

Offended Disciples (John 6: 52–71)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (9/19/2021)

Introduction

1. The discontented Jews at Capernaum

As Jesus addressed the Jews in the synagogue at Capernaum, many grumbled (discontent or complaint murmured) against Jesus because He claimed to be the Bread of Life sent from the Father to give life to the world. They assumed to know about Jesus (v. 42). How could Jesus presume to claim such spiritual authority? Jesus' response to them was to drill down on the sovereign authority of God to teach this truth. All who hear and learn from the Father come to Jesus (v. 45). Since the Jews were grumbling, they testified that they had neither heard nor learned from the Father and, thus, were not drawn to Jesus, nor did they possess eternal life.

2. The transition from bread to *flesh*

The Jews further questioned Jesus about giving His *flesh* to eat (v. 52). Note the transition from bread to flesh (v. 51). The Jews had to have understood this as a figure of speech (a metaphor), not a referral to the eating of *flesh*.

3. An allusion to the Lord's Table?

Many commentators see Jesus' remarks about eating flesh and blood as a sacramental reference or, at least, an ordinance—the Lord's Table. Such inference assumes Jesus' audience could understand and draw that conclusion. However, the Lord's Table would not be instituted until Jesus' final days on earth. It should also be pointed out that if participation in the Supper is what is meant, it would be a sacrament and participation would be necessary for salvation.

I. The *Flesh* of Christ

1. The professed disciples' problem was the purpose of the incarnation of the Christ, not to reign but to die as a sacrifice. The reference to *flesh* takes us back to 1:14. In other words, the Lord's reference to His flesh had to do, not only with His *incarnation*, but the *purpose* for which He took flesh—to save His people by dying for their sins.
2. Eating His flesh is not literal eating but making Christ the sole source of one's life. As bread sustains physical life, believing and trusting solely in Him and His work, sustains spiritual life.
 - a. We feed on Jesus (continual trusting) by spiritually consuming all He is, which sustains us with eternal life. Feeding on Him is equal to "*abiding in Him*" (vv. 56, 57).
 - b. As the Son abides spiritually in the "*living Father*" who sent Him and by whom He lives, so Christ's people are to abide spiritually in Him, and thus live by Him (John 15:1–11).

II. An Angry Response

1. The angry response came from some "*disciples*" who heard Him speaking to the Jews (vv. 60–71).
2. The character of false disciples betrayed their unregenerate state.

- a. They *grumbled* at Christ's words of truth (compare vv. 61 and 64). Christ's understanding of their condition was due to His supernatural knowledge of them (1:47, 48; 2:24, 25).
- b. They rejected of the cross also proved their unregenerate state. Jesus argued that they would they be offended even more to witness His ascension back to heaven (v. 62)? The cross was a stumbling-block to the Jews (1 Corinthians 1:23). This was the very issue Paul confronted in the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:18; 2:1–5; 14, 15). Paul describes this issue in Ephesians 4 9, 10). How people respond to the supreme scandal of the crucified Messiah determines their eternal destiny.
- c. The life-giving words (*rhema*) of the Spirit are the real bread needed for sustaining one's eternal life (v. 63). It is not *flesh*, literally, that gives life but the *Spirit*.

III. True Disciples

1. Jesus turned His attention to the twelve with a question (v. 67). "Surely, you do not want to go away, do you?"
2. Peter, speaking for the twelve, revealed their regenerate state by his reply (vv. 68, 69). Peter was saying in effect, "There are no other options available; you alone have the words of eternal life." Three things confirm this assertion about eternal life:
 - a. Peter called Him *Lord* (Romans 10:9, 10).
 - b. Peter *heard* His words and understood them to convey eternal life (John 5:25).
 - c. Peter *trusted* Him and would continue to trust Him, and in that trust confirmed Christ to be the Holy One of God.
3. To dispel any suggestion that Peter had the power within himself to initiate this correct confession, Jesus asserts His sovereign control: "*Did I not choose you, the twelve?*" (v. 70).

Application

Has Christ chosen you be a true follower?

Have you been born of the Spirit?

Do you hear Christ's words' spiritually sustaining your eternal life?

Have you witnessed the change in your life to the extent that you, like Peter, see no other option but to trust Christ fully and confidently with your eternal life and to feed on Him to sustain that life?