

## John 6:22-51 No One Can Come to Jesus

### Introduction:

*Have you ever wondered, why is it some people believe in Jesus, but others don't?  
It is been said that the same sun that melts butter hardens clay; are some people born butter  
and others born clay?  
Why is it that you came to Jesus, but your neighbor didn't?  
Are you smarter than he is?  
Were you intrinsically more spiritual than he is?  
If you were more open to spiritual things, why was that; chemical imbalance?*

The answer to this mystery was revealed by Jesus in John 6, as He explained why the five-thousand saw the signs and yet still did not believe.

### Review of Last Week:

A large crowd of over five thousand followed Jesus out to a desolate place "because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick" (6:2). Then, Jesus miraculously fed all five thousand with just two sardines and five pancakes. Seeing this, they correctly concluded that, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" (6:14). However, they then went too far and tried to take Jesus by force to be their king.

That night, the crowd saw the disciples leave in a boat without Jesus (who was hiding up on the mountain). Later that night, Jesus miraculously walked on the water, out to the disciples. Two miracles occurred that night. The first was walking on water; the second was immediately being transported to Capernaum.

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\*\*\*\***The next day, what mystery confronted the crowd (6:22-24)?** They knew that the disciples left without Jesus in the only boat there was, yet Jesus was nowhere to be found. *Where was he? How had he left?* The arrival of the boats from the Tiberias<sup>1</sup> evidently provided a way for at least some of the crowd to sail to Capernaum in search of Jesus, where they found Jesus in Capernaum, in the synagogue there (6:59). Five-thousand people couldn't have fit into the synagogue building, so obviously the crowd had diminished somewhat by the time this discussion took place.

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\*\*\*\***What did unbelief cause the crowd to ask for (6:25-34)?** Even though the crowd saw the "signs" Jesus did on the sick (6:2), even though Jesus had just miraculously fed them, also a "sign" (6:14), they asked Him for yet another "sign" to give them reason to believe (6:30).

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<sup>1</sup> Tiberias was a recently-founded city across the sea and about eight miles south of Capernaum (Carson, *John*, 268).

I saw street signs in China; I knew they were signs; but I didn't understand what the signs signified. Physically, these people saw the signs. Spiritually, however, they did not see what the signs truly signified.

**Jesus didn't answer their question (6:25), but instead questioned their motives. According to Jesus, why did the crowds come looking for Jesus (6:26)?** It was not because of the signs He did, but in order to get free food! Theirs was a faulty faith.

**What council did Jesus offer in 6:27?** Jesus advised them to come to Him, not for more physical food, but for spiritual food that has no expiration date.

**Joke:** Someone on Facebook posted a picture of a glass jar of rock salt from the Himalayan Mountains. The label advertised, "250 million years old." Below that there was an expiration date printed on the jar. The meme said, "Just my luck. 250 million year old salt and it expires next year." The soul food Jesus offers is has no expiration date. It will never spoil.

**According to 6:27, Father set his "seal" on Jesus as the Son of Man. What form did that seal take? See 1:32-34, 5:36. a)** The descent of the dove on Jesus as His baptism was one type of seal, as were **b)** the works the Father enable Jesus to do:

ESV **John 5:36** . . . the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.

**How did the crowd's question of 6:28 (about doing the works of God) logically follow what Jesus said in 6:27 about food?** Jesus told them not to "labor" (work) for perishable food, but rather to work for food that endures to eternal life. Thus they logically asked Him how to do works that God required in order to get the food of eternal life.

**What type of answer do you suppose they were expecting (6:28)?** They probably expected to hear something about giving to the poor, obeying the Sabbath, living a moral life, keeping the Law, etc. The problem is that they thought they had it within themselves to earn eternal life.

**In 6:29, how did Jesus answer the question of 6:28 in a way they probably weren't expecting (6:29)?** They were asking what they could do for God. Jesus gave an answer that is the polar opposite of works: faith. The work God wanted them to do was to believe in Jesus.<sup>2</sup> The doctrine of justification by faith goes all the way back to Abraham in the book of Genesis.

Eternal life is truly a gift. God did all the work because we can't do enough to earn it.

ESV **John 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

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<sup>2</sup> I'm not so sure that at this point Jesus was hinting at the fact that even our faith is a work that God did in us.

