

Biblical Notes – John 6

John Chapter 6

By James White

In our constant attempt to meet the needs of the Christian community for sound theological material, we are making available this translation and commentary on the sixth chapter of John. Our reasons for doing so are to bring the powerful light of Scripture to bear upon two rather distinct issues. First, Jesus' words in John 6 are vital for our understanding of the doctrine of God's election of the saints. John 6:38ff is one of the clearest expositions of the Lord's doctrine of salvation that we have. Hence, the proclamation of the truth will go far to correct the many errors, both within as well as outside of, the Christian community. Secondly, John 6:48ff is an important passage in dealing with sacramental theology, specifically the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church in regards to transubstantiation and their entire doctrine of salvation. It is hoped that this literal translation (done by Ministry Director James White) and commentary will be helpful in the ministry of the saints.

The sixth chapter of the Gospel of John is a fascinating piece of literature - seemingly woven together with great purpose. It is twice the length of the average Johannine chapter. It narrates two great miracles (the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus' walking on the water) and ties these together to form the introduction to a very important Christological dialogue. This dialogue then ends in the confession of faith of the true disciples of Jesus.

1. After these things Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberius). 2. And a great crowd was following Him, because they saw the signs which He was doing concerning the sick ones.

Commentary: Much of Jesus' ministry is connected intimately with the Sea of Galilee. John gives what is probably the official "Roman" name for the body of water, though this name appears infrequently. The town of Tiberius (named for the Emperor) had borne that name for only a few years at the time of Jesus' ministry, hence the secondary mention of the name by John. John tells of a large crowd that follows Jesus, presumably by land rather than by sea, because of Jesus' healing abilities. No mention is made of their being sick amongst this crowd; they seem more attracted by the possibility of a miracle than by anything else.

3. And Jesus went up into the mountain, and there He was sitting with His disciples. 4. Now the Passover was near - the Feast of the Jews.

Commentary: There is possibly some imagery in verse 3 that is reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew (5:1). Seemingly the Lord and His disciples have arrived by themselves, and have gone up into "the" mountain alone. If Jesus was wishing to privately speak to the disciples John does not mention it. What he does mention, however, is the fact that the Passover was near. Bearing in mind the non-Jewish character of his audience, John mentions that the Passover is the feast of the Jews - an item that would be surely unnecessary were his audience primarily Jewish. John may just be placing the events in their historical setting. Or, he may be attaching importance to Jesus' actions in what is going to follow. Is Jesus setting Himself up as the bringer of the true Passover? If the Passover was near, why were these people not going up to Jerusalem? Was Jesus pointing to Himself as the fulfillment of the Passover? The next chapter begins with the Feast of Tabernacles - which would be nearly six months after the Passover itself. Hence, there seems to be a time gap between the two chapters, and a real purpose behind John's mentioning of the Passover Feast.

5. Then when Jesus raised up His eyes and beheld that a great crowd was coming to Him, he said to Philip, "Where will we buy bread in order that these may eat?" 6. But this he said testing Him, for He Himself knew what He was about to do.

Commentary: John pictures Jesus seeing the multitude coming to Him from a distance. It would seem that He realizes that they will be hungry, for they would have traveled a long distance. The synoptics, however, indicate that a period of teaching intervened, and by the time the teaching was over, it was too late for them to return to their homes - hence the need for food.

Philip seems the best choice for the Lord's question, as Philip was from Bethsaida, and if this took place "across the sea" from Capernaum, Bethsaida would be somewhat close by. Hence, turning to the local boy, Jesus asks about sources of food in the neighborhood. But John is quick to point out that Jesus knew all along what He was going to do - the question was to test Philip's understanding of His own person and His power.

7. Philip answered and said to Him, "Two hundred denarii would not be sufficient to buy bread in order that each might receive a little portion." 8. One of his disciples, Andrew, brother of Simon Peter, said to Him, 9. "There is here a little boy who has five barley loaves and two fishes; but what is that amongst so many?"

Commentary: Philip's response is one of surprise - the entire apostle band's treasury probably did not contain enough money to purchase such a vast amount of food, even had such supplies been available. Not catching onto the Lord's purpose as yet, Andrew (who seems to have been one observant person, always bringing people to Jesus) brings to the Lord's attention the seeming only source of sustenance - a young boy who had five barley loaves (poor man's food) and two little fishes. But even Andrew has to add, "but what is that amongst so many?" He does not yet know the sufficiency of the little in the hands of Jesus.

