

The Bread of Life

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At one point, “many of [Jesus’] disciples went back and walked with Him no more.” (Jn. 6:66) As we progress further into the time of the apostasy, the great falling away from the faith which occurs just prior to Christ’s return (Mt. 24:10, 2 Ths. 2:3), we will find it of some benefit to examine what has caused others to fall away from the faith in the past. And we would do well to note Jesus’ response to their falling away from Him. “Then Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’” (Jn. 6:67) Far from begging His men to stay with Him, Jesus invites them to leave too! It was more important to Jesus that His men stay with Him for the right reasons than that, in staying with Him for the wrong reasons, they would fall away from Him in a different way.

Jesus’ invitation to leave evokes from Simon Peter a strong declaration of faith. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Jn. 6:68-69) Jesus is the Son of God who brings us eternal life. Preachers today labor long and hard to get people to come to altars to utter words like these and, once said, they put them on the track to local “church” attendance. Jesus, however, throws even Peter’s declaration back into the disciples’ faces, saying, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?” (Jn. 6:70) In effect, Jesus is saying, “As right as these things are, don’t rest your faith on what *you* believe. I chose you even though you don’t deserve it, you are not qualified to do what I have called you to do and one of you is even going to betray Me. No, don’t rest your faith on what *you* believe – rest your faith solely on *Me*.” This is so different from the me-centered “gospel” preached at many “churches”!

What had happened that had led to this crisis, this turning point, this cross roads for Jesus’ followers? “Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard [the things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum], said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can understand it?’” (Jn. 6:60) Something Jesus had said was beyond their natural, fallen human ability to dissect, understand and incorporate into their own thoughts and opinions. “When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured about this, He said to them, ‘Does this offend (Greek, *skandalizo* [4624]) you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, ‘Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.’” (Jn. 6:61-65)

There are several things to note from this answer.

- Jesus discerned in the Spirit, “in Himself,” that the disciples were murmuring about His teachings. He knew they were stumbling and, rather than let them stumble in silence, He makes certain that they know the choice they are making.

- The disciples were offended. The Greek word is *skandalizo*, “scandalized.” They were being “tripped up, stumbled, enticed to sin or apostasy.” (Strong’s, [4624])

- The disciples were offended because their flesh could not make heads or tails of this teaching. Their flesh could find no way to be in control of their life under

this teaching.

- What if they saw Jesus ascend back to heaven? This is a reference to “the sign” the Jews were demanding in Capernaum. (Jn. 6:30) The result would have been the same as when the people were fed the loaves and fishes – they would have tried to make Jesus the king of Israel. (Jn. 6:15) God’s plan was for Jesus to be crucified, resurrected and then glorified and exalted to be the King of *all* kings. Allowing these men to make him king of Israel would have produced the same result as leaping from the pinnacle of the temple at the devil’s promptings. (see Mt. 4:5-6) Jesus would be diverted from God’s way, probably dead and the devil would still control this world and there would be no hope for any of us in the next life either. The flesh profits nothing.

- Since some of His *disciples* did not believe in Him (Peter will so clearly express the faith of the twelve in just a few verses), they were operating, not in life, but in death. They were offended because Jesus was saying that *God* had to choose them rather than that they had to choose Jesus and God. This too is quite different from the “gospel” preached at many “churches” and “evangelistic crusades”!

“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.” (Jn. 6:66) The falling from the faith had occurred for these disciples. Perhaps they were brought back after His resurrection and some of these repented and were restored. Perhaps not.

The Prophet

What was the teaching that Jesus gave that was so offensive to His disciples? Let us start at the beginning of this story which is, in reality, the people’s reaction to the miraculous feeding of the five thousand. “Therefore [the disciples] gathered [the leftover fragments] up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.’ Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to a mountain by Himself alone.” (Jn. 6:13-15)

Let us note that Jesus really did not perform the sign, the miracle of feeding the five thousand, to prove anything. Rather, He was moved with compassion for the multitude, many of whom He healed. (Mt. 14:14, Mk. 6:34) And he spoke to the multitude about the kingdom of God. (Lk. 9:11) The men who wanted a different king than Herod perceived and concluded from the sign and the message that Jesus must be the Prophet whom God had told Moses would come.

