

**John 6:52-71**  
**No One Can Come to Jesus, Part 2**

**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 was revealed by Jesus in John 6. Jesus spoke to three groups in John 6: the crowd, His disciples, and the Twelve. Jesus explained *why* the five-thousand saw the signs and yet still did not believe, *why* many of His disciples gave up on Him, and *why* even one of the Twelve betrayed Him.

**Review of Last Week:**

Five thousand men saw the healing “signs” Jesus did on the sick (6:2), ate food miraculously supplied by Jesus (also a “sign”, 6:14), yet despite all this asked for another “sign” to give them reason to believe (6:30). Clearly, theirs was a faulty faith.

ESV **John 6:36** . . . you have seen me and yet do not believe.

The crowd rightly concluded that Jesus was “indeed the Prophet” (6:14), a reference to a prediction by Moses that God would send them another prophet like Moses (Dt 18:18-19). True enough, Jesus miraculously fed the five thousand, but they wanted to see Him now feed the whole nation, as Moses did with manna, as a sign.

\*\*\*\***What better bread did Jesus offer in 6:32-33?** The contrast here is clearly between physical things and spiritual things:

- Manna was literal bread; Jesus is living bread.
- Manna bread was physical; Jesus’ bread is metaphysical.
- Manna temporarily sustained physical life but ultimately those who ate it died; Jesus gives spiritual life and those who eat His bread live forever.

\*\*\*\***Based on 6:35, how does a person eat the true bread that Jesus offers?** That was a metaphorical statement, not to be taken literally. The way to eat and drink is to “come” to Jesus and to “believe” in Him.

\*\*\*\***According to 6:36, what did the crowd think about His declaration?** They did not believe what He said.

**Literary Purpose:** John wrote to unbelieving Jews outside of Palestine. It would appear that since so many people saw Jesus’ miracles and signs, yet still did not believe, His mission a failure. John dealt with that by recording for his readers what Jesus said about the Father’s

role in causing people to believe in Jesus. The Father's purposes were not dependent on the response of the crowd.<sup>1</sup>

\*\*\*\* **According to 6:37a, despite widespread rejection, who *will* believe?** *See also 6:39.* Jesus said that there is a group of people that the Father has "given" to Jesus and "all" of these people "will" come. In fact, Jesus said this twice (see 6:39b).

\*\*\*\* **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.<sup>2</sup>

\*\*\*\* **How did Jesus respond to the crowd's grumbling (6:41-44)?** He said that no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him. Jesus repeated this point in 6:65. This is an important truth.

**Literary Purpose (again):** John wanted to explain to his readers why so many people started out with Jesus, but then left him (the 5,000, the "disciples" and even one of the Twelve). It looks like Jesus lost them, that He couldn't hold on to them, but that was not the case at all.

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### The Crowd's Grumbling & Disputing

\*\*\*\* **In 6:52-59, how did Jesus respond to their disputations (6:50-51)?** He responded by simply saying it again, only this time in purely metaphorical form, with no explanation.

**Based on 6:52, what did the Jews think Jesus meant?** They evidently took what He said literally: cannibalism!

#### Applications:

**1) Beware Over-Literal Interpretations:** Christians often make the same mistake these Jews made—taking statements by Jesus literally, when it was meant figuratively. There is always a literal meaning behind what was said, but the wording is often figurative. The Roman Catholic Church has taken this too literally in claiming that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are actually, literally Jesus' flesh and blood. It still looks and tastes like bread and wine, but it is really flesh and blood. This erroneous doctrine is called transubstantiation.

The Baptist view is that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper *represents* Jesus' body and blood, not that it actually *is* His body and blood: "The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming."<sup>3</sup>

**2) Beware Eisegesis:** The things Jesus said in John 6 do reflect the true figurative meaning of the Lord's Supper.<sup>4</sup> However, the original intent of this passage has nothing to do with the

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<sup>1</sup> Carson, *John*, 290.