10. Jesus said, 'Have the men recline.' Now there was much grass in the place. Therefore the men reclined, their number being about 5,000. 11. Therefore when Jesus received the bread and gave thanks, He gave unto the ones reclining; likewise also from the fish; howsoever much they wished.

Commentary: John roots this, the most popular of Jesus' miracles (judging by the inclusion of this story in every gospel) firmly in history - Jesus gives mundane commands (Luke the historian notes that they were to be grouped by 50's) and John remembers visual details - there was much grass in the place. The image is striking - a cool spring day - a large group of men and women - well over 5,000, reclining upon the green grass, the harried disciples wondering what in the world their Lord was going to do now. One can see John's smile as he writes (or dictates) this part of his book - what a longing he must have had to be there again.

Jesus took the bread, and, as was His custom, He gave thanks for it. Unfortunately the exact wording of this prayer is not given to us - we might wonder just how Jesus gave thanks over those little loaves and dried-up fishes. John attaches importance to this act, for he mentions it again in v. 23.

In typical style, the miracle is narrated without flash and fancy. It is simply stated that the food was distributed to the ones reclining - each one taking his fill. The miracle is implied rather than directly stated, though the fact of the miracle is not left in doubt.

12. And when they were filled He told His disciples, "Gather up the pieces that are left over, in order that none of it should be wasted." 13. Therefore they gathered and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five loaves of barley which had abounded to the ones who had eaten.

Commentary: John continues on to make yet another point - that not only was there sufficient food for all, but actually more than was needed. God's grace was greater than the need itself. The disciples gather up twelve baskets full. Interestingly, in the narrative of the synoptics when Jesus feeds the 4,000, seven larger baskets are taken up, seemingly indicating even greater excess with the feeding of the 4,000 than with the 5,000.

14. Therefore the men seeing the sign which He did said, 'This is truly the Prophet, the one coming into the world.'

Commentary: As a result of the sign (not of the teaching) the men are convinced that Jesus is "the Prophet". Many see this as a referent to a first century belief in "the Prophet" like Moses (Dt. 18:18) to be distinguished from the Messiah himself, others see a synonymous relationship between the Messiah and "the Prophet". I prefer the first thought.

15. Therefore Jesus, knowing they were about to come and to seize Him to make Him king, again went away into the mountain by Himself.

Commentary: Jesus over and over again is portrayed by John as having the ability to know men's thoughts. It seems beyond question that this is presented by John as supernatural ability and power - yet this is not just John's presentation. Mark (2:4-8) gives the same information, though not in quite as strong a way as John gives it.

The men were about to come and make Jesus "king". The crowds, as always, were seeking the political/military conqueror who would relieve them of the Roman tyranny. Yet, if these men were looking for the "Prophet" rather than the Messiah, there is the possibility that we have here the connection made later by Jesus Himself - the "Prophet" will be like unto Moses, and Moses gave the people the manna in the wilderness. Hence, if Jesus is able to give "manna" in the modern wilderness, must He not be the "Prophet" like Moses? Exactly how "the Prophet" and "make Him king" fits together is difficult to determine, and is dependent upon which theory of first century Messianic belief one adheres to. Though the military aspect is strong in the synoptics, it doesn't seem to be as prevalent here.

Jesus heads off the men's rash plans by going away into the mountain by Himself. Possibly the disciples themselves were

in danger of being carried away by the frenzy of the crowd - they never quite give up their military hero/Messiah hopes in the synoptic accounts, and this might be present here as well.

16. But when evening came the disciples went down to the sea 17. and got into a boat to go across to the other side unto Capernaum; and it was already dark and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18. The sea was aroused by a great wind. 19. Therefore when they had rowed 25 or 30 stadia they saw Jesus walking upon the sea and He was coming near unto the boat, and they became afraid.

Commentary. John transitions quite naturally into the next part of this very busy day - and the next miracle as well. The disciples decide to go to Capernaum. Jesus' sudden withdrawal at the very time when they would expect Him to be accepting the accolades of the crowd must have caused them consternation. Had Jesus left them instructions to go across to Capernaum? Did they figure Jesus had left them to go there? Were they abandoning Jesus? John does not tell us that thoughts, and we are left only with questions. John notes that it was already dark when they entered into the boat - a dangerous thing to do on the treacherous waters of the Sea of Galilee. Perhaps they had waited as long as they could, and only now gave in and began to cross the sea.

