

General Comments on John 6

This chapter probably occurs a year after the close of the previous chapter, or at least several months (v. 4). The events of the chapter span two locations and involves three different groups of people. It starts with Jesus on the shores of Sea of Galilee opposite Capernaum with several thousand people (v. 1-14). The setting then transitions (v. 15-25) to a synagogue in Capernaum (v. 24-59) with a number of the people from the previous day and a number of the Jews, presumably Pharisees, present. The aftermath of the confrontation in the synagogue is a dispute between Jesus and his own disciples (v. 60-71).

On the first day, the multitude initially accepts Jesus as Messiah because he performs a great public miracle. They decide they will take him and make him king, but Jesus perceives this and leaves them.

On the second day in the synagogue it is plain the thousands from the previous day have been winnowed down to a considerably smaller number who actively seek out Jesus and follow across on the small ships. Since they find Jesus in a synagogue, there are other Jews already present there. It is important to draw a distinction between these two groups because they make different comments and have different responses to Jesus. Verses 25-40 is Jesus conversation with the people from the previous day, those who witnessed the great miracle firsthand. Verses 41-58 is Jesus' conversation with the Jews of the synagogue, who did not witness the miracle of the preceding day. The two different groups both reject Jesus as the Messiah, but for different reasons. The first group sees signs, demands more signs, but Jesus refuses. The second group knows the scriptures and understands the spiritual import of Jesus' comments to the first group, but rejects him over petty semantic issues.

This rejection by the general populous and religious leaders results in many of the disciples abandoning Jesus as well. These disciples witnessed both the miraculous feeding and Jesus walking on the water, in addition to any other miracles they would have been privy to. Yet, the lack of popular support still causes them to leave him.

This series of rejections indicates why Jesus continued to be a well-known curiosity among the Jews, but never became a popular leader. Whenever he started to get a large following motivated by worldly things, he preaches true religion to them and they abandon him.

The Anchor Bible (AB) indicates the underlying theme of this chapter is that contemporary Judah is no different from ancient Israel. John carefully draws parallels between the events here and the text of Num. 11. Some of the more blatant parallels are

as follows:

<u>Num. 11</u>	<u>John 6</u>
v. 13	v. 5
1	41, 43
7-9	31
13	51
22	9, 12

This parallel is made strikingly clear by Jesus in v. 49 where he passes judgement on ancient Israel, and implicitly does the same on present Judah.

Another underlying theme addressed herein is a common one John's Gospel, that of replacement. Jesus' bread at Passover (v. 4) replaces the manna of Moses and the unleavened bread of the Exodus. The people are looking for the prophet like Moses, and when he arrives they accept him about as well as their ancient parents accepted Moses.

Sections of this chapter are paralleled by the other Gospels. All three of the Synoptic accounts have parts of the v. 1-21 material in common, cf. Matt. 14:13-36, Mark 6:30-56, Luke 9:10-17. The discourses appearing in the chapter after v. 21 are unparalleled in the Synoptic Gospels.

The Synoptic accounts do contain material not appearing in John's account, e.g., Jesus' compassion on the people (cf. Mark 6:34-36), Jesus explicitly sending the disciples away (cf. Matt. 14:22-23), Peter's attempt to walk on water (cf. Matt. 14:28-31), Jesus' healing the people of Gennesaret (cf. Mark 6:53:56).

Why did John omit this material? To more clearly parallel the material in Num. 11. And, to emphasize the subsequent Passover theme Bread of Life discourses. By cutting back on the details, John more clearly presents the Passover-manna-Bread of Life subject to the reader.

Comments on John 6

1 AFTER these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is [the sea] of Tiberias. 2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. 3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. 4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

v1-4 These verses set the context as Jesus retreating with his disciples into a local high place, apparently to enjoy some seclusion. However, a large group of people follow Jesus out to the wilderness. The Passover is imminent and the people are eager for a deliverer, so their hope spurs them to throng Jesus.