“I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.” (Dt. 18:18-19)

These men had remembered the prophecy that such a Man would come but they had forgotten or jettisoned the warning about listening to Him! Instead of listening to Jesus, they took the prophecy that God would raise up the Prophet, piped it through their Jewish nationality and hatred

and discontent with Roman rule and decided it must be God's will that Jesus should be the king of Israel. These men were quite willing to let Jesus be king of Israel but they were not willing that He should be their own personal King and Lord over every aspect of their life.

It is no different today. A man displays some affinity for the words of God and has some heart toward helping people. This is piped through centuries of religious traditions of men and the man concludes he is called to be a "pastor" and he must go somewhere and start or lead a "church." But the understanding the Lord gives has already been bypassed. Whatever "success" the man enjoys, even though it may truly come from human strength or ability or even demonic deception and manipulation, is attributed to God. Though the man might draw in large crowds because of his demonically-enhanced eloquence and the demonic spirit of mammon has poured forth the riches to build a fabulous "Christian" temple, this is called the work of God. And though God will use even this to draw men to Himself from wherever they are at, the words of God as He intends and desires them to be understood and obeyed is obscured and lost on those who really aren't listening to Him anyway but who are instead being led by their secretly demonically misguided reason and intellect (their flesh).

The Work of God

When the people who had eaten the loaves and the fishes and who had tried to make Jesus king of Israel found Jesus at Capernaum "on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, 'Rabbi, when did You come here?' Jesus answered them and said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.'" (Jn. 6:25-27)

The man who thinks godliness is a way to profit and prosper himself is very deceived and one from whom we are commanded to withdraw. (1 Tim. 6:5) These people were not convinced by the signs (the healings, deliverances and feeding the multitude) that Jesus was the Christ who had the words of eternal life. They thought the promised Prophet had come to throw off the Roman yoke and they were in a unique position to profit themselves by being the king's right-hand men. They had so much to offer Him (in their own opinion) if He would just quit disappearing on them and get down to the business of plotting Rome's overthrow and start ousting the hated Romans from their beloved Promised, ancestral homeland.

Jesus, knowing that this is the work they have in mind, chose to use the word "labor." Do not labor, He says, for worthless wages, work for a wage that pays eternal dividends. And let us note that this is not a salvation-by-works gospel but a salvation-*that*-works gospel. The Son of Man *gives* us eternal life even as we work at obeying Him. (see Heb. 5:9)

"Then they said to Him, 'What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.'" (Jn. 6:28-29) Jesus has chosen this as *the* (singular) work of God required of men, not because it is the *only* work required of men by God (see Eph. 2:10 for example), but because it is the *first* work from which all other works must proceed. If this work is left undone (as we have already seen that it was in those who were falling away from Jesus) then no other work will make up for its absence. When one believes, the whole of His grace (that is, the power of God to overcome all aspects of the fallen flesh nature) and the whole of His Person, Spirit and nature are opened to the believer. Without this belief, there is nothing of God available to the individual. The devil's chief strategy against any true believer is to get the person, who sees only dimly and in part anyway (1 Cor. 13:12), to take his eyes

off of Him in whom he has believed and step away from this first work. After two millennia, the demonic is very successful in this strategy and the “church,” the counterfeit of genuine assembly in Christ, produces far more apostates, those fallen from the faith, than it produces genuine believers who obey Christ.

“Therefore they said to Him, ‘What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”’” (Jn. 6:30-31) Here the people Jesus fed and who wanted to make Him king of Israel demand a sign. Let’s rewind the tape again. When they had seen the sign of feeding the multitude, they were willing to make Him king – that they could understand, control and even manipulate to their own ends. But believe? How do you do that? And what will it do for *me*? The twelve disciples, of whom Peter will soon make his strong declaration of faith, had experienced an additional sign since then because Jesus had walked across the sea to meet them in their boat. (Jn. 6:19) So they are watching Jesus and wondering why He doesn’t just give the Jews the sign they’re asking for and get this kingdom of God thing going in high gear. The answer to that puzzlement would not come until some time later when they were in an upper room in one accord. (Acts 2:1, 4)

