

The Words of Eternal Life

John 6

The Prophet (vs. 1-21)

After Jesus performs the miracles of feeding the five thousand (vs. 1-14) and walking on water to His disciples in the boat (vs. 15-21), the people pursue Him across the Sea of Galilee and find Him in Capernaum. They had seen His miracle and said that He was the Prophet Moses had told would come (v. 14; Deut. 18:15-22). In fact, they were ready to make Him their king (v. 15). But would they listen to His words?

The People (vs. 22-40)

When the people find Jesus, He rebukes them for working for food that perishes and calls them rather to labor for the food that endures to everlasting life which the Son of Man will give them. Jesus claims to have the seal of the Father, claiming the authority to speak the words of God. The people respond by asking how they should work the works of God? Jesus says the work of God is simply to believe in the One God has sent. The question is: will the people hear this prophetic word of Jesus, or will they refuse to listen?

They begin by testing Him, asking Him to prove Himself, that they might see His sign and believe Him. They seem to have lost some of their wonder at His miracle, comparing it to bread that came from heaven to feed their fathers in the wilderness. But Jesus does not promise to give them a sign. He instead claims to be the true bread that the Father sends from heaven. They hunger for a sign. Jesus claims that He is the sign: "But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe." He is the One sent from heaven. Will they listen to His words? Believing is coming to Him (v. 35). But then Jesus says: "All that the Father gives me will come." Jesus is speaking to Jews, after all. Why would the Father give them? Aren't they the children of God, the children of Abraham? And then Jesus says that the will of the Father is that Jesus should lose none and that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life.

The Jews (vs. 41-59)

The Father will *give* them to Jesus? Jesus is the bread from heaven? Who does He think He is? Jesus was claiming an awful lot. And so, the Jews complained about Him. They knew who He was, just the son of Joseph. Jesus had said that they would have to come to Him. Instead, they turn to one another and grumble about His words.

Jesus rebukes them. Instead of trying to allay their concerns, He leans in and states His claim more clearly: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." If they have learned from the Father (which every Jew would think he had), Jesus says they would come to Him. And He repeats that eternal life is dependent on believing in Him, because He is the bread of life. He is the sort of bread that if one eats, he will not die. And in fact, Jesus says that the bread He gives to give life to the world is His flesh. Will they heed the words of this Prophet, of the One sent by the Father?

The Jews quarrel among themselves (v. 52). How can He give us His flesh to eat? They did not come to Jesus to understand. They quarreled and disputed. Jesus again does not explain away their contentions, but heightens 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." Imagine the gasps, the confused looks, perhaps the horror on the Jews faces. God's people were forbidden

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from drinking blood (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 3:17; Lev. 7:26-7; Deut. 12:16, 23-25; Deut. 15:23, 1 Sam. 14:33). But Jesus claims that instead of being cut off, the one who drinks His blood and eats His flesh will have eternal life. The living Father sent the Son who lives because of the Father, and being united with Christ, feeding on Him, coming to Him, means that you can have that life as well. He is the living bread that whoever eats it will live forever.

The Disciples (vs. 60-66)

You can imagine by now that “the Jews” had had enough. Surely His disciples (His public following) would listen, would turn to Him, though. No, because it is a hard saying. Who can understand it? John emphasizes that they did not bring their trouble to Jesus. Not only that, they too were grumbling about His words. Jesus knew in Himself that they complained. Their lack of understanding was not because of the hard saying. It was because of their hard hearts.

So Jesus asks, “Does this offend you?” Does this make you too stumble so that you cannot, will not, come to Me? Jesus won’t back down. “What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?” Building on His earlier claim to come from heaven, Jesus claims also to be the Son of Man who will ascend back to heaven. Every Jew should have known what this meant (Dan. 7:13-14; Mark 14:61-64). It was a claim to absolute authority, while at the same time telling them the sign that would verify His authority (remember v. 30). Life comes, though, only through the Spirit. So they should heed His words, which are spirit and are life. Jesus says some of them do not believe, and He knew it from the beginning, because no one can come to Him unless the Father grants it. And at this many of the disciples left Him and walked with Him no more. They rejected the words of the Prophet.

The Twelve (vs. 67-71)

Imagine being one of the twelve disciples at this point. Jesus turns to them and asks if they too wish to leave Him? Peter speaks for the twelve: “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.” Jesus had slowly thinned the crowd, showing that belief in Him only comes if the Father grants it. And as if to drive this point all the way home, He warns the disciples that even being handpicked and given the status of apostle did not ensure that they would come to Him, that He would abide in them. One of them would betray Him.

Conclusion

You too have heard the words of eternal life today. So, what will you do? Some of the things Jesus said are hard to understand. Do not let that harden your hearts. Come to Him. And yet, Jesus says that you cannot unless it is granted to you by the Father. So what can you do? First, plead with the Father to give it. “Grant what You command, and command what You will.” This is ultimately true, of course, with regards to your salvation, but it is also true as you fight against the sin that remains, as you wrestle with what God has set before you. Second, consider again part of Peter’s answer: “We have come to believe and know.” Understanding follows belief. Your questions and concerns will be answered. But come to Jesus first. Last, cling to the words of eternal life.