**What's wrong with them asking Jesus for yet another sign (6:30)?** See 6:2, 14. Father had already given them plenty of evidence. The crowd followed Jesus in the first place precisely because they *already* "saw the signs" He had been doing (healing the sick in Jerusalem, 6:2). Then, they "saw the sign" of Jesus feeding the five thousand (6:14). There are none so blind as those who will not see. The

**Based on 6:31, what sign did the crowd want to see?** The crowd rightly concluded that Jesus was "indeed the Prophet" (6:14), a reference to a prediction found in the writings of Moses (Dt 18:18-19). Since through Moses God fed the Israelites using manna, they expected that the predicted Prophet, like Moses, would be able to do the same. Jesus miraculously fed the five thousand, but they wanted to see Him now feed the whole nation, as Moses did, as a sign.<sup>3</sup>

**What better bread did Jesus offer in 6:32-33?** Physical manna only sustained physical life and those who ate it eventually all died. Jesus offered Himself as the spiritual bread of God who came down from heaven and gives eternal life. The manna that the Father gave them was a type, a shadow, of the ultimate, true, spiritual bread the Father gave them in Jesus.

**Based on their request (6:34), did the crowd understand that Jesus was presenting Himself as the bread from heaven?** They seemed *not* to get it.

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**\*\*\*\*What promise did Jesus extend to anyone who comes to Him (6:35-40)?** Jesus promised that whoever comes would never hunger or thirst, would never be cast out, would have eternal life and be resurrected on the last day.

**What type of hunger and thirst did Jesus mean in 6:35?** The context here is clearly between physical things and spiritual things. He similarly said to the woman at the well:

ESV **John 4:14** . . . whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

**Ponce De Leon:** Legend has it that Spanish explorer Ponce De Leon sailed to Florida in search of the elusive fountain of youth. Jesus really was the fountain of youth!

**Based on 6:35, how does a person eat Jesus' flesh and drink His blood?** That was a metaphorical statement, not to be taken literally. The way to eat and drink (so to speak) is to "come" to Jesus and to "believe" in Him. The original intent of this passage has nothing to do with the Lord's Supper.

**Jesus very clearly identified Himself as the bread of life (6:35). According to 6:36, what did the crowd think about His declaration?** They did not believe what He said.

**Flawed Faith:** These people believed that Jesus was "indeed the Prophet", but they did not believe that He was the bread of life sent from the Father.

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<sup>3</sup> The quotation in 6:31 is from Nehemiah 9:15 where the text states "you (God), not "he".

Five thousand men saw the healing signs in Jerusalem and then ate the supernatural feeding sign, yet they did *still* not believe (6:36). According to 6:37a, despite their unbelief, who will believe? Jesus said that there is a group of people that the Father has “given” to Jesus and these people “will” come. In fact, Jesus said this twice (see 6:39b).

**Literary Purpose:** It would appear that, since so many saw Jesus’ miracles and signs and still did not believe, His mission a failure. Jesus dealt with that by introducing a truth about predestination. The Father’s purposes were not dependent on the good will of well-meaning people.<sup>4</sup>

**In 6:37, what percentage of those given by the Father to Jesus will come to Jesus?** The word Jesus used, “all”, suggests that 100% will come.

**What guarantee did Jesus make in 6:37b-40?** Jesus guaranteed that everyone who comes to Him will have eternal life and experience a bodily resurrection on the last day. Jesus is not saying He won’t reject anyone the Father give Him, He is saying He would lose anyone the Father gives Him.

**Application: What implication does 6:37-40 have for the possibility someone losing his salvation?** “All” that the Father give to Jesus will come, and He will lose “none” of them. This suggests that no one could possibly lose his salvation. Further, Jesus promised “eternal” life (6:40). If you had eternal life for ten years and then lost your salvation, you didn’t have eternal life, you had ten-year life. Eternal life is eternal.

**Apostates:** One well-know Reformed church leader, pastor of a 3,000 member church, first renounced a best-selling Christian book he had written years ago, then shortly thereafter he and his wife divorced, next he renounced his faith, and then apologized to the homosexual community biblical teachings that sodomy was sinful. These are some spectacularly sad examples of prominent past church leaders who have renounced their faith. At one time these men *appeared* to believe in Jesus. They certainly knew the Gospel. However, they were self deceived—perhaps sincerely so—but never-the-less deceived about truly believing. It’s not necessarily that they were pretending. They may have had a type of faith, but never a saving faith. Thus, as time went by or trouble arose, they fell away. It is as Adrian Rogers said, “the faith that fizzles before the finish had a flaw from the first!” Such people are like Judas, who outward appeared to be a true believer, but who was actually an unbeliever.

**ESV 1 John 2:19** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

**Based on 6:40, how can a person obtain eternal life?** It is by looking on Jesus and believing in Him. You come to Him and believe in Him for Who He claimed to be: God in human form, equal to the Father, Savior of those who trust Him. Eternal life is a gift obtained by grace through faith.

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<sup>4</sup> Carson, *John*, 290.

\*\*\*\***How did Jesus respond to the crowd's grumbling (6:41-51)?** Their grumbling was insulting. They quite literally questioned His ancestry. He told them not to grumble, then repeated the claim that offended them: He was the bread of life that came down out of heaven.