Manna in the Wilderness

Perhaps the people, having just been miraculously fed from five barley loaves, see a connection between this Prophet and His barley-bread miracle and Moses and the feeding of the Israelites with manna. However they made the connection (or perhaps it would not have mattered which Old Testament connection they chose as Jesus is to be found in the whole of the Book – Heb. 10:7), they’ve arrived at the right answer but they don’t have it in the right light or from the right angle. How could they? Jesus’ words are spirit and life – these people do not believe! They do not have the spiritual faculties and enablement to rightly divide this word of truth. So instead they use their flesh to arrive at wherever their flesh can take them. When we examine the quote these people are referring to, once again we find they are missing half of the story.

When the children of Israel had been gone from Egypt for 45 days and were camped in the wilderness,

“the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, ‘Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.’ Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.’” (Ex. 16:2-4)

When we examine the record further, we find out what some of these tests were.

“And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, as fine as frost on the ground. So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, ‘This is the bread which the LORD has given you to

eat. This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: “Let every man gather it according to each one’s need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons, let every man take for those who are in his tent.” And the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one’s need. And Moses said, ‘Let no one leave any of it till morning.’ Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank.

...Then Moses said, ‘Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, there will be none.’ Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, ‘How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?’” (Ex. 16:14-20, 26-28)

We find further,

“Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: ‘Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; but there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!’” (Num. 11:4-6)

And Moses said,

“And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” (Dt. 8:2-3)

The Israelites in the wilderness failed these tests and they died in the wilderness. And now the people who were fed by Jesus and who want to make Him king of Israel refer to this bread from heaven and ask Jesus what sign will He give that they might believe and follow Him. Again, in their minds, this means the glorious overthrow of Rome and the restoration and expansion of Israel’s power. They already believe these lies and in so doing are incapable of doing the work of God which is to believe in Him whom He has sent. Because their paradigm was already set in place, there was no room for the plan, will and purpose of God. So Jesus says to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ Then they said to Him, ‘Lord, give us this bread always.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life.’” (Jn. 6:32-35) In effect, He says to them, You want this bread from heaven? I am that bread. You know neither what you are asking for nor what stands before you.

The Bread of Life

Jesus, by saying that He was the bread from heaven, identifies Himself as the ultimate fulfillment of the prophetic picture or type which was given by the manna in the wilderness. This should give us an indication of how accurate God's foreknowledge is. To accurately and perfectly predict future events with words is more powerful than what either men or demons can do. Yet even that pales in comparison with God's ability to take people's lives and specific events and use them to accurately and perfectly portray the deepest element of what is to come. Let us examine how the Old Testament passages about the Israelites' reactions to the manna mirror how people reacted to Jesus and still react to Him now and especially in the context of the apostasy, the great falling away from the faith.

- The Israelites expressed their preference for the things of Egypt over obediently enduring their wilderness training. The life of Jesus, the wandering prophet and teacher, was looked down upon by many of the leaders of Israel. The life Jesus gives by His Spirit is considered contemptible and ridiculed as cultic and radical by "pastors" and "church" folk who find the spiritually drowsy, feel-good religious experience of routine sermonizing preferable to actual, active obedience to Christ and His Spirit. Too many of those who have abandoned the apostate "church" have likewise developed an aversion to life in the wilderness and have either returned to "church" or developed their own version of it.

- The bread from heaven was given to the murmuring Israelites to test them as to whether they would obey God or not. The Jews, in the ultimate expression of rebellion and disobedience, murdered Jesus who was the express image of God's Person. (Heb. 1:3) Jesus presents ongoing aspects of Himself and His way to people today for the same reason – to test their loyalties to Him. One major testing going on now is the revelation that the "church" paradigm was the means by which God allowed the wheat and the tares to mature simultaneously and side by side. (Mt. 13:30) Now the choice before men is whether they really desire to be wheat or tare.