The way the text reads it sounds like not much time has elapsed between the past chapter and this one. However, a considerable amount of time elapsed. Exactly how much is unclear, but at least a few months. An unidentified "feast" is referenced in 5:1, and here the events are occurring just before Passover per v. 4. Commentators typically assume the feast in 5:1 is the previous year's Passover, so ch. 6 would be a year later.

v2 "because they saw his miracles", John sets the context by informing us these people are mainly sign seekers, cp. v. 14, 26.

v4 "passover", the Passover feast has messianic implications of delivery. Just as Moses delivered Israel from Egypt, so the Jews were looking for the Messiah to deliver them from the Romans. This chapter uses manna and messianic feast symbols from Exod. 16 as well as Isa. 55.

5 When Jesus then lifted up [his] eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? 6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. 13 Therefore they gathered [them] together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

v5-15 When Jesus sees the multitude (v. 5), he meets them in a grassy field (v. 10) and miraculously feeds them (v. 5-9, 11-13). They recognize the miracle as a sign of Jesus being the "prophet like Moses" (v. 14).

v5-6 The other Gospel accounts are more verbose on the tangential details, cf. Matt. 14:14-15, Mark 6:34-36, Luke 9:11-12.

v5 "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?", Jesus is playing on Isa. 55:1-2, hence the statement in v. 6.

v7 "two hundred pennyworth", i.e., two hundred days wages per Matt. 20:2. Philip is saying even a whole lot of bread isn't enough.

v9-13 Jesus takes the lad's small offering and feeds a multitude with it. The child gives while the men take, and later demand more (v. 15, 26, 30-31). Thus, this is symbolic of being childlike (cf. Matt. 18:1-5), and what Jesus can do with a sincere sacrifice no matter how small.

v9 "five barley loaves, and three small fishes", Luke 11:5 implies three loaves was a sufficient meal for one, so the amount of food present here is enough to feed two.

v10 "men...men...in number about five thousand", the Greek terms translated to the KJV "men" are gender neutral. A better translation would be "people". Thus, there were about five thousand people present. It is safe to assume the multitude was composed of men, women, and children as entire families would have been gathering to Jerusalem for the Passover feast.

v12 "the fragments that remain", John Lightfoot (A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica) comments:

It was a custom and rule, that when they ate together, they should leave something to those that served: which remnant was called peah. ... "Every one leaves a little portion in the dish, and gives it to those that serve; which is called the servitor's part."

Although I would not confound the fragments that remain with the peah, nor would affirm that what was left was in observation of this rule and custom; yet we may observe, that the twelve baskets full of fragments left at this time answered to the number of the twelve apostles that ministered.

v14 The people recognize the miracle and the similarity between Jesus and Moses and so they proclaim Jesus to be the prophet like Moses, cf. Deut. 18:15-18. Note the emphatic statement here, "this is of a truth that prophet", they are absolutely certain Jesus is the prophet like Moses. Contrast this with the demands for additional proof the very next day, cf. v. 30.

15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a

mountain himself alone.

v15 The people seek to make Jesus the king (v. 15) in the hopes of the messianic message of the Passover. But, Jesus wants nothing to do with being a political ruler or deliverer in this sense, so he leaves them and goes back up into the mountain (v. 15).

The people see the "prophet like Moses" as a political deliverer and move to enthrone Jesus. The people clearly have rebellion against Rome on their mind, and see Jesus as the new David who will throw off the yoke of Roman rulership. When Jesus gets wind of this he gets out of the situation by sending his disciples away, sending the multitude away, and himself resorting to seclusion.

It would appear that the mountain Jesus and his disciples go up to in v. 3 is the same one here. They apparently went up, and upon seeing the people in v. 5 went down to meet them in a large grassy field, cf. v. 10. Then, after the miracle and the people's reaction to make him king, he went again alone back up to the mountain to pray.

16 And when even was [now] come, his disciples went down unto the sea, 17 And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. 18 And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. 19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. 20 But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. 21 Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

22 The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but [that] his disciples were gone away alone; 23 (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) 24 When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. 25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?

v16-25 Jesus leaves them for the mountain after he tells the disciples head back to civilization for the night (v. 17, cp. Matt. 14:22-23, Mark 6:45-46). A storm rises up on their way back across (v. 18) and they end up running into Jesus, who is walking on the water but he sets them at ease (v. 19-20) and enters into the ship (v. 21) and they soon after land the ship ashore. The people from the multitude come across in other ships later that night (v. 23-24). The next day they do some simple

math and realize something odd has happened (v. 22), so they question Jesus, terming him "Rabbi", on how he got across the sea (v. 25).

