

“Responding to the Bread of Life”

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John 6:60-71

I. Introduction

Writing decades after the 3 synoptic Gospels, there was no need to introduce Jesus again, so John didn't write a fourth biography of Jesus Christ. In [John 20:31](#) he wrote, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” That is, John's purpose was to inspire faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. For many, the key verse of the Gospel of John is [John 3:16](#), “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” With the purpose of inspiring faith in Jesus Christ, John recorded only 8 of Jesus' 30-plus miracles. In the last verse of his Gospel, in [John 21:25](#), he wrote, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them was written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.”

The majority of the Gospel of John is devoted to the events of Jesus' life and sayings during His last days. For example, chapter 5 contains all John recorded of Jesus' 2nd year of ministry—often called the Year of Popularity. Because of what and how John did write, the Gospel of John is considered by many to be the deepest and most spiritual book in the Bible.

The 6th chapter of John is a rather long chapter. It covers two days and one night and it's taken us 4 weeks to work through it. John wrote in [John 6:4](#), that “the Jewish Passover Feast was near.” This was the beginning of Jesus' 3rd and final year of ministry, called the Year of Opposition. In the 71 verses of chapter 6, John showed the people's attitude changing from one of popularity to that of opposition.

It all started when Jesus wanted to get away with His disciples for some R&R, so they went to a secluded, mountainous place on the far side of the Sea of Galilee. But because of Jesus' popularity, people searched for them and eventually a large crowd had gathered in “the middle of no place.” This led to Jesus feeding a multitude of hungry people. [Mathew 14:21](#) says, “The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.”—about 15-20,000 individuals. This impressive

miracle got everyone excited for this miracle worker. [John 6:15](#) says, “Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force withdrew again to a mountain by himself.” To get His disciples away from the people and this temptation and to continue their education, [Matthew 14:22](#) adds that “Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into a boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.”

While the disciples were trying to cross the sea, a mega-storm came up, and the Apostles were fearful for their lives. Their fear escalated when they saw Jesus walking on the water as He came to their aid. After Jesus got into the boat and calmed the storm, they finally got to shore. However, the crowd soon found them and asked about more bread.

From the beginning of His ministry Jesus had been preaching repentance; [Matthew 4:17](#) describes it this way: “From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” Now in [John 6](#), with His death just months away, Jesus turned the conversation from bread for one’s physical well-being, to bread for one’s spiritual well-being. He said in [John 6:27](#), “Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.” Later in [verse 35](#), Jesus said, “I am the bread of life.” Then in [verse 53](#) of [John 6](#) He said, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” It was these statements that led to the different reactions of those following Him. [Turn to John 6:60-71](#) as John records the various ways people responded to the Bread of Life.

Generally speaking, those who hear the Word of God will respond in one of three ways. Some scoff and ridicule and react with outright rejection. The scribes and the Pharisees constantly opposed Jesus’ teachings and ridiculed him personally. Some don’t reject the Gospel right away, instead they respond with a temporary or shallow faith. These false disciples are the curiosity seekers who are superficially attracted to Jesus. But when Jesus makes demands on them, or there is a cost to be paid for following Him, because they are not willing to let go of the world or to deny themselves, they disappear.

[Turn to Luke 9:23-25.](#) John described false disciples in [1 John 2:19](#), “They went out from us, but they did

not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us, but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.” The third group is made up of those who respond with true faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

As Jesus concluded His words, the outright rejecters left, John wrote in [verse 42](#) that earlier they had said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can He now say, ‘I came down from heaven.’” So, when Jesus finished speaking, only those claiming to be disciples were left. “On hearing it, many of his disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?’”

II. The Reaction of the False Disciples

Although John called the remaining crowd “his or Jesus’ disciples,” this didn’t mean that they were true followers of Jesus. The Greek word that John used refers to anyone who attaches himself to a teacher as a student or learner, but it does not imply anything about the disciple’s sincerity or devotion. From the beginning of His ministry up to His feeding the multitude, large crowds had followed Jesus. The problem was that many of them were drawn by the sensational miracles He performed—especially healing their diseases and feeding them. But they were merely thrill seekers, not truth seekers. They were false or counterfeit disciples.

Jesus’ teaching was not hard to understand, but it was hard to accept. The Jewish leaders and others first misunderstood His words and then rejected them. They were “offended” by what Jesus taught. They were offended over the fact that He claimed to come down from heaven. They were offended over the idea that they had to eat His flesh and drink His blood in order to be saved. They were offended by His insisting that eternal life is found only in fully committing to Him. What Jesus said was not incomprehensible, but in their eyes it was unacceptable. They rejected His words as objectionable and offensive. Jesus said that if they found these things hard to accept, “What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he came from?”