While they were on the sea a "great wind" came up - a common occurrence in desert climates. John tells us that the men were only about halfway across the sea by the time Jesus came to them - not very far given the fact that many of them were fishermen and would be skilled at aquatic travel. The wind was, obviously, contrary to them. The synoptics tell us that it was now very late in the evening - Mark tells us it was the fourth watch (Mark 6~48).

We do not know who the first one was who saw Jesus walking upon the water. But the shock must have been something. Every possible naturalistic explanation has been voiced for this miracle, but the text simply will not allow for it. Jesus comes toward the boat, walking on the water, and the men become afraid. Given the current situation, this is quite understandable.

20. But He said to them, "I Am - be not afraid." 21. Therefore they wished to receive Him into the boat, and immediately when He came into the boat they were at the shore unto which they were going.

Commentary: Jesus quickly identifies Himself, realizing their fear. John does not give as many details as Matthew does (Matthew 14:22.27) - his narrative is quite spartan. Jesus' identification calms their fears, and He embarks into the boat.

The next clause seems to indicate yet another miraculous event - the immediate transportation of the boat and the men to the place of their destination. The synoptic accounts do not give any hint of this, and Matthew 14:34 would seem to indicate otherwise. The miracle noted by the synoptic writers is the immediate cessation of the storm - which may be what John is alluding to here - not that a miracle took place, but rather that, given the now calm sea, they reached their destination quickly (or "immediately").

22. The next day the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but His disciples had gone away alone. 23. There came other small boats from Tiberius near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord gave thanks. 24. Therefore when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there any longer, they themselves entered into the boats and came unto Capernaum seeking Jesus,

Commentary: This new paragraph introduces the new setting, yet provides continuity with what came before. The multitude, which seems to have stayed the night in the surrounding countryside, sees that the disciples have left, yet without Jesus. They are obviously perplexed as to where the Lord could be. So, embarking in small boats that come from Tiberius, they cross the sea and return to Capernaum in search of Him.

The phrase "...after the Lord gave thanks." in verse 23 is somewhat awkward, and has engendered some textual variance. One could almost get "after giving thanks to the Lord" Out of it, though the genitive is not normally found in this way.

25. And finding Him across the sea they said unto Him, 'Rabbi, when did you, get here?' 26. Jesus answered them and said, "Truly truly I say to you, you seek Me not because you understood the sign, but because you ate of the bread and were filled.

Commentary: Here the crowd finds the Lord Jesus and immediately asks the obvious question: 'how did You get here?' Jesus does not answer the question, but drives directly to their motivations for seeking Him. He declares that what He did He did not simply to feed a large group of people, but rather for a reason. It seems obvious that the entire miracle was meant to point to Jesus as the new Moses - yet more; the fulfillment of Passover - yet more. As Jesus will soon say, the bread which He gave to the men is representative of much more - indeed, it represents the "bread of life."

27. Work not for the bread which perishes but for the bread which abides unto eternal life which the Son of Man will give to you; for this one the Father, even God, has sealed.

Commentary: Jesus warns his listeners to get their priorities straight the wrong emphasis which they obviously have as seen in their motivation for seeking Him is here likened to seeking after bread which perishes rather than bread which "abides unto eternal life" and this bread is found in only one - the Son of Man. This is the one which the Father - God Himself - has sealed or set apart - placed His mark on, so to speak. Throughout this discourse Jesus will intimately connect His person with the eternal life He gives. One cannot have eternal life outside of a proper understanding of the One who gives it - the Lord Jesus Christ.

28. Therefore they said to Him, "What must we do in order that we might work the works of God?" 29. Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God: that you believe in the one whom He sent."

Commentary: The usage of the term "work" in verse 27 prompts the question of the Lord, what must we do to work the works of God? There seems to be a shifting of proper focus here, for it is likely that the crowd is still stuck on the sign rather than its meaning - how can they do the things that Jesus does? Jesus' answer, much like His answers to the woman at the well, masterfully redirect the conversation toward His goals. The work of God, Jesus says, is to believe in Him! This is the work of God. Our senses are frequently dulled to the tremendous impact of such statements as this due to our familiarity with the person of the Lord Jesus. But it is important to try to understand this kind of statement against the backdrop in which it was originally uttered. No prophet of Israel had ever dared utter such words! They always pointed away from themselves and solely to God. To equate the "work of God" with faith in the person of Jesus of Nazareth - how brash! Unless, of course, Jesus is as He claims to be all through John. The modernistic concepts of a forward-looking prophet/teacher from Galilee who was a good man but certainly no divine Messiah are made ridiculous by such statements as these, for no "good man" equates the very work of God with faith in himself! The immensity of this Divine Person is clearly portrayed here, though so often missed in a casual reading!