The second miracle with a Passover theme. Jesus' walking across the sea is reminiscent of the miraculous parting of the Red Sea (i.e., Sea of Reeds), which occurred shortly after Passover in the original event.

v25 They apparently find Jesus teaching in a synagogue, cf. v. 59. Note they call him "Rabbi", which would be appropriate for a synagogue, but is quite a demotion from "that prophet" which they called him only the day before (cf. v. 14).

John's intent is to show the fickleness of popular opinion, and its considerable subjectivity. Popular opinion is such that it exalts those who serve its will and demotes those who do not. John exposes their lack of conviction.

And again note their interest in the miraculous in the question "When camest thou hither?" They sense something unusual is going on and want to know the details of any miracle that has happened. The miracle the day before apparently wasn't sufficient for them.

26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. 27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. 28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

30 They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? 31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. 32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. 36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. 37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth

the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

v26-59 Being approached by remnants of the previous day's multitude, Jesus takes the opportunity to teach them the difference between spiritual bread and physical bread. Jesus offers them spiritual bread, and the people want physical bread. The dialogue is presented as Jesus speaking with the people, but more than anything they are speaking past each other. Jesus keeps addressing spiritual things and they keep addressing physical things.

Jesus' comments rely heavily on the concept of Deut. 8:3 where the Law of Moses is equated with manna:

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Just as the people must eat physically in order to live, so must they eat spiritually in order to live. The physical food was the manna, the spiritual food was the Law of Moses. Jesus is equating himself with the spiritual food, telling the people that they must "eat his flesh" in order to live spiritually. Jesus equates himself with the Law (v. 35, 48, cp. 3 Ne. 9:15), and so if the people are unwilling to spiritually feed on the Law, they are also unwilling to spiritually feed themselves on him.

The concept of eating the flesh is drawing on the partial consumption of all sacrifices except burnt offerings. When a person made sin offerings, the fat of the sacrifice was burned, part went to the priests, and part was returned to those who made the sacrifice and they ate the flesh on the spot in token of the offering. As Jesus is the sacrificial lamb of God, that sin offering per Isa. 43:23-24 and Isa. 53:10, his sacrifice is representative of the flesh they eat when making sin offerings. They must participate in the sacrificial offering of the Father by "eating the flesh" of His offering, His Son. Jesus explicitly references such a sacrifice in v. 51, "I will give...my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world".

The dialogue in this section can be outlined as follows:

Jesus: Labor for the spiritual, not the physical (v. 27)

People: What works should we do? (v. 28)

Jesus: Believe on me (v. 29)

People: Give us a sign, like manna (v. 30-31)

Jesus: The Father gives true manna, life eternal (v. 32-33)

People: Give this to us (v. 34)

Jesus: I am the true manna of heaven, believe (v. 35-40)

Jews: How is he from heaven? (v. 41-42)

Jesus: Those who are of the Father believe me and will have eternal life if they eat my flesh (v. 43-51)

Jews: How can we eat your flesh? (v. 52)

Jesus: You must eat my flesh and drink my blood if you want eternal life, this is the true bread (v. 53-58)

The dialogue boils down to "You don't accept me because you don't accept my Father, so you just keep looking for excuses but I won't leave you one".

As the dialogue goes on, note Jesus repeats himself over and over again concerning his being the bread of life, being at unity with the father, and raising people up to eternal life. Both the people of the multitude and the Jews he is arguing with keep ignoring that and nit-picking other things he says using hyper-literal interpretations. Jesus counters each of them, and keeps driving home the main points without compromise.

v26 The IV differs from the KJV, as follows:

KJV

Jesus answered them and said,
Verily, verily,
I say unto you,
Ye seek me,
not because

ye saw the miracles,
but because
ye did eat of the loaves,
and were filled.

