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^A John 6:48-51, 2:25

^B Genesis 12; Leviticus 17:11-14

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A. Introduction

1. The Precedent Items

- a. there were a lot of people in synagogue that day
 - (A) the preceding day, Jesus had fed 5,000 men plus women and children from a young lad's 5 barley loaves and two small fishes
 - (B) that had taken place on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee
 - (C) in the night, Jesus had walked on the water, and come into the boat with His disciples as they went to Capernaum
 - (D) the people, curious about this miracle-working Jesus, and intent on getting the benefits of free food from Him, followed
- b. using the subject of food, Jesus introduces Himself as, the Bread of Life, the Bread from Heaven, starting in verse 48 ...
 - (A) '48 "I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh."
 - (B) with these words, Jesus brought the illustration that He was using of Himself to a new level; and as He expected – for Jesus knew what was in man (2:25) – this brought separation between those who were His, and those who were not

2. The People

- a. "59 These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum."
- b. what we just read took place in synagogue; in church, if you like
 - (A) it could have been on the Sabbath
 - (B) that isn't necessarily the case, for services were also regularly held on both Mondays and Thursdays
- c. there were a number of groups present
 - (A) there was the group that was not particularly interested in nor following Jesus, but going to church was part of their regular routine, it was the thing to do, it was a community activity that was expected of them, and which they expected of themselves
 - (B) there were those who had been following Jesus throughout His over 2 years of ministry thus far, some from

the very earliest days, and, as we shall see, these too, can be classified into groupings

- (1) those on the fringes who drifted away
- (2) those who persevered in following though not at the forefront
- (3) those who were walking closely with the Lord

d. if you examine a church today which consists of more than a few in number, you will find each of these groups present

- (A) the verses of our text today has a lesson for each group
- (B) may God's Holy Spirit speak to us wherever we may fit

B. The Jewish Onlookers 6:52-58

1. Their Question (52)

- a. 'The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"'
- b. among the general audience a fierce debate was going on
 - (A) the word 'argue' – also translated 'strove' or 'quarrelled' comes from the same root word as the word for 'sword'
 - (B) these people were engaged in swordplay with words
- c. there may have been some who took Jesus' meaning literally
- d. but for more of them, the question they were hotly debating was not cannibalism, but in what sense were Jesus' words to be understood
- e. everyone had an opinion, and they all differed hotly – that is the problem when people differ on the Scriptures based on men's, even good men's, opinions rather how the Scriptures interpret themselves
- f. so Jesus proceeds, not so much to explain what He has said, but to emphasize it even further

2. Partaking of Jesus (53-58)

a. Gives Eternal Life (53-54)

- (A) '53 Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.'"
- (B) if the literal eating of His flesh would cause reaction, speaking of drinking His blood would be even more abhorrent to the Jews.
- (C) so these words made it even more evident that Jesus must be speaking figuratively; and the figure in question would be explained by the words of Moses:

- (1) Exodus 12 records the institution of the Passover lamb; its blood was to be put on the door-posts and on its lintel, so that the angel of death that passed over the land would pass by their house and those within would all live. The sacrificial lamb was to be eaten by those dwelling in the same house
 - (2) but the blood of the sacrifices was never to be eaten as was instructed in Leviticus 17:11-14, "11 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.' 12 Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, 'No person among you may eat blood, ...' 13 ... 14 For as for the life of all flesh, its blood is identified with its life..."
- (D) the eating and drinking that Jesus is talking about is accepting of His flesh, His sacrifice on the cross; and receiving His blood, His life given in place of our life for the punishment of sin – for it is the 'blood that be reason of the life that makes atonement' that saves
 - (E) so Jesus' words were looking prospectively (forward) to the cross while our communion service looks retrospectively (backward) to that same even – and we see the same picture in them both
- b. Gives True Fellowship with God (55-56)
- (A) '55 "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."'
 - (B) we need not describe any further the picture that Jesus has given but rather let us go on to see the further benefit Christ promises to those who partake of Him in this fashion, those who accept His body crucified bearing our punishment, and His life blood shed to pay the price of our redemption
 - (C) that benefit is the union and communion which exists between the Lord Jesus and every Christian
 - (D) it is that which is described in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."
 - (E) I think that just the reading of that verse makes this very clear
- c. Joins a Person to the Living God ... For Ever (57-58)
- (A) '57 "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever."'
 - (B) all life exists because of the creative and sustaining work of the living God ... but what is described here is something more
 - (C) the manna would sustain that kind of physical life, but only for a season, and then death comes
 - (D) but the life that Jesus Christ possessed, was of a higher quality for it was 'because of the Father', the direct

result of His relationship to the Father

- (E) and so the life that we can possess by accepting Christ, is of a higher quality for it is 'because of Me (Christ)', the direct result of our relationship to Jesus Christ
- (F) and for that reason, being so joined to God, it is 'live forever'.