<sup>2</sup> Jesus is not saying He won't reject anyone the Father gives Him; He is saying He would lose anyone the Father gives Him.

<sup>3</sup> Article VII, "2000 Baptist Faith and Message".SBC.net. Accessed September 05, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Carson, *John*, 298.

Lord's Supper. Beware of reading into this passage something that neither Jesus nor John ever intended.

**Why did Jesus make absolutely no effort to clear up their wrong thinking (6:52-59)?** He had already explained it (6:35-51). It may have been a form of judgment against them for their disputing, grumbling and unbelief.

ESV **Matthew 13:10-11** . . . the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in **parables**?" And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given."

**From the overall context, what does it mean to feed on Jesus, eating His flesh and drinking His blood (6:52-59)?** It means you *believe* in Jesus; see 6:40, 47. To wit, that Jesus was sent to earth by the Father, that He is equal to the Father, and that He is metaphysical bread give eternal life.

**Augustine:** "Believe and you have eaten."<sup>5</sup>

### The Disciples' Grumbling & Unbelief

**Audience Review:** Jesus spoke to three groups in John 6: the crowd, His disciples, and the twelve. Jesus next turned His attention to a group called His "disciples".

\*\*\*\***Why did Jesus repeat the truth that no one can come to Him unless it is granted him by the Father (6:60-65)?** Jesus said this because many of His "disciples" grumbled (6:61) and did not believe (6:64). The "this" of "this is why" (6:65) refers to unbelief. Jesus repeated the truth that the only people who are able to come to Jesus are to whom it has been granted by the Father. John wanted His readers to know why even many of Jesus disciples ultimately rejected Him.

- **"disciples" (6:60):** The disciples were different from the Twelve. At the most basic level, a disciple was someone who followed Jesus around because he regarding Jesus as an authoritative teacher. Such an outward disciple was not necessarily a true believer. That many of these disciples left reveals that they were not actually Christians.

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.

**How was what Jesus said about ascending (6:62) answer their grumbling (6:61)?** They grumbled because Jesus claimed to be the bread of the Father who came down out of heaven. For Jesus to visibly, bodily ascend back into heaven (where He came from) would prove the truthfulness of His claims.

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<sup>5</sup> Carson, *John*, 297.

**Jesus asked, “what if” (6:62); what if what?** One possibility is that He was asking if they would believe *even* if they saw Him ascend into heaven. Another possibility is that since an ascension would prove that what He said is true, He was asking, “What are you going do about it?”

**In 6:63, Jesus said, “the flesh is no help at all”. What did He mean by that?** The flesh is no help with respect to giving anybody eternal life. Flesh includes mind, will, and emotions. Thus the futility of the earlier question, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Eternal life comes only through the Holy Spirit. It is the supernatural gift of God. Even if they saw Jesus ascend into heaven, they still would not believe. Thus, Jesus said that no one has the ability to come to Him.

**ESV John 3:5** Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

**How did Jesus describe His own words in 6:63b?** He said that His words were “spirit and life”.

**How did Jesus know from the beginning who did not believe, and who would betray him (6:64)?** Only God knows such things, and Jesus is God.<sup>6</sup> Though Jesus lived life as Adam should have lived it, in complete dependence on and obedience to the Father, Jesus was still God, equal to the Father, and as God had insight into all men.

**Review: According to 6:65, who are the only people who can come to Jesus?** It has to be granted by the Father. Since Jesus repeated Himself (6:44), I will too:

•**”no one” (6:65):** “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” (6:65):** In Greek, the word “can” means ability, not permission. 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.

**ESV Ephesians 2:1** . . . you were dead in the trespasses and sins . . .

**Total Depravity:** 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 could better be called Radical Depravity. 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! Thus Jesus said, “the flesh is no help at all” (6:63).

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<sup>6</sup> Since He was God, He knew things that only God could know. Beware the “kenosis” heresy, which was a denial of Jesus’ divine nature, and thus posited that Jesus only knew what the Father told him. D.A. Carson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 551.