30. Therefore they said to Him, "What sign do you do, In order that we may see and believe you? What do you work? 31. Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, just as it has been written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

Commentary: If we moderns miss the import of Jesus' words, His listeners of the time did not. They immediately reply (note the connecting their questions to what came before) with a demand for signs. if we are to believe in you," they reason, we need more signs - you've given us but one, and even then our fathers ate manna in the wilderness - not just once, but for many years." Jesus will need to do more than a one-time dinner to match up with the feat of the manna!

32. Therefore Jesus said unto them, "Truly truly I say to you, Moses did not give to you the bread from heaven, but My Father is giving to you the true bread from heaven, 33. for the bread of God is the one coming down from heaven and giving life to the world."

Commentary: The quotation from Psalm 78:24 which is given by the people specifically identifies Yahweh as the "He" who gave them bread in the wilderness. Possibly they were referring this to Moses either directly or by implication, and hence Jesus corrects them. Either this or they are making the comparison between Him (whom some had said "this is truly the Prophet..") and Moses, and Jesus is correcting their misunderstanding of His person. Rather, the one source of the "true bread" is the Father- He gave the manna in the wilderness, but is now giving (present tense) the "true bread from heaven" which is not a perishable food, but rather a person - "the one coming down from heaven." Again the magnitude of these words must be grasped. In each instance the former things, so precious to the people of Israel, is shown to be eclipsed in the life and ministry of Jesus, and even more so by His own person! The true bread is a person - who has come down from heaven. It is no wonder that liberal interpreters, wishing to hold onto their mythical "psychologized" views of Jesus and His supposed lack of knowledge of His divine mission until later in His ministry, reject the historicity of John's work outright - men who described themselves as "coming down out of heaven" obviously have a divine view of their origins!

There is also another parallel (but an incomplete one, of course) - just as the manna came down from heaven and provided sustenance for the people of God during their sojourn, so too Jesus has come down out of heaven to be the sustenance of God's people - and their salvation. Jesus will utilize this kind of dualistic symbolism throughout this discourse - referring to the physical reality of the manna to represent the spiritual reality of faith in Him. Sadly enough, this dualism has been missed by the Roman church, which reads into this passage their own erroneous doctrine of transubstantiation in the mass - and in so doing they reverse the very direction the Lord is taking the conversation. They, like the first century listeners, cannot see past the symbol to the reality beyond.

34. Therefore they said to him, 'Always give us this bread?' 35. Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. The one coming to Me will not hunger, and the one believing in Me will never thirst.

Commentary: The crowd continues in its blindness, unable to see the real significance of Jesus' words. Still recalling the feeding of the 5,000, they clamor for a continuous supply of the heavenly bread. In response Jesus gets quite specific - He Himself is this bread. The one who "comes to Me" - a clear reference to faith (as the parallel will show) will not hunger (hence, the bread is spiritual, not natural) and the one who "believes in Me" will never thirst. The reference to thirsting" seems somewhat out of place here, given that only food has been in view up to this point; but in actuality there is no difficulty, as Jesus is not referring to actual physical consumption of food - He is referring to spiritual need. Man has a need spiritually (symbol: hunger and thirst) and Jesus meets that need completely and eternally. "Coming" and 'believing" will become "eating" and "drinking" in verse 54. There is a clear progression in these terms that will be noted in the commentary.

36. But I spoke to you because you have seen Me and have not believed.

Commentary: The Lord knows their hearts, their thoughts, their minds. He knows they have not "believed" in Him - though they confessed He was a prophet (v. 14) this is not enough - this is not the highest, truest level of faith as used in John. Though they have looked upon the bread of life, they have not believed. They are faced with God's very revelation of Himself, but they don't ace It. In verse 40 He will say that all who "look" upon the Son might have eternal life. Here He says they have seen (heorakate) Him - later in verse 40 He will say that all who look (theoron) will be saved. Again more dualism for John. What follows, through verse 47, seems to be an explanation of the rejection of even those styled "disciples" (v. 66) when faced with the reality of His person. The difference between those who will stay with Jesus and those who will walk away is simply this - the drawing of the Father.

