

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Bread of Life John 6:60-65 Part 6

Churches are growing throughout the Antelope Valley. It also seems apparent from what I have heard from many different sources that though churches may be growing numerically, the emphasis on strong biblical teaching within those churches is diminishing. What is particularly tragic is that in some instances the diminishing role of strong biblical teaching has actually been purposed. It appears that an increasing number of churches actually believe that strong biblical teaching is an impediment to church growth.

This is not our belief. We believe that the church Christ is presently building needs to be built on the cornerstone of strong biblical teaching. We also believe that when churches fail to understand this truth, they are no longer following the example of Christ. Consequently, though these churches may on the surface look good, their work will be seriously flawed.

These thoughts bring us back to our study of **John 6**. The Apostle used the "Feeding of the 5,000" and "Christ walking on water" as a transition into the "Bread of Life" discourse in John 6:22-71.

Because of the length of this discourse, we have broken it into several different parts. The first part of the "Bread of Life" discourse began with a challenge in John 6:22-27. What was that challenge? Christ challenged the Jewish multitude to not work for the food that perishes but rather for the food that endures to eternal life. This challenge then led us to the second part of the Bread of Life discourse.

The second part of the "Bread of Life" discourse consisted of a promise in John 6:28-40. What was that promise? Christ promised this Jewish multitude that if they responded to His challenge and worked for the food that endures to eternal life; or in other words, if they would in faith come to Him as the "bread and life" and purpose themselves to feast at His banqueting table, they would never again hunger or thirst. The deepest longing of their soul would be met.

Why was He able to say this? He was able to say this because He was and is the Bread of Life who came down out of heaven.

Having extended a challenge in **John 6:22-27** and a promise in **John 6:28-40**, the apostle John then introduced the final part of the "Bread of Life" discourse. The third and final part of the "Bread of Life" discourse consists of various responses in John 6:41-71. We have now considered two of those responses.

The first response could be entitled, "We know where you come from" in John 6:41-51. What led to this response?

Jesus had told the Jewish multitude that He was the Bread of Life and that He had come down out of heaven. They found this difficult to believe. They found it difficult to believe because they knew His mother and father. We saw this in **John 6:42**. Even though they were struggling with His

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teaching concerning His heavenly origin, He did not backpedal in order to keep this large following of people. He rather expanded on what He said by telling them if anyone eats of this heavenly bread, which He had identified as Himself, they would live forever. This obviously would have caused some confusion on their part, but this was compounded even further when He went on to say in **John 6:51** that the bread that He was prepared to give them for the life of this world was His flesh. This last statement led to a second response by this Jewish multitude.

The second response could be entitled, "How can He give us His flesh to eat?" in John 6:52-59. The things Jesus was sharing were not being received. They did not accept His teaching concerning His heavenly origin nor did they understand what He meant by eating His flesh, but again Jesus did not backpedal in order to keep this large following of people. In fact, He once again added to what He said. He did this by amending His statement about eating His flesh to include "drinking His blood." This addition, in light of the Mosaic Law's prohibition against consuming things with blood or drinking blood, certainly would not have made Christ's audience more receptive.

This was very unfortunate. Obviously they did not understand what Jesus meant by His words, but they should have. They should have, based on information Christ shared with them in **John 6:51** combined with what they could have known if they had compared **John 6:40** with **John 6:54**.

What should they have understood when they considered these verses? They should have understood that when Christ spoke about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He was speaking metaphorically of appropriating through a sincere faith the benefits of Christ's atoning death. This should have been clear to them. Unfortunately, because of their unbelieving hearts, it wasn't clear to them at all. This leads us to a third response by this Jewish multitude. What this third response?

The third response could be entitled, "This is a *difficult* saying; Who can listen to it?" (John 6:60-65).

Let me read for you **John 6:60-65**. **"Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this said, 'This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?' (61) But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, 'Does this cause you to stumble? (62) What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before? (63) It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (64) 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 it was that would betray Him. (65) And He was saying, 'For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.'"**

I would hope, that as we consider this third response of this Jewish multitude, we will once again see the importance of strong doctrinal teaching in the building of Christ's church; since it is through strong biblical teaching that those who have been who have been called to salvation can be separated from those who have not been called to salvation.

