

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

JOHN 6:53 Then Jesus 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 no life in you.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

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

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

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

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

64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the

beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

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

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

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

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

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

70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

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

NOTES

Jesus' Hard Saying

Lesson Text: John 6:53-54, 60-71

Related Scriptures: John 3:5-21; Matthew 26:26-29;
I Corinthians 11:23-26

TIME: A.D. 29

PLACE: Capernaum

GOLDEN TEXT—"And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:65).

Lesson Exposition

TEACHING AND RESPONSE— John 6:53-54, 60-61

A hard teaching (John 6:53-54). Jesus' statement, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (vs. 51), caused the Jews to wonder what He could possibly mean (vs. 52). Surely He was not advocating some kind of cannibalism!

Jesus continued His metaphor by adding, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (vs. 53).

It should be obvious to any reader of this discourse by now that Jesus was speaking metaphorically and not literally. By referring to His flesh and blood He was figuratively referring to His whole person.

The only way for us to gain eternal life is to appropriate Christ Himself as our Lord and Saviour.

A mixed response (John 6:60-61). Many who were following and listening to Him at this time were unable to interpret His metaphorical meaning

and therefore decided they could no longer follow Him. Verse 60 uses the word "disciples" of these people, but that does not necessarily indicate that they had been true believers. When we read that many of these disciples stopped following Him, it was because they lacked spiritual ears to hear and eyes to see.

Jesus, knowing all things, was aware that such grumbling was taking place among His listeners, so He asked the question, "Doth this offend you?" (vs. 61).

EXPLANATION AND ALIENATION— John 6:62-66

True life (John 6:62-63). The Jews had already been offended that Jesus said He had come down from heaven (vss. 41-42) and they had to eat His flesh (vs. 52). What would happen, then, if they should see Him ascend back to heaven? It would have forced them to realize that all His seemingly crazy claims were actually true! But Jesus did not ascend back heaven at that time; His mission was not yet accomplished. So those who were offended felt confirmed in their indignation.

True life is not limited to the physical and material realm. Jesus' entire message was spiritual; this is what they were completely missing. Limiting our understanding to what is fleshly and earthly will never lead to eternal life. Jesus was trying to tell them that true, spiritual life is much more important than physical.

Jesus was referring to the Holy Spirit as the giver of true life. Apart from Him, life lived in the flesh is worthless and hopeless.

Jesus knows (John 6:64). Jesus' words and miracles had attracted the attention of a multitude of people, some merely out of curiosity. But when He said they needed to eat His flesh and drink His blood, curiosity changed to dismay and unbelief. Their inability to comprehend Him revealed their unbelief. This did not surprise Jesus at all, since He knew all along who truly believed and who did not.

Followers leave (John 6:65-66). Unbelief never surprises Jesus. It grieves Him. But it is nevertheless included within God's perfect plan.

Many do not receive the truth available to them; when they reject it, the Father sometimes does not reveal further truth to them.

QUESTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING—John 6:67-71

Disciples challenged (John 6:67-69). Jesus addressed the Twelve, pointedly asking, "Will ye also go away?" Did Jesus doubt their commitment? It is more likely that He was issuing them a challenge to reaffirm their commitment to Him.

At this point in their training, the disciples were still immature. One of them we know will eventually betray Him. Jesus was affirming to them that there can be no middle ground when it comes to believing in Him.

Peter had the right answer: "Lord,

to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (vs. 68). He then affirmed without hesitation: "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (vs. 69).

Betrayer revealed (John 6:70-71). Is it possible to know all about Jesus, His life, His death, burial, and resurrection, and still not truly trust in Him as Lord and Saviour?

Judas is a perfect example of one who knew all about Jesus and was among His closest associates and yet never really became a believer. For Jesus to indicate that one whom He had chosen among the Twelve was a "devil" (vs. 70) means that He knew one of His own disciples was evil and would betray Him.

—Keith E. Eggert.

QUESTIONS

1. What did Jesus say that caused consternation for His hearers (John 6:51-53)?
2. How should we understand Jesus' statement?
3. How did some of Jesus' followers react to His statement?
4. Why did they reject this teaching?
5. Why did Jesus refer to His ascension (vs. 62)?
6. What was Jesus saying about the true nature of life?
7. What did Jesus already know about His followers?
8. What did He ask His twelve disciples after many followers left Him?
9. What was Peter's insightful response to Jesus' challenge?
10. How is Judas a prime example of what Jesus teaches in this lesson?

—Keith E. Eggert.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Just as food is nourishing to our bodies, so faith in Jesus is nourishing to our souls (John 6:53).
2. We know we have eternal life if we have truly put our faith in Jesus (vs. 54).
3. Those who reject Jesus do not have faith that what the Bible teaches is true (vss. 60-61).
4. The teachings of Jesus are life to our souls, but they must be accepted by faith (vss. 62-65).
5. Every person must determine personally whether he or she will follow Jesus or reject Him (vss. 66-67).
6. Jesus alone has the words of eternal life and can offer salvation to sinners (vss. 68-71).

—Brandon Byler.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think Jesus used such a difficult analogy for the people to accept? What did He want to teach them (John 6:53)?
2. Jesus said of the believer, “I will raise him up at the last day” (vs. 54). When is the “last day,” and how does this resurrection differ from others?
3. What are some reasons people will not follow Jesus or will stop following Him today (vs. 60)?
4. What are the implications of Jesus’ words, “the flesh profiteth nothing,” for our lives and ministry (vs. 63)?
5. If Jesus has the words of eternal life, how should this impact our witnessing (vss. 67-69)?

—Brandon Byler.

Golden Text Illuminated

“And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father” (John 6:65).

Haldor Lillenas (1885–1959) was one of the most prolific gospel music publishers and Christ-centered hymn writers of the twentieth century. He composed an estimated four thousand hymns. A couple of stanzas of his invitational hymn “Come Just as You Are” read, “You who are troubled and burdened by sin . . . Come to the Savior a new life begin. . . . Come to Jesus as you are.”

After proclaiming Himself the Bread of Life, Jesus explained to His disciples that “no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.” In other words, man is incapable of coming to Jesus on his own initiative. The Father draws men to His Son. Without this, we are utterly unable to draw near to Jesus Christ.

Because man is a slave to sin by nature, there is nothing in him that prompts him to turn from sin and seek after God (cf. Rom. 3:10-18). He is spiritually dead.

A dead man cannot seek the living God, can he? No, because he is devoid of life and separated from God. It is God who seeks and saves spiritually dead men. “Salvation belongeth unto the Lord” (Ps. 3:8).

Many people think they can go to Jesus on their own terms, when in reality they have to come to Him by faith on His terms. God causes man to come to Jesus. He draws him by His grace.

—Kenneth E. Ware.