37. Everyone which the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and the one coming to Me I will never cast out 35. because I have come from heaven not in order that I might do My will but the will of Him who sent Me; 39. and this is the will of the one who sent Me: that of all which He has given Me from Him I lose nothing but raise it up at the last day.

Commentary: This section continues the thought brought out in verse 36. Jesus presents the complete sovereignty of God in salvation. All that the Father gives to Jesus - everyone - will come to Him. The operative factor in answering the question of why some come and others, presented with the same opportunity, do not, is simply the nature of the Father's choice. The Father "gives" persons to the Son - a gift of love, to be sure. When the Father "gives" to the Son a person, that person will come to Christ (as the one avenue to the Father). There is no question that if a person is so given to Christ (or, to use the terminology of verse 44, is so "drawn" by the Father) that he/she will come to Christ. This is the "Godward" side of salvation - absolute certainty and security. Yet, He says that they will "come to Me" which speaks of the human response - not that the human can change the decision of God - but that the response is there all the same. Man is not pictured simply as a "thing" that is bounced around like a ball, but rather a vastly important person who comes to Christ for salvation, all as the result of the gracious working of God in his/her life.

Jesus continues by stating that when one is so given to Him by the Father, and comes to Him, that one is secure in their relationship with Him - He will never cast them out. The aorist subjunctive of strong denial makes it clear that rejection of one who seeks refuge in Christ is a complete and total impossibility. What words to a sinner's heart! Those who come to Christ will find Him a loving Lord who will never cast out those who trust in Him!

Why will the Lord never cast out those who come to Him? Verse 38 continues the thought with the explanation - the Son has come to do the will of the Father. And what is the will of the Father? That "of all which He has given Me from Him I lose nothing but raise it up at the last day." Can we doubt that Christ will do what He promises? Will the Lord Jesus ever fail to do the Father's will? Here is eternal security beyond dispute. But note that again all is pre-eminently balanced - the security of the person is based on two things - the will of the Father that none be lost, and secondly, the fact that those who are not lost are those who are given to the Son by the Father Himself. So, in reality, there is security in the Father (He gives us to Christ) and security in the Son (He always does the Father's will).

An interesting note is to be found in the fact that in verse 37 the first "everyone" is literally "every thing" - that is, the Greek term is neuter, not masculine. But in the next phrase, where we read "and the one coming to Me I will never cast out..." the term "one" is masculine - that is, personal. To me, this seems to be purposeful on John's part, and the same differentiation of neuter/masculine, thing/person is carried on in verse 39 as well. I think that the differentiation I. due to this - that when God's absolute and eternal decree is in view, John uses the neuter to refer to the whole of that decree, including each individual person included in that decision of God. But when referring to the personal response of the individual, he returns to the personal, masculine pronoun.

40. For this is the will of My Father: that all the ones looking upon the Son and believing in Him might have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day.'

Commentary: The “will of the Father” for the Son was expressed in verse 39 - now, the “will of the Father” is expressed differently. Again, the perfect and complete balance of God’s role and man’s response is brought forward. In verse 39 is the assurance of the Son’s success in saving those given to Him by the Father. In verse 40 is the promise that all the ones looking upon the Son and believing in Him might have eternal life. From above it is evident that many look upon the Son but do not believe - the operative difference was the drawing (or “enablement”) of the Father. Here it is clear that the “all” refers to those mentioned in the immediate context - all those whom the Father has given to the Son. For them, It is the looking and believing that brings eternal life - the Father’s drawing is to them invisible - they see only Christ.

It should be noted that this is exceptionally high “doctrine” that is here presented. Isn’t this out of place? One would expect this kind of teaching in Ephesians, or maybe Philippians, or might expect it to be more at home in Calvin’s Institutes - but amongst a crowd of Galileans in the synagogue at Capernaum? Is it any wonder that the people found these sayings “hard to hear”? Why then the “high doctrine”?

I feel that the response of the men on a purely physical plane to the spiritual teachings of Christ, demonstrated by their inability to get past the physical symbol and penetrate to the spiritual reality, prompted an explanation on Jesus’ part. Why do people respond to His words and His works in such different ways? Jesus is not seeking followers on the level they are pursuing - they need to know the truth of His mission. He came to seek and save the lost - but, not all of the lost. Those whom the Father leaves in their darkness will respond to Christ in very different ways than those who have been given to Him by the Father. It is time to separate the true disciples from the false - the called from the whimsically interested. “High doctrine” is nothing more than the truth at its purest. It is meant for the peasant farmer as well as the theologian.