**Why did Jesus' claim to be bread from heaven cause them to grumble (6:41-42)?** It was because they knew Mary and Joseph. Jesus seemed to be just as home boy.

**What prompted Jesus to say what He did in 6:44?** See 6:36-37. It was in response to their grumbling and disbelief. Jesus said something similar in the face of their unbelief in 6:36-37.

•**"no one" (6:44):** "No one" is a universal negative. It includes everyone.

ESV **Romans 3:10b-12** "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

•**"can" (6:44):** The word "can" means ability, not permission. When I was in grammar school, students would often ask the teacher, "Can I go to the bathroom?" She would say, "I'm sure you can, but yes you may."<sup>5</sup>

Thus, no one has the ability to come to Jesus. If there were a period right there, making a complete sentence, then there would be no hope of anyone ever being saved. We would all universally reject Jesus. That's why Paul wrote that we are "dead" in our trespasses and sins (Ep 2:1).

•**"unless" (6:44):** The word "unless" flags a necessary condition that must be met. It introduces an exception clause. *What is that necessary condition?* No one has the ability to come to Jesus *unless* the Father draws him.

•**"draws" (6:44):** To "draw" means to pull. The brand name of the trailer hitch on my truck is "Draw-Tite". The truck draws the trailer along behind it. I heard a man say if someone ever struck his hand out toward him in violence, that man would "draw back a nub" (a nub is a stump; it means when he pulled his arm back, it would be missing his hand).

In English, sometimes "draw" has the idea of being attracted to something, such a bee that is drawn to the flower, or a man to a woman's beauty, but that is not at all what the underlying Greek means. It is from *helko* and means to haul, to drag, to pull, to tug.<sup>6</sup>

*How do you draw water out of a well? Do you stand at the top and call it up? Do you woo it up?*  
No, of course not; you drop a bucket down into the water and pull it up to the top.

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<sup>5</sup> Example taken from R.C. Sproul in Chosen By God audio series.

<sup>6</sup> Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 251.

Here are other places the same Greek word (*helko*) is used:

ESV **John 18:10** Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear . . .

ESV **John 21:6** He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.

ESV **Acts 21:30b** They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple . . .

ESV **James 2:6b** Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?

**Total Depravity:** No one has the ability to come to Jesus unless the Father drags him. This is, in essence, the doctrine of total depravity. It does not mean that everyone is as possibly bad as he could be. There clearly is relative good among men. It simply means that sin has so affected your mind, will, and emotions that left to yourself, you will never come to Jesus. Of your own free will, you will reject Him. We have a bias toward sin. If you give a cat a choice between a sardine and an onion, he'll pick the sardine every time!

**Divine Election:** Notice how 6:37 and 6:44a match up with each other. There is a group of people that the Father has given to Jesus. This is called divine election. God the Father chose certain people to believe in Jesus. Furthermore, "all" of them "will" come to Jesus. It is impossible to be chose and not to come. The Father makes sure this happens by dragging them to Jesus.

**Based on 6:45, how does the Father draw people to Jesus (6:44)?** He does it by teaching them. He gives them ears to hear and to learn. The "all" in 6:45 refers to "all" those given to Jesus by the Father.

**What claim did Jesus make again in 6:46?** He claimed to have seen the Father.

ESV **John 1:18** No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

**According to 6:47, how can a person obtain eternal life?** It is through believing that Jesus is who He claimed to be.

**What contrast did Jesus make between manna and Himself (6:48-51)?** Manna was literal bread; Jesus is living bread. Manna temporarily sustained physical life but ultimately those who ate it died; Jesus give spiritual life and those who eat His bread live forever.

**What did Jesus mean when He said the bread is His flesh and that He would give it for the life of the world (6:51)?** This obviously is a reference to His death on the cross in payment for our sins. His death bought us life.

ESV **2 Corinthians 5:21** . . . he [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin [Jesus], so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

ESV **John 1:29** . . . he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

**Lord’s Supper:** Jesus said that the bread of the Lord’s Supper represent his body, given for us.

### **So What?**

**What does John 6:22-51 teach us about God the Father’s role in the salvation process?**

**Why do you suppose John wanted His original readers to understand about why Jesus was rejected?** It shows that it was all part of God’s sovereign plan. Jesus was not a failure.

**What did Jesus claim about Himself in John 6:22-51?** Jesus claimed to be living bread from heaven who offers eternal to all who partake by faith.

**Based on John 6:22-51, what does Jesus want from us?** He wants us to believe in Him as to get eternal life (6:28-29, 40, 47).

\*\*\*\* = Ask this question before reading the text. This will engage people’s minds and focus their attention.

•You can hear this lesson being taught at [SermonAudio.com/NTRF](http://SermonAudio.com/NTRF).

•Stephen E. Atkerson NTRF.org 09/01/19