

The Lord had given the multitude a free lunch and returned to Capernaum in the night, walking upon the sea and stilling a great storm along the way. But moving their thoughts beyond physical food would be a more difficult task. He had openly stated His equality and unity with the Father. He had announced the authority and might He had been given by the Father to give life to men, and to judge all men. Upon hearing Him declare He is the bread of Life come down from heaven they challenged Him, citing His supposed human birth father, Joseph, whom they knew. But they sought to avoid the issue that He Himself was Giver of life. That made them accountable to Him. They rejected that idea. Many do. But He took the issue to them. They wanted to talk more meals, rules and revolt. He began to use old terms and expressions in new spiritual ways unfamiliar to earthly, fleshly minds. Why? To bounce them (and us) out of their comfortable carnal, mind-set into a spiritual manner of thinking. Did He succeed?

He used examples and expressions which are naturally repulsive to normal human thinking. Eating His flesh? drinking His blood? Cannibalism? No, but one doesn't readily open a treasure chest to those indifferent to its contents. They would have to repent. In contrast to the manna that had fallen from heaven to be gathered daily from the ground He offered Himself as the Bread of Heaven which when eaten gave life that is eternal. Couldn't they see this? He was offering them each eternal life through one simple spiritual act, as simple as the physical act of eating. Eating His flesh and drinking His blood as a spiritual act of faith was the only way to receive eternal life. Though the partaker might still die a physical death the Lord would raise him up the last day.

They were familiar with the Law of Moses and animal sacrifices. An animal sacrifice to be eaten had to be slain and its blood poured out. The blood of the sacrifices was never to be eaten and was always either sprinkled or poured out by the priest. And certainly the Lord was not advocating physically violating or abandoning one of the most ancient sacred ordinances given in scripture regarding eating blood. Those repeated warnings down through time against eating blood only highlighted the deep value of the life blood of the Son of God's love which was to be poured out on the cross. That blood was sufficient to purchase the whole Creation and everything in it. It is His to dispose of as He sees fit. And He will.

The giving of His blood and giving of eternal life to the lost was His to accomplish. And He stated that He would do so in loving fellowship and obedience to the living Father who had sent Him. He assured the believers they dwell in Him, and He in them. He had in view relationship, fellowship and communion between Himself and us. And He assured the believers that we will live by Him even as He lives by the Father. Security, peace

permanence. Those who eat of Him by faith will never hunger.

Note again how the Lord openly and publically taught these truths. Though they were not really new if the Old Testament were to read apart from the religious trappings and interpretations men had since hung upon it. But He taught truths and concepts which were astounding and incomprehensible to the narrowed Jewish minds. His teachings were still that to Saul of Tarsus until the Lord appeared to him from the glory. After he saw and heard Jesus he spent fourteen years in the desert unlearning and relearning his Old Testament at the feet of His Lord and Savior. Notice as you read his epistles how they treat the Old Testament in the glorious light of the Cross and the risen Man in glory.

Given their Jewish heritage His disciples also had some difficulties with what Jesus was saying. They said it was a hard saying, hard to understand and harder to accept. If we believe Him, the Lord is patient with our weak capacity to comprehend things He has told us. Faith believes Him despite any initial befuddlement and lack of understanding. If we insist upon understanding all the deep things we read before we will believe God's word, we rank ourselves above the Master. Such may never "get" what He has said to them. Believe, and the understanding will follow, perhaps increasing throughout a lifetime and into eternity.

(John reports the Lord knew what others were thinking. No surprise, if He is God the Son.) Jesus, knowing their thoughts, challenged the sincerity of His audience. They were still having trouble accepting His statement that He had come down from heaven. If the Jews could not accept the fact He had come down from heaven what proof would they demand? If they were to see Him ascend back into heaven would they believe then? This was not an idle exaggeration to get their attention. He knew then that He would indeed ascend bodily into heaven, but not before dying and rising again. Many today also do not believe He came down from heaven, even many in "Christian" circles. Do they believe He went back to heaven? Do you? The Lord clearly holds each person responsible to believe and hold this fundamental fact about Him.

Why were they following Him if they doubted His coming from heaven? Were they still thinking revolt against the hated Romans? He challenged them and effectively "cleans house." He announced again "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." John tells us those that had not been given him by the Father went back and no longer walked with Him. (Note the calm, sorrowful the way the Spirit moved John to relate this sad incident.) They had been stumbled by the truth, or better said, the truth had stumbled them. People will leave if the truth of scripture

makes them uncomfortable and they are unwilling to abide by it. John says in his epistle:

*1John 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. 20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*

But if some should go out from among us we can't just assume the truth offended them. We aren't the Apostles. We need to humbly check if they are offended by our attitude, something we say or do, or our treatment of them. Or, is it the truth itself. Others, who may have come in because of the persuasiveness of men or other some human attraction, may also later leave as did Judas Iscariot. John perhaps reveals more about him than other Gospels. Much has been written since and many have speculated about Judas. Clearly he was never a believer, the Lord said so later. And the Lord knew that he never would be, but He chose Him as one of the original twelve. Later when praying He referred to him,

*John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of*

*them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.*

He simply was not one of the elect given to the Lord by the Father to keep. Was he then a famous example victim of "God's reprobation"? No, nor will any soul ever be! For there is no such thing! God never has, nor ever will, pre-assign a sinner to hell. [He is] "**not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**"

2Peter 3:9. Judas is a prime example of this scripture. He was brought into the closest relationship any unsaved man could ever have had with the Lord. And he refused. He ignored numerous direct and indirect personal warnings and appeals, never personally repenting as a sinner. Instead he betrayed the Man who had enlisted him as a disciple, who had befriended him, trusted him, favored him and confronted him. Ever since Cain, man has insisted upon his "free will". Read Romans 3:9-18, then 19-28. That says it all. No, God has reprobated no one. All have reprobated themselves. God in His mercy has freely offered salvation to any and all who will but come. Have you? Will you?

By Ronald Canner, June 8, 2011