- When the manna first appeared, the people did not even know what it was. When Jesus arrived, men supposed Him to be the Prophet who should be the king of Israel. Others supposed Him to be a demonized deceiver of the people. (Mk. 3:22) Even His disciples who came to know He was the Christ who had the words of eternal life did not know what that meant until the Spirit came upon them and led them into the truth. Now, after centuries of submitting to the traditions of men in the name of Christ, few indeed know how to find and gather the bread from heaven for themselves. In the context of the parable of the wedding maids, this is a significant problem. (Mt. 25:8-12)

- The Israelites were each to gather what manna they needed according to the size of their family. Some gathered much while others gathered little yet (whether miraculously or through systematic distribution) each had enough. Those who, whether in Jesus' day or our own, truly partake of the bread from heaven (and not some religious or spiritual counterfeit), if they let remain in them what was spiritually implanted in them by God, they will remain in God. (1 Jn. 2:24) They will have

enough to attain to the eternal life which God gives in Christ.

- When the Israelites tried to save some manna for the next day, it rotted, bred worms and stank. In Jesus' day, the Law of Moses had devolved into a traditionalized religious system that usurped the role of the word of God in people's lives. (Mk. 7:13) Today, the "gospel" has become a tool to bring people into the web of an institutionalized religious system that is most often characterized by a form of godliness wherein the power to change lives (from the flesh nature to the Spirit and nature of Christ) is largely absent. (2 Tim. 3:5) In every instance where there has been a genuine work of God, who still draws all men toward Himself from wherever they are at, the wineskin (see Lk. 5:37-38) hardens and a new group has to break away from the previous group who is so enamored with yesterday's manna that they don't detect the stench nor the fact that they are no longer a vehicle for the Spirit of truth.

- The mixed multitude enticed the Israelites to sin by craving the delicacies and abundance of Egypt. The original believers were closely linked to the Spirit of Christ and people feared to join themselves to this "new sect" (Acts 5:13) and Ananias and Sapphira were only the first who tried to practice impurity in the name of Christ (Acts 5:1-2) – many others would follow in their footsteps. (see 1 Tim. 1:19, 3 Jn. 9, etc.) Today, the "church" is a place specially designed to seat the mixed multitude in comfort and ease while any of the true partakers of the heavenly life are slowly sermonized to sleep and ultimately death or quickly chased out the door.

- When the manna appeared to the Israelites, it was a new thing. When Jesus arrived, His understanding of the Messiah and His role in human history was very new. Today, when the bride is undergoing what would appear to be final preparations to be ready for her Husband, new fresh manna is required to bring her out of the corrupted, contaminated filth and leaven which has grown up around her over the centuries.

The "church," like the Israelites, has failed God's testings which have attended the manna from heaven which is Jesus Christ Himself.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

In the remainder of His encounters with the Jews at Capernaum, Jesus lays out more spiritual truth about His nature as the bread of life. "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.'" (Jn. 6:35-40) Jesus is, in effect, saying to them, Sign? **I** am the

sign – you’ve seen the sign and still you don’t believe. I can tell you these things – indeed I tell you these things clearly and repeatedly – but you still won’t understand unless you first believe. Obedience comes before blessing and understanding.

For those of us who can understand, however dimly or in part, let us note the key features of the gospel of the kingdom, for that is what Jesus is speaking forth here.

- If we are truly partaking of Christ and believing in Him, we shall never hunger or thirst. If we are spiritually hungry and thirsty, it is only a symptom that we’ve come to a different “Christ,” listened to a different spirit or believed a different “gospel” and fallen from the simplicity that is in Christ. (2 Cor. 11:3-4)

- The Father draws men to Himself and to Christ and any who will come and submit will not be cast out. Those who truly believe must continue to submit just as Jesus did not live to perform His own will but the will of Him who sent Him. Knowing and doing the will of God is the central focus of the true citizen of Christ’s kingdom of light.

- Those who believe now, in this world of darkness, will be raised up on the last day to receive and experience eternal life with Christ and God in a place where righteousness – and not sin and darkness – dwells. (see 2 Pet. 3:13)

This is the essence of the gospel of the kingdom. Note well the subtle (and not so subtle) differences from the “gospel” of the “church” which, at its core, says, “Come, listen to our guy preach and, if you like what you see and hear, you can stay and do as much or as little as you like.”