• **“unless” (6:65):** 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 grants<sup>7</sup> it to him (in 6:44 Jesus said “draws”). The NIV interprets this slightly: “unless the Father has enabled him”.

**Divine Election:** Notice how 6:65 and 6:37 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 these chosen “will” come to Jesus. It is impossible to be chosen and not to come.

ESV **John 6:37** All that the Father gives me will come to me . . .

**The Basis of Election:** *On what basis did the Father elect those He gave to Jesus? Why did He pick the ones He picked but not others?* One Baptist pastor explained it like this: God votes for you, the devil votes against you, and you cast the deciding vote! : )

- 1) Conditional Election:** Some people speculate that the Father’s choice was based on foreseen faith. They posit that God looked down the tunnel of time to see who would one day believe, and then He responded to that foreseen faith by in turn Himself picking those people. This is called “conditional” election; God’s choice is conditioned on what He foresaw we would do of our own free will. According to this view, divine election is like Smokey Robinson’s song, “If you feel like giving me a lifetime of devotion, I second that emotion”. It is important to realize that the Bible never gives this as a reason. One theologian who sincerely held this view H.C. Thiessen, wrote that “we are nowhere told what it is in the foreknowledge of god that determines His choice...” He went on to write that it is “postulating” to believe that God chose those who he knew in advance would accept Him.<sup>8</sup>
- 2) Unconditional Election:** The alternative view, based on the truth of radical depravity, is that had God looked down the tunnel of time to see who would one day believe, He would have seen that left to themselves, no one would believe in Jesus. Thus, despite foreseen ill will, God the Father mercifully grants to some the ability to believe in Jesus, and draws them to Him. This choice was not based on anything in those chosen, but rather purely on God’s mercy.

**The Issue:** *Whose choice is causative?*

**View #1:** God chose me because I chose God.

**View #2:** I chose God because God chose me.

## Jesus & The Twelve

\*\*\*\***What impact did Jesus’ teaching have on his disciples (6:66-71)?** They turned back and no longer walked with Jesus. So in the course of one chapter, Jesus went from over 5,000 followers down to twelve.

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<sup>7</sup> “Granted” is from *didomi*, which fundamentally means “to give”.

<sup>8</sup> HC Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1949), 344.

**Application:** Many people since then have rejected Jesus because of various things Jesus taught. Darwin rejected orthodox Christianity in part because of what Jesus said about the reality of hell.

**Why did the Twelve not also go away (6:67-69)?** Peter said it was because they truly were convinced that Jesus had the words of eternal life, and thus there was no one else to turn to. It is what it is. You might not like the law of gravity, but you had better deal with it. They had changed their thinking to get in line with reality.

ESV **John 6:62** . . . what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?

**According to 6:70, who chose who?** It was not that they chose Jesus, but Jesus chose them.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, it is God who cast the deciding vote.

ESV **1 John 4:10** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

**Why do you suppose that John pointed out that Jesus knew all about Judas, long before the betrayal (6:70-71)?** It shows that Jesus' statement that he would lose none those given to Him by the Father was not voided by Judas' betrayal. Jesus was in complete control. He did not make a mistake when he picked Judas. It was part of God's sovereign plan.

- "devil" (6:70): The Greek word here is *diabolos* ("diabolical"). It literally means to hurl through (as with a spear or accusation); Satan is the accuser of the brethren. The idea here seems to be that Judas was an agent of the devil, that he was manipulated by the devil.

ESV **John 13:2** . . . the devil . . . put it into the heart of Judas . . . to betray him . . .

### So What?

**What does John 6 teach us about God the Father's role in the salvation process?**

**Why do you suppose John wanted His original readers to understand why Jesus was rejected?** John wanted them to realize that Jesus was not a failure. John explained why so many rejected Jesus despite overwhelming signs and works.

**What did Jesus claim about Himself in John 6:22-71?** Jesus claimed to be living bread from heaven who offers eternal to all who partake by faith.

**Based on John 6:22-71, 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 09/08/19

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<sup>9</sup> Brown, *John*, 298.