Let us now begin our examination of this third response by the Jewish multitude by looking at **John 6:60**. What does the Apostle John share with us in this verse? He tells us, **"Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this said, 'This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it.'"** There are a number of different questions that we need to answer if we are going to fully understand what the apostle meant by these words.

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The first question we must answer is this. Who were the disciples who said, "**This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?**" First of all, the "disciples" in **verse 60** must be distinguished from the "twelve" who are specifically contrasted with this group in **John 6:66-67**.

If the "disciples" in **verse 60** are not the "twelve," then who exactly are they? The so-called "disciples" who said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it" are pseudo disciples; or in other words, false disciples (John 8:31). How do we know this? Let me read for you **John 8:31**. "**Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of mine.'**" Let me ask you this question. Were these so-called disciples in **John 6:60** abiding in the words of Christ? Absolutely not! They were not abiding in the words of Christ; in fact, they were not even close to even receiving the words of Christ, which is evident by what they said here in **verse 60**.

They were following Christ because they had eaten the loaves and fish that Jesus had miraculously supplied for them. Jesus made this very clear in **John 6:26**. They were not following Him because they had made a personal commitment to Christ based on the words of Christ. They were just simply following Him to see what else they might be able to get from Him in respect to the things of this world.

Obviously these so-called disciples, these pseudo disciples, were struggling with Christ's statement; or in other words, the whole of what Christ had been sharing with them in the "Bread of Life" discourse. They called it a "difficult statement."

The word "difficult" in this context does not mean hard to understand but rather objectionable, offensive, or impossible to accept. What specifically in the "bread of life" discourse had they found impossible to accept?

It was impossible for these so-called disciples to accept what Christ had said about His heavenly origin and the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:41, 52). These were things that they found themselves in a sense unable to swallow. Was Jesus aware of their unbelieving response? The answer is yes!

Let us go on to read **John 6:61**. "**But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, 'Does this cause you to stumble?'**" It is clear from this verse that Jesus knew within Himself that these so-called disciples were unhappy with what He had been saying. How He became "conscious" of their struggle is not specified but He did know. He confronted them with that knowledge in the form of a question. "**Does this cause you to stumble?**" Of course if they were to answer this question honestly, they would have said, "Yes, what you have said has made us to stumble."

What is the meaning of the word "stumble"? The Greek word translated "stumble" is "SKANDALON." "SKANDALON" originally was the name of the part of the trap to which the bait was attached. In the New Testament, "SKANDALON" (stumble) is always used metaphorically of anything that becomes a hindrance to others or causes them to fall by the way. This multitude was in the process of falling away from Christ because of the things that He has been sharing with them. They knew this and Christ knew this.

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Perhaps now He would begin to backpedal and soften what He had said to them and cease hammering away at doctrine. Certainly those who are highly committed to the church growth movement I believe would be tempted to do this. Just as we have seen before throughout this discourse, Jesus once again pressed forward in His teachings even if those teachings might be difficult for many people to hear. How did He press forward?

Let us now go on to read **John 6:62**. **"What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before."** Jesus, in John 6:62, in essence is saying, "You are struggling with what I said about coming down from heaven. Would you continue to struggle if you saw me ascend to heaven?" This question not only again reinforces what He had already said about His heavenly origin, but it expands on this thought by implying to them that He would also return to the very place that He Himself had originated. You have heard the expression, "What goes up must come down." In His case, quite the opposite is true. What came down must go up.

Christ knew that they were struggling with what He has been saying. Would they continue to struggle with what He had been saying if they were to see Him ascend back to heaven? This is a question that He wanted them to answer. This question, I believe, was designed to challenge their obstinate refusal to consider the ample evidence already put before them concerning His heavenly origin and earthly mission.

Jesus has now in the course of the discourse spoke of His heavenly origin. He has spoken about His mission. He has spoken about what people must do in order to appropriate the benefits of His mission and now He shared with them, by way of this question, what is going to happen to Him after His mission is completed. What is most interesting is the fact that, though the Jews were struggling with everything that He said, He has never made it easy for them to stick around. He was committed to sharing with them what they needed to hear rather than simply sharing with them what they might have wanted to hear. Certainly we see this again in **John 6:62** when He challenged their stubborn unbelieving attitude by introducing His future ascension back to heaven.

