation required something more than a solitary life of himself as the people murmured against him. How could they accept such a "normal local person" when they had expected a Davidic King arriving on a royal highway or clouds of heaven?

Verses 47-51 serve as our conclusion summarizing the main teachings on 1) The nature of the Bread of Life and 2) As a transition anticipating the discussion on the reception of the Bread of Life in verses to come.

A brand new theological idea or theme was introduced in Vs 51, which is that of receiving ***"living bread"***. We are told for ***the first time***, that the bread which Jesus would give for the life of the world was his own flesh. This strange assertion would then be theologically explained in the next section of verses.

Key Theological Point of John Verses 35-51

- The life which is eternal rather than perishing is sustained by the one who believes
- Jesus himself is the bread of life, which faith appropriates in order to have eternal life
- Jesus is superior to manna, whereas whoever may eat of Jesus will not die
- The "living bread" given by Jesus was his own flesh

III. **The Reception of the Bread of Life, Vs 52-65**

⁵² Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, **“How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”**

⁵³ 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. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷ 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. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”** ⁵⁹ He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Many Disciples Desert Jesus

⁶⁰ On hearing it, many of his disciples said, **“This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”** ⁶¹ Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, **“Does this offend you? ⁶² Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³ The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. ⁶⁴ 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. ⁶⁵ He went on to say, **“This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.”**

Jesus first mentioned that he would give men “his flesh” to eat as the Bread of Life immediately provoked violent controversy as the Jews disputed among themselves. How could he use such repugnant terminology which on the surface seemed to suggest cannibalism. In response, Jesus did little to nothing to mitigate their distress and even heightened it with the demand that they eat the flesh of the son of man and drink of his blood. The drinking of the blood was especially unthinkable given blood was used for sacrifices and they were forbidden to partake of it from Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 3:17 and Deuteronomy 12:23. This was directly offensive language to a Jew.

Although this new direction and language of the bread analogy was disconcerting to the Jews, it had been carefully prepared by Jesus in the previous verses. In Hebrew thought, flesh and blood stood for the physical, earthly corporeality of an individual person or of humanity in general. By pointing explicitly to his flesh and blood, Jesus was insisting that the life giving sustenance which he offered men was conveyed by his incarnate existence.

His incredible claim is that he drew his very life from the “The Living Father” and therefore that those that “ate” him could draw their life from him. **His very temporal existence was the unique link mediating the eternal life of God to man.**

It is often debated whether Vs 51-58 also allude to the Lord’s supper. The Lord’s supper or reference to it is not specifically mentioned anywhere in this chapter or in the book of John. Therefore, it is quite legitimate to maintain that the teaching of John chapter 6 have no direct relevance for an understanding of the Lord’s Supper. However, it is also strange if such an important observance in the life of the early church was completely ignored in a comprehensive Gospel with respect to the Christian movement in the ministry of Jesus.

One way to interpret the silence of John 6 with respect to the Lord’s supper is to suppose that its primary concern was not to record the institution of the rite but to establish a theological foundation to form the proper understanding of the Supper by pointing to Jesus himself as “sacramental”. He is the unique one who in whom, the invisible has become visible, the heavenly has become earthly, the infinite has become finite. Only as believers eat his flesh and drink his blood do they thereby partake of the life of God.

This section concludes by anticipating the rejection of Christ by some. Just as someone can refuse to eat physically, they can also choose to “not believe” in the Bread of Life. Interesting to note, that these verses say specifically that Jesus knew from the first “those who did not believe”. He knew that he would be given the followers who were open to the drawing power of God.

IV. The Testing of the Twelve Disciples and Crisis in Relationship with Jesus, Vs 66-71

⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. ⁶⁷ “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.” ⁷⁰ Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” ⁷¹ (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

Throughout John chapter 6, the cruciality of a “decision for Christ” has been sharpened until now it reaches a peak. Negatively in this chapter, what began as a theological argument for Christ as the Savior from God ends in personal rejection as “***many of his disciples drew back and no longer went with him***”. Jesus realized that men differed widely in their personal beliefs and attitudes towards him.

Now Jesus exposes the upcoming treachery of Judas after he offered his flesh and blood as food and drink in Vs 52-57. It is troubling to read that Jesus describes Judas as “a devil”. Some would suppose that this portrays Judas as a helpless pawn of Satan, doomed to serve as an agent of evil against his will. Interesting to note that other Synoptic gospels also mention that Jesus references Peter as “Satan” (Mark 8:33), whereas he only describes Judas as a “devil”. With that said, it is ultimately important to look at the results of both of these men’s lives to put it all in perspective. While Peter became the chief disciple, Judas died a tragic death from suicide. Jesus had charged two of his main disciples with being under the influence of satanic temptations. The opposite responses of the two men to the same predicament show that human choice was a crucial factor even in the struggle between Christ and Satan on this earth.