C. The Followers 6:60-66

1. The Causes of Their Perplexity (60-65)

a. Words Harsh to the Mind (60)

- (A) 'Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"'
- (B) it was not so much that this was hard to understand
- (C) they had seen the sacrifices to which we have referred many times and understood the character of atonement resulting from them
- (D) but rather this was hard to accept, because of its implications
- (E) the word 'listen', perhaps it is clearer if we translate it 'hearken', includes the ingredient of obedience
- (F) they were not willing to obey, just as many today are unwilling to obey the gospel, for that means leaving all of our pride, our good works, and trusting in Christ's finished work at Calvary
- (G) the obedience of faith was difficult for these Jesus followers; for

b. The Cross a Stumbling-Block (61-62)

- (A) '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?"'
- (B) the ascension was the culmination of the events that began at the cross, and flowed through the resurrection.
- (C) His words in figurative terms have just hinted at that; what if He had told them all the details that were to come?
- (D) over the next year he did so to His own disciples and they never understood until it was all over
- (E) to these followers, just the hint that in some fashion Jesus was to be their Passover, the One providing for their atonement was a 'stone of stumbling', something tripping them upon the path of their following Jesus as the Christ
- (F) "but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness," (1 Corinthians 1:23)

c. Spiritual Understanding Needs Faith (63-64a, 65)

- (A) '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,...
- (1) in these verses, Jesus clarifies that what He has been saying must be understood in a spiritual sense
- (2) but that embodied in what He has said is the message of how one can be resurrected from spiritual death to spiritual life
- (3) and some of those who were finding this difficult, found it because they did not have persevering faith in Jesus
- (B) '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.'"
- (1) how ever you understand this verse
- (2) and verse 37, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."
- (3) and verse 44, "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."
- (4) in the matter of God's electing grace in bringing salvation to the believer, it is readily apparent that in practical terms, God's calling and invitation is only made effectual through faith: or, in Jesus' own words, "For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:14)

2. Their Resulting Actions (64b, 66)

a. Betrayal by One (64b)

(A) '... For Jesus knew from the beginning ... who it was that would betray Him.'

b. Desertion by Many (66)

(A) "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore."

D. The Inner Circle 6:67-71

1. Jesus Tests the Twelve (67)

- a. 'Jesus said therefore to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?"'
- b. the question expects the answer, 'No!'
- c. one way of strengthening faith is to voice it; to tell others
- d. Jesus wanted them to do that at the crisis point

2. Peter Speaks for the Twelve (68-69)

- a. '68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.'"
- b. this is one of Peter's two great confessions
- c. and he speaks not only for himself, but for each of the Twelve
- d. they have no choice but Jesus; His gospel is eternal life; but

3. Jesus Has an Exception (70-71)

- a. '70 Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" 71 Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.'
- b. even in His chosen twelve there was one whose reasons and purposes ran counter to Peter's wonderful declaration

E. Conclusion

1. Judas was warned here

- a. this wasn't the only occasion that Jesus directly or indirectly spoke to the twelve words that should have convicted Judas
- b. and at the last supper he gave a final sad warning
- c. but Judas persisted in his sad, downward path

2. do not ignore the warnings you received from God

- a. each time an applicable truth is stated, an invitation is made, a warning is given, and it is rebuffed and repulsed by the hearer, then his or her heart grows a little harder
- b. so that a person turns themselves away from the source of life
- c. but those who surrender can have this testimony

My stubborn will at last hath yielded;
I would be Thine, and Thine alone,
And this the prayer my lips are bringing,
"Lord, let in me Thy will be done."
Sweet will of God, still fold me closer,
Till I am wholly lost in Thee;

Shut in with Thee, O Lord, forever,
My wayward feet no more to roam;
What power from Thee my soul can sever?
The centre of God's will my home. ^{-{2}}.

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NLT	New Living Translation © 1996 Tyndale Charitable Trust
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 National Council of Churches of Christ
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 National Council of Churches of Christ; Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

- Bruce – *The Gospel & Epistles of John*, by F. F. Bruce, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI; 1983
BM – *Biblical Museum*, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
EBC – *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, MI:
John, by Merrill C. Tenney
Gill – *Exposition of the Old Testament, Exposition of the New Testament*, by John Gill, D.D.
NICNT – *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*
The Gospel according to John, by Leon Morris
NTC – *New Testament Commentary*, by William Hendriksen; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1954
RWP – *Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament*, by Dr. A. T. Robertson
TEC -- *The Gospel according to John*, by George Allen Turner & Julius R. Mantey, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI; ca 1965

2. ‘Sweet Will of God,’ in 1900 by Lelia Naylor Morris (1862-1929)