

“No one can come to Me unless the Father ...”

John 6:41-51

41 So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" 43 Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— 46 not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has 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 that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

ESV

Jesus answered the Jews request for literal bread [34] by saying, **“I AM the bread of life, he who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”** [35]

Jesus says several times in John Chapter 6 that in order to have eternal life we must eat His flesh and drink His blood.

In previous messages I have made it clear that Jesus cannot be talking about **literally** eating His flesh and drinking His blood. That is absurd and any objective study of the context of John Chapter 6 will make it clear that it is **believing in Him** that He is talking about.

When a person is so very committed to Jesus Christ He becomes their food and drink, Jesus is what they are sustained by as their daily bread.

Nevertheless, the idolaters teach that they can actually change the **substance** of the bread and the wine into the actual flesh and blood of Christ. And they go to John 6 to make their case. They are in the same literalist camp as those who said in verse 34, “**Lord, give us this bread always.**”

The answer that Jesus gave to them is the same answer for all time. It is not the actual eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood that Jesus means, it is to believe the teaching of Jesus and to live on His word that becomes the “eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood!”

The analogy is to the intensely personal nature of what happens to food and drink, as it becomes a part of our body.

We saw that those given to the Son by the Father **will** come to Him, “**All that the Father gives Me, will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.**”

Jesus says three times [38, 39, and 40] that He does the will of the Father! It is simply wrongheaded to preach that God the Father intends to condemn those sinners that He Himself gave to the Son, and that the Son pleads against the will of the Father. There is always **unity** in the Godhead because there can only be one will of God!

In verse 37, Jesus asserts the absolute sovereignty of God in the choice of who will be saved. Ignorant men have made an idol out of man’s free will as they put man’s will above the will of God.

What do lost men do when they are confronted with the sovereignty of God? They do exactly what this crowd did that Jesus is speaking to in the synagogue in Capernaum. **They complain! They murmur!**

John 6:41-42

The Jews then complained [murmured] about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." 42 And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

There is an extremely important point of doctrine that is at issue in the complaint of the Jews. What is it?

What point of doctrine is at issue in these two verses?

The Jews clearly understood the claim that Jesus makes for Himself when He says, **“I have come down from heaven.”**

And they **murmur**. A murmur is a low-voiced grumbling that expresses discontent. It is a grumbling that is not intelligible but rather like a moaning in disagreement.

Their reference to Moses was shattered. Jesus will not continue to give them physical bread but says that He is the Bread come down from heaven.

And they understood the meaning!

If He came from heaven, then He was not born of a normal procreation, i.e., of a sinful generation, thus He is virgin-born.

But Jesus of Nazareth is to them only a man that they have known from a small boy growing up with His parents. Now He is claiming to be the very One that Isaiah wrote about:

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

And Jesus does not deny their conclusion!

The point of doctrine at issue is called the **incarnation**, the Immanuel, God with us.

The **incarnation** of the Son of God is an essential part of the Gospel. The Word who was in the beginning with God, and is God became flesh and dwelt among us. The Son of God at a point in human history actually began to be a Man. The second Person of the eternal trinity became fully human!

The Incarnation: [Mostly from Martyn Lloyd-Jones]

The doctrine of the incarnation is that the second Person of the Holy Trinity took unto Himself a human nature, was born as a babe and lived His life as a true man.

Since our eternal salvation depends on the person of Jesus Christ it is extremely important that our knowledge of Him is according to the Scriptures.

One of the most important things to understand about the incarnation is that a new personality did not come into being.

There are many NT references to the incarnation and I have selected three.

1 Timothy 3:14-16

These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; 15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

**God was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.**

Romans 8:3-5

3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Philippians 2:5-11

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Listen carefully because I do not want to confuse anyone.

The **Triune God** did not become flesh but the **second Person of the Trinity** became flesh. It is not really correct to say, “God became man,” as some of our hymns say, but the Scriptures says the Word became flesh. This may not seem to be a great distinction but it really is.

1 John 1:1-4

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life — 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us — 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

1 John 4:1-3

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

There was no change in the **essence** of the second Person of the Trinity at His incarnation. That is what John 10:30 means: **“I and My Father are One.”**

He does not mean that the Son and the Father are the same Person but they are of the same essence. That is why there is only one will of God.

Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:13, **“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.”**

Here is Jesus, a Man on earth, speaking to Nicodemus and saying that He is still in heaven!

So when the Son of God became a Man He did not change in essence but He did take for Himself a human body.

That “holy thing” in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the babe in the manger, is still the second Person of the Trinity. So we must not think that God “changed” into a man. He was and is always God the Son, but now he is in the body of a Man.

Another important distinction about the incarnation is that the Son of God did not just “appear” to be a man. Angels appeared as men but they were not incarnations. The second Person of the Trinity actually took on human flesh.

The Gnostics taught that Jesus only “seemed” to be human; that He was rather a phantom that appeared to be a real man. They said that human flesh was inherently sinful and therefore Jesus, the Son of God, could not be a true Man. He only seemed to be a man.

But in the incarnation of the Son of God He is a complete man with body and soul and spirit.

By that we mean that a new human nature was **not created** for Him.

He did not bring His human nature with Him with the idea that His human nature simply passed through Mary. Jesus took His human nature **from** Mary. He is truly the “seed of Abraham.”

Matthew 1:1, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” That could not be true if a special human nature had been created for Him.