Resistance

This presentation of the gospel of the kingdom was clear enough that the Jews began to resist what Jesus was saying. “The Jews then murmured against Him, because He said, ‘I am the bread which came down from heaven.’ 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?”’” (Jn. 6:41-42) The poverty of the flesh is readily apparent in these Jews. They chose the example of manna and when Jesus tells them the right angle and the best light to understand that example, they become combative. Their flesh, seeing God’s righteous demand that they surrender all control of their life to Him, rises up in rebellion. Logic and reason are brought in as weapons to show how, because we see clearly with our fleshly eyes that this physical thing is thus and so, then this spiritual reality which we can’t see at all with our fleshly eyes could not possibly be so. The “logic” of spiritual blindness! In this case, they used Jesus’ human parentage to deny His divine lineage. That this premise was incorrect was probably unknown to these Jews but they probably wouldn’t have accepted that God was His literal Father anyway. And this *is* the usual resistance of the flesh against the Holy Spirit of truth! (see Acts 7:51)

“Jesus therefore answered and said to them, ‘Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him’ and I will raise him up at the last day. 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. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has

everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. 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.” (Jn. 6:43-51) It really doesn't matter how many times or in what different ways Jesus says the same thing, they *cannot* understand it and will *always* (as we will see shortly) distort His spiritual words to some physical, fleshly, even absurd explanation – all so that their flesh can remain “in control” of their own life.

This is the dilemma of all mankind. Our flesh, the fallen, sinful, selfish *me*, dominates our life from day one. This is the fruit of Adam's sin, the Fall. We are flawed and broken, imperfect in the very foundational structures of our existence. And yet this flawed, fallen, imperfect identity persists in promoting, even flaunting itself and in clinging to its own blind and groundless perceptions of itself as the most important, most well-developed thing that has ever existed. And even where reality has taught us to deny the extreme expressions of this false self-image, the flesh continues to stubbornly believe only the best about itself.

Then Jesus comes along and simultaneously confronts us with the truth about Himself and ourselves and commands us to repent of all our sin and selfishness and truly draw near to God (who has been drawing us to Himself all along). Our first choice is to believe or not. This *is* the work which God commands all men to perform first. If we refuse to believe, we will never gain spiritual understanding and our flesh will rise up in resistance to God's Spirit and find ways to rationally dismiss the spiritual truths and realities He is opening up to us. Nor is this just our initial introduction to Christ and God. “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh – for these are in opposition to one another...” (Gal. 5:17) The initial conflict is also the ongoing one and, if we do not overcome the flesh, it will be the cause of our falling away from the faith. Though this big picture can be so easily painted in such few, broad strokes, the working out of our salvation is indeed an intricate, laborious, painful and yet glorious undertaking which requires diligence and attention the remainder of our days. We would laugh at a person who buys a brand new car but then neglects to ever once check the oil in the engine, but some “theologians” see nothing wrong with the notion of receiving eternal life and then never having anything more to do with obeying Christ and God.

Again, let those with understanding note the elements in Jesus' answer that will help us with the ongoing war between the Spirit and the flesh.

- Only those who are drawn to the Father will come to Christ. This takes the burden off of us to “go out and win souls” for the Lord. We have one work to do: believe. If we truly believe that Jesus is truly the Son of God who alone has the words of eternal life, as Peter said so well (Jn. 6:68), then we will not dare to lose our connection with Him by allowing some other voice (human or demonic) to draw us away from Him. From this belief will come the obedience that enables us to *be* whatever God has made us to be and we will accomplish whatever purpose God has in mind for us, both individually and corporately.