41. Therefore the Jews were grumbling concerning Him, because He said, “I am the bread which came down out of heaven.” 42. And they said, “Is this not Jesus, the Son of Joseph? Do we not know His father and His mother? Therefore how does He say “I came down out of heaven?”

Commentary: The human reaction of the crowd is not surprising. Jesus’ claims finally begin to sink in, though they seem to be running a little behind the Lord’s message! They grumble because of His claim to heavenly origin. Their questions are straightforward - isn’t this Jesus, the son of Joseph? We might object to the term “son of Joseph” here in regards to the virgin birth, but this may not be in John’s mind at all - at least right here. The emphasis is more upon the tact of Jesus’ family and His origins - they knew the family of the Lord - Joseph and Mary were known in the synagogue of Capernaum. Thinking in strictly human terms (not understanding John’s own statement of the Word becoming flesh - the dual nature of the Lord) how could this one whose parents we know claim to “come down out of heaven?”

43. Jesus answered and said unto them, “Do not grumble among yourselves! 44. No one is able to come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Commentary: Jesus brushes aside the grumbling and objections of the crowd by pinpointing their inability to accept His claims about Himself. In even stronger terms He reiterates that which He has said before - no. one has the ability in and of themselves to come to Him unless the Father draws him. The construction is precise - no one is able - ou dunatai -- a phrase of ability. As Paul would later state, it is a principle of the spiritual realm that the natural man is not able to take in spiritual things. This is here expressed by Jesus as the reason the people are unable to understand or accept His divine origin. Absolutely necessary is the “drawing” of the Father. The term *helkuso* is used elsewhere in John of Jesus drawing all to Himself when He is lifted up (John 12:32 - though here it is Jesus who does the drawing) and at the end of the gospel when Peter “drags” the net full of fishes onto the shore. It is impossible to maintain a “universal” drawing here, for all who are drawn are also raised up - the Father draws, and the Son raises up those who are drawn. This is exactly parallel to verses 37-39 above, only in more stark terms. This is election on a par with Ephesians 1 and Romans 8-9.

45. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught by God. All the ones hearing from My Father and learning come to Me. 46. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God this one has seen the Father.

Commentary: In defense of His teaching in v. 44, Jesus points out that the Scriptures themselves had indicated this - Isaiah 54:13 is the reference. In this context Jesus is referring this specifically to the “hearing” of the words of the Father. “Hearing” is yet another of those words used by John in a dualistic manner - some hear, but don’t. Others hear and believe. All who “hear” in this manner (from the Father) come to Christ - divine election again. Jesus says that the ones who hear the Father and learn from Him come to Christ - continuing the “Father gives to the Son” motif that is all through this section. Again, the response of man is to come to Christ. This format is seen again later in chapter 17 when Jesus prays and says, “They (the disciples) were yours, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept your word.” The formula is the same here - the Father sovereignly owns the elect; He graciously gives the elect to the Son; the elect respond by faith in the Son. The repetition of this truth throughout the book is evidence of its importance to Jesus.

Verse 46 is parallel to John 1:18: "No one has seen God at any time; the unique God, the one who eternally exists in the bosom of the Father, this One has made Him known." Jesus is the main avenue of knowledge about the Father (Matthew 11:27/John 14:6). This has great ramifications for the study of "other" religions and Christianity's ingrained exclusivism and rejection of relativism.

47. Truly, truly I say to you, the one believing has eternal life. 48. I am the bread of life. 49. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and died. 50. This is the bread which has come down from heaven - in order that anyone who eats of Him should not die. 51. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any eats of this bread he will live forever, and the bread is my flesh which is given for the life of the world.

Commentary: The one who believes, Jesus says, has (present tense - continuous action) eternal life. Eternal life is not simply duration of life, but quality of life as well - not something just future, but present, too. But what is the person "believing"? Faith in the Bible always has an object - it never exists in a vacuum - faith is not a separate entity with an existence of its own. It seems that, in the context, the main object of faith is the person of Jesus Christ Himself - this is seen in a few ways. First, in verse 46 He speaks of being the "one who is from God." In verse 48 He speaks of being the bread of life. Both of these statements are assertions about who Jesus is - and hence are fitting objects of faith. Also, the majority of the textual tradition reads "believes in Me." Seemingly many later scribes saw the faith as being exercised in the Lord Jesus, and this fits with the context quite well.