IV

Jesus answered them and said,
Verily, verily,
I say unto you,
Ye seek me,
not because

ye desire to keep my sayings,
neither because
ye saw the miracles,
but because
ye did eat of the loaves
and were filled.

If these people are following Jesus as sign seekers, then they are following him to see more miracles as sign seekers not as disciples of Jesus. I think this is what Jesus means when he says "Ye seek me not...", that they aren't seeking after him as Messiah, they are seeking the other tangential things like miracles, delivery from the Romans, free lunch, etc. These

miracles and free lunches are not drawing the people to Christ and resulting in spiritual conviction, which is in contrast to 2:11 where it is. The IV/JST suggests this as well.

v27-29 Jesus tells them not to labor for physical things, but for spiritual things (v. 27). They ask in reply what works they should do, they are asking what physical things they need to do to be spiritual (v. 28). Jesus sees they don't get the point, so he says their work is to believe in him (v. 29).

v27 Jesus admonishes them to seek after the spiritual bread as opposed to the physical bread, cp. Deut. 8:3. Similar wording is used in 4:14, 32.

"him hath God the Father sealed", contrast this with v. 15 where the people attempted to make him a physical king. Also compare 3:33, 10:36. While the people's opinion of Jesus wavers, he is sealed by the Father as the Messiah.

v30-31 The people return to their "prophet like Moses" ideas from yesterday (cf. v. 14) and ask him for a sign to prove he is what he claims. If you are the prophet like Moses, then give us the manna like Moses. Prove it! Yesterday they were certain Jesus was that prophet, today they want more proof, or maybe all they really want is more free food.

Unlike the woman at the well who questioned Jesus' greatness in 4:12, Jesus doesn't provide these people with a sign. The Samaritan woman believed when rebuked and shown a sign, these people do not believe.

v31 "manna", the Hebrew for "manna" literally translates to "what is it?" John is playing on the ignorance of the contemporary Jews and saying they are just as ignorant of the true manna as were the ancient Israelites. They do not understand it at all.

v32-33 Jesus again tells them to look past the physical manna of Moses and look at the true spiritual manna that God gave them, the Law (v. 32). He says this bread from heaven is the one who descends from heaven to give life to the world (v. 33).

Jesus is telling them to realize who gave the manna and the Law, not Moses, but the Lord. For background, see Nehemiah 9:15-20 and note the context is one of contrition and the Lord is identified as the source of the bread from heaven.

v34 They ignore Jesus' blatantly obvious figurative statement that he is the personified bread, and instead ask him for the bread as though he were carrying a loaf of it with him. Notice

they switch the eternal part of Jesus' statement, they ask him to give them the bread eternally, as opposed to the bread that is eternal.

v35-40 Jesus must be tired of the word games, so he bears down on them in plain terms. Jesus states emphatically that he is the bread and water of life, a blatantly messianic claim (v. 35, cp. Isa. 49:10, Isa. 55:1-2). He then states they are unbelieving despite seeing him, as well as his miracles (v. 36). Jesus then emphasizes his unity with the Father, that he has condescended from the Father, and that all who approach the Father will approach the Son and obtain eternal life, because that is the Father's will (v. 37-40).

41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. 42 And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? 43 Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. 44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. 46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. 47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. 48 I am that bread of life. 49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us [his] flesh to eat? 53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

v41-42 The Jews, presumably the Pharisees rulers of the synagogue, hear the interaction between Jesus and the people of the multitude and question Jesus' claims.

v41 "murmured", just like the ancient Israelites, cp. Exod. 16:2-8, 1 Cor. 10:1-10.

v43-51 Jesus tells them to stop murmuring (v. 43). In response to their questioning his association with the Father, he repeats and emphasizes that none can approach the Father except by himself (v. 44-46). Jesus then returns to the manna symbolism to dispose of the physical interpretation once and for all, saying the physical manna resulted in preserving no one's physical life, but he is the true bread of life men must believe in (v. 47-50). Jesus then equates the living bread from heaven with the sacrifice of his flesh for the life of the world (v. 51).