Where will Christ go from here in respect to His interaction with this Jewish multitude? He has already given them in this discourse a general overview of His life and mission beginning with His original descent to His final ascent. What else would need to be shared with them?

Jesus, after challenging their present unbelieving state in John 6:62, will once again give them the opportunity to *rethink* what He has shared with them in John 6:63-65.

Let me now read for you **John 6:63**. **"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."**

When Jesus refers to the "Spirit" giving life in John 6:63, He is clearly referring to the *Holy Spirit* since it only through the Spirit that anyone can experience life (John 3:8). We have already seen this clearly stated in **John 3:8**.

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If the reference to the "Spirit" is a reference to the Holy Spirit, then what is the reference to the "flesh" referring to? The reference to the "flesh" is a reference to the flesh of a physical body, more specifically to the flesh of Christ's *body*.

This understanding clearly fits into the flow of the preceding verses. If this true, how could Jesus say that the flesh profits nothing in light of His purposed future giving of His flesh for the life of the world which He spoke about in **John 6:51**?

Jesus was able to say that the flesh profits nothing, even His flesh, because no one would be granted life by literally *eating* the flesh of any man including His own flesh. If this Jewish multitude could have understood Christ's statement at the beginning of **John 6:63** in this way, then hopefully they would have been able to see that when Christ spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He was not talking about literally eating His physical flesh. Why? As He says here in **John 6:63**, the flesh profits nothing.

If this is true, that the Holy Spirit gives life and not Christ's literal flesh, then how does the Holy Spirit give us life? The Holy Spirit can give us life by causing us to believe the words of Christ, which He Himself has *empowered*. How do we know that the Holy Spirit is empowering the very words that Christ was speaking?

Let us continue to read the verse. **"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."** What does Christ mean when He says that His words are "spirit"?

Jesus describes the words that He is speaking as "spirit" because they are the *product* of the life giving Spirit; or in other words, the Holy Spirit (John 3:34). If there is any question about this, all we have to do is to read **John 3:34**. **"For He whom God has sent [referring to Christ] speaks the words of God; for He [God] gives the Spirit without measure."**

Jesus does not only describe His words as "Spirit," He also describes His words as "life." Let me read for you this verse one more time. **"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."** What does it mean when He describes His words as "life"? Jesus describes the words that He is speaking as "life" because when those words are rightly understood and absorbed, they *generate* life (John 5:24). If there is any question about this, all we have to do is to read **John 5:24**. **"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."**

If we understand and appreciate the words of Jesus, which are empowered by the Spirit, we will find life. We will be joined to Christ and we will take up permanent residence at His banqueting table. In other words, our experience will in a sense parallel the experience of Jeremiah in **Jeremiah 15:16** when he said to the Lord, **"Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart."**

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This is how the Jewish multitude should have received the words that Christ had spoken to them. They should have received them joyously and with a heart full of delight. Why? They should have received them joyously and with a heart full of delight because His words were spirit and life. Hopefully, this is how we receive the Word of God. Hopefully, this is how you are receiving the Word of God here this weekend.

Unfortunately, many of them did not. Let us read the final verses of the "Bread of Life" discourse. **"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 it was that would betray Him."**

The words of Christ are spirit and life, but not everyone who associated with Christ is truly attached to Him. Those who are truly attached to Him are those who receive His words with joy and a heart full of delight. Unfortunately, at this particular point in time, this did not include these so-called disciples and the one who would eventually betray Him.

Why had they, those that He lists here, chosen not to believe? Let us read **verse 65. "And He was saying, 'For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.'"** No one will come to Christ without God the Father taking the initiative.

CONCLUSION

If the words of Christ are spirit and life, then why would we not want to teach them? If the words of Christ are spirit and life, why would we not want to proclaim them? Of course we would want to teach them and we would want to proclaim them. If the words of Christ are spirit and life, there is no better way to build the church than by being committed to *biblical teaching*.