Upon the assertion again of His being the bread of life, we seem to be re-entering the original conversation after having digressed (needfully) in regards to where real faith comes from - the Father. Jesus now resumes the pursuit of the original topic. The fathers of the exodus ate the manna in the wilderness and died - but the bread which comes down from heaven (Himself) is vastly superior (picking up the earlier comparison between the manna and His own miracle of the feeding of the 5,000) to the manna which was simply a picture of what comes later in Christ. The one who "eats" of this bread will never die. The "eating" here is paralleled with the "believing" of verse 47 - any attempt to make this a physical action misses the entire point being made by the Lord. He who believes has eternal life - he who eats of the true bread from heaven will never die. Eating = believing.

This faith is a personal one, because it involves the "eating" of this true bread - which is Jesus Himself (v. 51). The eating of the true bread means eternal life, and this bread, Jesus says, is His flesh "which is given for the life of the world." It is not Jesus' flesh, per se, which is the object here - it is His flesh as given in sacrifice which brings eternal life. It is the sacrifice that gives life, not simply the flesh. In His giving of His life, the Son provides life for the world. The context again demands a strict interpretation of "world". John uses kosmos in many different ways, but here it is clear that the kosmos is just those who are drawn by the Father, given by the Father to the Son, and who respond by faith in the Son. Consistency demands the continued emphasis on this group.

52. Therefore the Jews quarreled among themselves saying, "How is He able to give to us His flesh to eat?"

Commentary: The Jews, continuing to dwell simply on the physical plane, and refusing to follow Jesus above to the spiritual truth underlying the symbol of His words, begin to quarrel among themselves about this. It is intriguing that often men quarrel amongst themselves about theology, rather than asking the Word about it. Same holds true today. Things change little over time. The men ask how Jesus can give his flesh for them to eat. Of course, Jesus is not saying that He is going to do so - He is speaking of His coming sacrifice and the resultant forgiveness of sins and eternal life for all who are united to Him.

53. Therefore Jesus said to them, "Truly truly I say to you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. 54. The one eating My flesh and drinking My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Commentary: Jesus decides to come down to their level in an attempt to bring them up to His. He moves on with the metaphor, already firmly established, of "eating = believing". The only way to eternal life is through union with the Son of Man. This involves a vital faith relationship with Him, symbolized here by the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood. To make the equation complete. Jesus places "eating My flesh and drinking My blood" in the exact same position as hearing His word and believing on Him who sent Jesus in John 5:24, or as being drawn by the Father in 6:44, or as looking to the Son and believing in 6:40, or simply believing in 6:47. The result is the same in each case - eternal life, or being raised up at the last day. Hence, we here have a clear indication of Jesus' usage of the metaphor of eating His flesh and drinking His "blood" in John 6. Graphically we would have:

"ALL the ones Looking into the Son and believing in Him" \	
Those who are "drawn" by the Father	--> all = being "raised upon the Last day."
"The One eating my flesh and drinking my blood"	/

Hence, the sacramental interpretation of this passage is left with no foundation at all - Jesus is obviously not speaking of some "sacrament" of the "Eucharist" established years later - His referring to His body and blood here is paralleled clearly with belief in the Son and the drawing of the Father - the same themes struck above. Consistency of interpretation must lead one to reject a sacramental interpretation of this passage.

55. For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. 56. The one eating My flesh and drinking My blood abides in Me and I in him. 57. Just as the living Father sent Me and I have life through the Father, also the one eating Me will have life through me.

Commentary: The reason that one will have eternal life through feeding on the Son is simply that the Son is "true food and drink" - He is the sole source of true spiritual sustenance. It is by vital faith that one is united with Christ (John 15:4-8). This is where life is to be found. Apart from Christ, the believer can do nothing (15:5) for Jesus is the source of all life. Life comes from the Father, it is given to us in the Son and is ours only in and through Him. As we know that eternal life comes by faith, then the eating and the drinking is a symbol of the continuous reliance in faith upon Christ. Here is the key to Christian life - reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ in all things. There is no other path to eternal life.

58. This is the bread which came down from heaven which the fathers did not eat and they died. The one eating this bread will live forever." 59. These things He said in the synagogue while teaching in Capernaum.