- *Everyone* is taught by God. But not everyone believes – and not everyone obeys. God is looking for those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. (Jn. 4:23) Many will attempt to imitate the goodness and loving nature of God but that

this is done in the flesh is demonstrated by their rejection of truth. There are others who attempt to imitate God by attaining spiritual knowledge but that this is being done in the flesh is evidenced by their lack of love (which *is* the fruit of God's Spirit – Gal. 5:22) The “church,” which places more importance on teachings, buildings and salaries than on the needs of the orphans, widows and the least of Christ's brothers, is a perfect example of the latter. But since God teaches everyone, we don't need that any man keep on regularly and continually teaching us the things of God. (1 Jn. 2:27)

- The Israelites ate of the manna and later they died. In spite of what some “theologians” try to tell us, the Scriptures point to a condition of spiritual death for those who partake of the heavenly things and then fall away. (see Heb. 6:4-6) Let us who are drawing near to God recognize that, in at least one sense, the closer we get the greater the danger is if we do fall away from Him. Let us work out our salvation with great diligence, fear and trembling lest we too fall after the same example of others' disobedience. (Phlp. 2:12, Heb. 4:11)

Contention

With this further expounding on the kingdom of God, “The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, ‘How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?’” (Jn. 6:52) This is the caliber of understanding the flesh gives. Jesus had already said that the work of God was to believe but these Jews (either because they completely misunderstood or because they are deliberately distorting His message to drive others away from Him) have taken a “literal” interpretation that, when one knows the spiritual truth, borders on the absurd. Jesus means for us to believe in the power of His death and resurrection and these Jews think He wants us to be cannibals! And because they don't agree with Jesus, their flesh erupts and they start arguing with each other, each contending for whatever aspect of Christ's teaching that they *can* agree with! Doesn't this sound like nearly every “Christian” blog site in existence today?

But let us note well Jesus' answer. Rather than denouncing their answer as ridiculous, Jesus uses their own language to continue bringing the truth before them. “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven – not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.’” (Jn. 6:53-58) Jesus is in effect saying, You want to press the spiritual parable to its limits? That's okay. My flesh and My blood are food and drink. Partake of them or not – that is the choice before you. If your flesh wants to call it cannibalism but I'm telling you it is life itself, which are you going to listen to – the flesh or the Spirit?

Jesus probably earned the hatred and enmity of the flesh-driven Jews right here – a hatred and enmity that, in God's timing, culminated in the crucifixion and death of Christ, the very flesh and blood which He was offering up for consumption by all who would believe. As we have already seen, many of His own disciples “abandoned ship” at this point and walked with Him no more. Since the flesh could not be in control, this Man must be deluded and wrong, certainly not worth

investing one's life and time into. Even the twelve only barely remained with Him as they simply waited on the horns of this apparent dilemma – He *is* the Messiah but *I* don't understand – until such time as understanding was granted to them. This is true faith indeed.

Very few people indeed are willing to walk in the truth about themselves – or at least, most are unwilling to have their own wretchedness brought out into the light even once so that they can see the human existence as God sees it. But those of us who are following hard after Christ and God can rest in His assurance that He will be faithful to complete the work which He has begun. (Phlp. 1:6) Though we, through diligent obedience to God, do need to take care that our flesh does not regain control of our lives, we can trust God who is very able to keep us (Jude 24, compare v. 21) even when we don't understand or know what He is doing in us.

We must come to this place of resting in *His* work in us. The flesh will always be delighted to rise up and try to do the second and third kind of works of God as long as the first work, denying self and believing in Christ, is overlooked and left undone. It is often very difficult to cease from one's own religious works but this is precisely what must be done if we are to do God's first work first and His secondary works in accordance with His will. The world and the "church" teaches us to do, do, do and that we must rely primarily on ourselves if anything "good" (in our own eyes, that is) is ever going to get done. The notion of simply waiting on God, resting in Him, abiding in Him and trusting that He will lead each of us and instruct each of us is almost a completely foreign idea to the world and the "church." But if we will simply set ourselves at His feet, He will give us the strength and power to do His works and He will also give us the strength, wisdom and discernment to wait on His timing and way of doing a particular thing. This *is* the step-by-step process by which we daily deny ourselves, take up our cross, die to our self and flesh nature and demonstrate that we truly are Christ's disciples. (Lk. 9:23-24) Anything else is just "church," the religious counterfeit of genuine life in Christ.

Let he who has ears hear.

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