Jesus explained to those that hadn’t outright rejected Him that His language was figurative and spiritual, not literal. He said that there is no salvation in the physical “flesh.” In [Jeremiah 17:9](#) God said,

“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” **Philippians 3:3** says, “Put no confidence in the flesh.” Instead of trusting in the flesh for eternal life, Jesus said to trust in Him, as He said earlier in **John 5:24**, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

Jesus then added, “Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” The issue wasn’t a lack of information, but a lack of faith. The Lord held these false disciples personally responsible for rejecting Him, not because they could not understand, but because they chose not to believe. **John 3:36** says, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.” Jesus is the only way to have eternal life.

The response to Jesus’ message was the loss of most of His so-called disciples, the false disciples. “From that time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.” They went back to their old life, their old religion, and their old helpless situation. As long as they saw Jesus as a source of healing, free food, and deliverance from enemy oppression, the self-serving, false disciples flocked to Him. But when He demanded that they acknowledge their sinfulness, confess their sin, and commit themselves to Him as the only source of salvation, they became offended and left. *What they wanted, Jesus would not give; and what Jesus offered, they would not receive.* He may have been disappointed, but this was no surprise to Jesus, because He knows the hearts of all people.

III. The Reaction of the True Disciples

Jesus then turned the Twelve, “You do not want to leave too, do you?” And, as on so many other occasions, Simon Peter acted as a spokesman for the Twelve. He said, “Where else could we go? *You have the words of eternal life.*” Peter had understood Jesus’ message. He knew that Jesus was speaking about the Word of God and not about literal flesh and blood. Basically, Peter said, that there was no other teacher to whom they could turn; it was Jesus Christ alone who had the word of eternal life. They had believed already and had come to know that Jesus is the Promised One—the Messiah. Unlike the false disciples who had made a final decision to abandon Jesus and would eventually betray Him before Pilate,

the Twelve had made a permanent pledge to follow Him. True disciples are committed to Jesus. In this way John showed the difference between those who are fickle and those who are faithful.

Later, Peter would emphatically declare his belief that Jesus is the Son of God. **Turn to Matthew 16:13-16.** But he wasn't the only one, in **John 11:27** Martha, said, **"I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."** Peter told the truth, but the one mistake he made was to speak up for the entire group. Peter, as were the rest of the Apostles, was sure that all the Twelve were believers. Because Judas had the right words and the right actions and because Peter couldn't see Judas' heart, Peter did not know that Judas was an unbeliever. **2 Corinthians 11:13-15** says, **"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness."**

The true disciples must have been shocked when Jesus said that there was a traitor among them, **"One of you is a devil."** The word **"devil"** means *"slanderer"* or *"false accuser"* and that is just what Judas was going to do later. Only then would the rest know the traitor's true identity. Just like everyone has a choice to follow Jesus or not, Judas had a choice to follow the Devil's leading or not. Jesus' betrayal is placed at Judas Iscariot's feet—**turn to Matthew 26:23-24.** Even after Jesus' warning Judas chose to betray Jesus.

IV. Conclusion

As John has emphasized in this 6th chapter, there are only two possible responses to Jesus' words and the Word of God: either one follows Jesus or rejects Him. There's no middle of the road choice. Either as Jesus said in **John 14:6**, He is **"the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through"** Him or He isn't the Way and He is a liar. As an eyewitness, John wrote in **John 1:14**, **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."** Contrary to what some may want to

believe or what others may say, there is only one way. In [Matthew 12:30](#) Jesus said, “He who is not with me is against me.”

Towards the end of his life, Joshua challenged the people in [Joshua 24:15](#), “If serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served (~~beyond the River~~), or the gods of those (~~the Amorites~~), in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” In [Matthew 16:15](#) Jesus asked, “Who do you say I am?” So, who do you say Jesus Christ is?

But be careful, “serving the Lord” doesn’t mean just “lip service”—in [Luke 14:26](#) Jesus said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters-- yes, even their own life-- such a person cannot be my disciple.” [Turn to 1 John 2:15-17](#). With Good Friday and Easter just 2 weeks way, [Phil. 2:5-8](#) reminds us that “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!” In [Matthew 7:16](#) Jesus said, “By their fruit you will recognize them.” If you say you choose Jesus as your Lord as well as your Savior, and your attitude is like His, what does your fruit say? Looking at your heart, whom do you really serve; Jesus or someone or something else?