See also Hebrews 2:14-18. Jesus who is the Christ is truly one of us!
True Man!

14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16 For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. 17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

This leads us to the doctrine of the virgin birth. The fact that Jesus is true Man begs the question about man’s sinful nature. How can Jesus be truly man and yet without the sinful nature that all men are born with?

The Scripture teaches us that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin. We will not go into all the references to the virgin conception of Mary, but you can look them up if you have not already committed them to memory.

Luke 1:26-38 is the announcement to Mary.
Matthew 1:18-25 is the announcement to Joseph.

The doctrine of the virgin birth is essential to the sinless nature of Christ.

Jesus was not sinless because Mary was not a sinner.

Mary was not sinless as the Roman Catholic Church teaches.

Mary called God her Savior and only sinners need a Savior [Luke 1:47].

As Lorraine Boettner said if Mary was sinless that only moves the problem back one generation. How was Mary sinless?

The **incarnation** is truly wonderful and defies understanding apart from the sovereign work of God. Do we believe that God created everything that is not God? Then we must grasp the incarnation, that the second Person of the Holy Trinity becomes a Man. He is born of a virgin. He is sinless and lives under the law with perfect obedience in all points. He is made to be sin for us and is crucified, He actually dies, and He is buried. After three days and three nights He comes forth from the grave in His own power. He ascends back to the Father and intercedes for His people until He returns in His glory at the end of the present age. He is Jesus Christ, the Lord!

And so these Jews when confronted with the **incarnation** of the Son of God, they murmur. How does Jesus deal with their complaining?

He tells them something else that causes lost men to become angry with God!

He has declared His incarnation and they murmur.
Now He is going to really upset them!

John 6:43-51

43 Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. **44** No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. **45** It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. **46** Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. **47** Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. **48** I am the bread of life. **49** Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. **50** This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. **51** I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

Those who reject the sovereign choice of God in the salvation of sinners must ignore or mitigate what the Lord Jesus Christ says about man's ability.

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him;

Some of you who teach elementary school know how early a child is supposed to know the difference between “can” and “may”.

“Can I be excused?” I don’t know if you are able to rise up and walk. Can you? Are you able to do it?

“May I be excused?” Yes, you have permission to leave the room.

“Can means ability, and no one is able [has the ability] to come to Jesus **unless** ... unless that person is drawn by the Father.

Those **only** come to Christ who are **drawn** to Christ by the Holy Spirit of God. Men make an idol out of their free will when they say that it is the will of man that is the deciding factor in salvation!

“**Draw**” means a very powerful influence of the mind, heart, the entire person.

In a physical sense, the strength of “draw” can be seen in James 2:6 and Acts 16:19. The OT equivalent can be found in Jeremiah 31:3.

**3 The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying:
"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;
Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.**

Another usage in the NT is John 12:32-33

**32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."
33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die.**

Since the Father has **given** those who come to Christ to Christ and that transaction occurred before the foundation of the world and they must be **drawn** to Christ why do men boast of their “decision” as though their so-called free will was the cause of their being saved?

Many years ago I learned that we should never quote verse 44 without also quoting verse 45.

44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

The quote in verse 45 is from Isaiah 54:13.

**All your children shall be taught by the LORD,
And great shall be the peace of your children.**

The “children” so taught, necessarily come to Christ.
In trusting Christ in this life, they are assured of everlasting life.

Isaiah 54 is a “gospel” passage in the OT that follows the “atonement” passage. Isaiah 54 has entirely to do with the spiritual kingdom of the redeemed. Read all of Isaiah 53 and 54 when you can and delight in the promises of God.

Jesus uses the plural “prophets” and only quotes Isaiah. The reason He does this is because all the prophets proclaim the same message and their words come from the same divine source.

He who is the Word of God spoke by all the prophets since the world began; and always, as here, He spoke of Himself:

Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father.

47-50 **“I am the Bread of Life.”**

47 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.

Those who ate the manna in the wilderness died. What is it to “eat?”
What happens? What you eat becomes you. You assimilate what you eat.

It is an intense personal act; no one can eat for you.

It is necessary to eat the Bread from Heaven, understand it, agree with it, eat it! It is a response to a need. When I am hungry I will eat. A lost sinner who is drawn by the Spirit will come to Christ.

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

Jesus further defines the bread as His flesh, i.e., Himself, as a vicarious sacrifice for sin.

You cannot accept, believe, and trust in Jesus apart from His sacrifice of Himself. Why did Jesus give His life?

He gave His life for sinners; the self-righteous have no need of a Substitute.

We have seen that the Jews understood that Jesus was speaking of His incarnation; the Son of God has come down from heaven, He has come into the world and He is now in the body of a true Man.

Only those who are taught of God will come to Jesus. Those who come are being drawn to Him with an irresistible attraction that reveals how their sin and guilt has been covered by the blood of Christ. They come of their own free will. But it is a will that has been taught by God.

Then they feast on the Bread of God into eternal life.

The "eating" is the believing of the truth about Jesus.

Dear souls do not fall for the wizardry of the idolaters who make fantastic claims about changing the actual bread and the wine.

Don't be misled either by those who teach that while the bread is still bread that there is some grace imparted through eating the bread itself.

They are legalists who trust in their works instead of in the work of Christ alone. They make their legalistic obedience as much of an idol as does the man who "adores the wafer" believing that the bread has been changed into the flesh of Christ!

Be taught of God and come to Christ!

Jim Gunn

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