The doctrinal content of Jesus' statements here closely parallel that of 5:19-30, but are couched in obscure OT symbols. These are symbols the Jews are intimately familiar with through the ritual of sacrifice, but at present are deliberately choosing to ignore it.

v45 "And they shall be all taught of God", a quotation of Isa. 54:13, and probably alluding to Jer. 31:31-34 as well, especially Jer. 31:34. Hebrews 8:10-11 quotes Jeremiah in a similar context.

v44 The IV differs from the KJV, as follows:

KJV

44 No man can come to me,
except
the Father
which hath sent me
draw him:

and I will raise him up
at the last day.

IV

44 No man can come unto me,
except he doeth the will
of my Father
who hath sent me.

And this is the will
of him who hath sent me,
that ye receive the Son;
for the Father
beareth record of him;
and he who receiveth
the testimony,
and doeth the will
of him who sent me,
I will raise up
in the resurrection of the just.

v49 A scathing condemnation of the rebellious among Israel. Their fathers who ate manna in the wilderness are those who were cursed by the Lord to wander for 40 years until that wicked generation died off. Jesus condemns them, and the generation as well.

v51 "my flesh", see the comments on v. 36-59 above regarding the sacrificial theme.

Remember this is the Passover season. This is the time where the lamb is sacrificed and the blood is smeared on the lintels of the door so that the people inside might live. The Passover lamb is then eaten by the people inside the house. Jesus is drawing heavily on this Passover sacrifice theme, the people have it in their minds because of the season, and they are deliberately ignoring it.

v52 Despite all of the blatantly figurative language Jesus uses, and the fact that he has hamstrung their preceding arguments based on literal interpretations, they continue to dispute with each other and with him. They ignore everything Jesus has said and focus on the detail of flesh eating so as to persist in their fault finding.

In v. 51 Jesus equates the bread with the flesh. Bread and flesh are obviously two completely different foodstuffs, thereby forcing a figurative interpretation. They, however, choose to ignore this.

v53-58 Jesus counters the Pharisee's attempt to interpret his saying literally by using something they cannot possibly interpret literally: the drinking of blood (v. 53-56). The idea that Jesus would want people to literally eat his flesh is preposterous (v. 51), yet the people are choosing to interpret it literally (v. 52) in order to find fault with Jesus and thereby excuse themselves. So, Jesus goes a step further to make it impossible for them to interpret literally by saying something that is explicitly prohibited in the Law, cf. Gen. 9:4. He then equates the true bread of heaven with eating his flesh and drinking his blood (v. 57), forcing a completely figurative interpretation (v. 58). This ruins their line of argumentation, and terminates the dialogue.

v53 "eat the flesh...drink his blood", the phrase "flesh and blood" is a Semitic merism referring to the whole of the man, all of him. The concept is that one must accept all of Christ, his entire sacrifice, not just the convenient parts.

v55-56 Compare 4:31-34 for the interpretation of these two verses. Whoever participates in this sacrificial "meal" is at one with the Son and the Father, which is the subject of ch. 17.

v57-58 Jesus becomes nothing less than didactic in order to cut off these faultfinder's tactics. He has to explicitly state "not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead" in order to give them no grasp on a literal interpretation.

It is unlikely Jesus is calm and composed at this point. He has got to be angry at the sophistry of these Pharisees who are

arguing with him. The deliberate ignorance of their arguments is approaching idiotic.

v59 This rather hostile exchange took place in a synagogue. John makes it clear those Jews he was arguing with were aligned with the synagogue.

60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard [this], said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? 61 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? 62 [What] and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? 63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, [they] are spirit, and [they] are life. 64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. 65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. 66 From that [time] many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

v60-66 Jesus' strong words and his rapid loss of popularity result in a lot of his disciples abandoning him. Many of the disciples question Jesus (v. 60). Jesus responds to the murmuring among his disciples, by forcing polarization knowing full well there are unbelievers among them (v. 64). He asks them "Are you offended by this? (v. 61) What does it take to convert you? Do you have to see the heavens open and me ascend into them? (v. 62) Jesus' words are the Spirit that brings life to men, pursuing things of the flesh is a waste of time (v. 63). He admits he knows there are unbelievers among them (v. 64), thereby pushing them to leave. He knows that people who have not accepted the Father will not accept him (v. 64-5). These disciples who question Jesus, the ones who are more interested in the flesh than the spirit, end up leaving him (v. 66).

v60 The disciples in general were of the attitude that Jesus was being too abstract in his symbolism and/or that he came down too hard on the other people. He was not building up his following as they thought he should. They are questioning his judgement. Here was his big opportunity to gain a huge following, and he blew it, as far as they were concerned.

v62 This verse should be read as a rhetorical question.