Commentary: This fantastic discourse ends with the solemn warning - the fathers did not eat of this bread, and they died. Will His hearers understand this warning? John will tell us that all but a very few - and those only being the ones chosen by God - hear and believe. Men will continue to seek the natural - the physical bread - and ignore the true spiritual bread offered in Jesus Christ.

John tacks down the other end of this sermon in history again - these words were spoken in the synagogue in Capernaum, a real place, in a real time. The mystery of the Divine One speaking these words in history - the greatest mystery of all.

60. Therefore hearing this, many of his disciples said, "This is a harsh saying, who is able to hear it?" 61. And Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples were grumbling concerning this said to them, "Are you scandalized by this? 62. Therefore what if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?"

Commentary: It is sad to see John's usage of the term "disciple" here - many had followed after Jesus in a way that could be called "discipleship" but which was not a heart-felt conviction - there was not drawing or enablement of the Father within them. They were "scandalized" by the harshness of Jesus' words. Many people are. Many hate the strong teaching of the Bible - relativism is the deadly poison of modern man. Their question, "who is able to hear it" goes to John's double usage of the word "hear" in his gospel. Only those who "hear" from the Father and learn from Him have eternal life.

Jesus knows the thoughts of these surface followers and asks them a simple question - if they are scandalized by these basic truths about His person, what are they going to do if they see Him in His glory - the very glory He shared with the Father before the world came into existence (John 17:5)? Surely this would be even more difficult for them to handle. As Jesus said to Nicodemus, "If I speak to you of earthly things and you do not believe, how, when I speak to you of heavenly things, shall you believe?"

63. It is the Spirit which gives life the flesh profits nothing. The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. 64. But there are certain of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who it was who did not believe and who it was that would betray Him.

Commentary: There may indeed be a note of exasperation in Jesus' voice here - can not even these disciples" understand the difference between spirit and flesh? Have they not followed the obvious duality here? It is the Spirit which gives life - the flesh is of no use. These words of Jesus are spirit and life - yet they do not understand, because they do not believe. Jesus knew who didn't believe just as He knew who would betray Him.

65. And He was saying, "Because of this I said to you that no one is able to come to Me except it is given to him by the Father." 66. Because of this many of His disciples went away to the things behind, and no longer walked with Him.

Commentary: The imperfect tense here indicates a continued action (or probably an iterative action in this case) in the past - Jesus did not just once say this to them, but often - "no one is able to come to Me except it is given to him by the Father". Some translations say "unless the Father enables him". Coming to Christ is not something that is the result of persuasive speaking - Jesus was the greatest speaker of all time, yet many of his disciples "went away from following Him and no longer walked with Him." If man could be convinced in this way, these men would have been. But the operative

factor was missing . the enablement of the Father. Jesus' soteriology is decidedly "God-sided". One sees the foundation of Paul's theology here explicitly expressed.

67. Therefore Jesus said to the twelve, "You are not also going away, are you?" 68. Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where would we go? For you have the words of eternal life. 69. And we have believed and have known that you are the Holy One of God."

Commentary: One can see the Lord Jesus turning to the small disciple band. It has been a difficult day for them. They have seen the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 followed by the rejection of kingship on their Master's part. They have seen Him walk upon the water. But this has been followed by the most difficult sayings of Jesus to date - this Messiah is quite different than they expected! Now, the great crowd is leaving. Many are walking away. It all seems to be ending in failure. And Jesus turns to them and asks, "You are not also going away, are you?"

Impetuous Simon Peter replies for the disciple band - "Lord, where would we go?" What these words must have meant to the Lord! Peter confesses that these men understand that His words are eternal life, and that they have believed and known (both perfect tense verbs) that Jesus is the Holy One of God. What a comfort this would be to His heart. Gods purposes will be fulfilled. These are some of those given to the Son by the Father, and the Father is keeping His promise to "teach" them. He has done so, and they respond by following Christ, even when they are in the vast minority.

70. Jesus answered and said to the twelve, "Are you not the twelve which I have chosen? But one of you is a devil." 71. And by this He meant Judas Simon Iscariot, for this one would later betray Him, being one of the twelve.

Commentary: There is love in Jesus' voice when He speaks of His choice of these men - yet, even here, the terrible betrayal is kept in view. One of these men does not understand Jesus' love. One of these men is the "son of perdition". It is not until Judas leaves the company on the night of the betrayal that Jesus has full freedom to open His heart to these men whom He loved "completely" (John 13:1).