The focus is on the disciples observing the ascension of the Jesus into Heaven with their own eyes. They have seen so many miracles firsthand, and yet they are still questioning him. What then would happen if they saw precisely what Jesus was saying, that he ascends into heaven? Nothing. If they have seen all of

this evidence and they can reject that, then what difference will it make if more evidence is presented? None.

Jesus is saying no amount of evidence can result in spiritual conviction, it is futile to show signs to convert people. Even if these disciples saw the heavens open and angels herald him as the Messiah, and then he ascends up into heaven, their initial acceptance would give way to their worldly desires for an earthly king.

v64-65 Jesus is resigned to his lack of acceptance and popularity because he knows that if people are not accepting his Father they will reject him as well. This admission, almost a confession, seems to be an expression of depression. His lack of success is because of the hard heartedness of these people, their unwillingness to keep the commandments and do the Father's will.

v65 The IV differs from the KJV, as follows:

KJV

And he said,
Therefore said I unto you,
that no man can come unto me,
except it were given unto him
of my Father.

IV

And he said,
Therefore said I unto you,
that no man can come unto me,
except he doeth the will
of my Father
who hath sent me.

v66 In the course of just a few short days Jesus is catapulted to immense popularity and then crashes in total unpopularity. In the Passover season a crowd of thousands want to elevate him to king, seeing him as the prophet like Moses. But he reprimands the crowds for their selfish and carnal nature. The result is they abandon him, and his disciples follow the crowds. Jesus is left alone, questioning the loyalty of the twelve apostles. One of whom he already knows is a betrayer. Jesus has got to be depressed at this point.

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. 69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. 70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? 71 He spake of Judas Iscariot [the son] of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

v67-71 He turns to the twelve apostles and asks them if they will abandon him as well (v. 67). Peter answers for them and states they believe he is the Messiah, the son of God (v. 68-69), thus implying they will not leave him. Jesus then identifies a defector, even among the twelve (v. 70-71).

The text strongly suggests Jesus is quite depressed at this

point over the hard-heartedness of the people. Jesus is quite negative through the whole thing, and is not even consoled over the apparent loyalty of the twelve. Rather, he dwells on the defection of one.

v67 Jesus' question sounds even more depressed than his statements in v. 64-65. Many of his disciples have left him as a result of this unpleasant exchange, and now he turns to his most faithful followers and asks them if they will follow the crowd and abandon him as well, "Will ye also go away?"

v68-69 Peter responds for the twelve and states they are firm believers, there is nobody else to follow as Jesus has the words of life (v. 68). He confesses that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God (v. 69).

Peter's reply in v. 69 is a paraphrase of v. 63, indicating his acceptance of Jesus' teachings. And v. 69 is a direct contradiction of the people's doubt earlier in the chapter. They questioned Jesus' Sonship, Peter affirms it.

v70-71 Jesus, rather than taking heart in the loyalty of the twelve, instead reflects on the disloyalty of one among the twelve who will ultimately betray him.

v70 "one of you is a devil", cp. 3 Ne. 27:32, 3 Ne. 29:7.

v71 "Iscaiot", the Anchor Bible (AB) states "Iscaiot" most likely means "man of Kerioth" which is a town of Southern Judea. This would mean Judas is of Judea where the rest of the disciples are Galilean. John's deliberate inclusion of the appellation "Iscaiot" at this point may be to indicate a socio-cultural difference between him and the other eleven. As Jesus is constantly in conflict with the Judean-based Sanhedrin and Pharisees, Judas may be more stung by these conflicts than the others, and more subject to public persuasion and ridicule for his association with these Galileans.

Copyright © 2003 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurtn@cybcon.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.