



Jesus is Rejected

John 6:41-71

Notes: The primary reference used in developing this Bible Study was the *Life Application Commentary*. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.

6:41 – Why did the Jews grumble about Jesus?

They were offended by His claim to be the bread that came from heaven. Essentially, they thought Jesus was blaspheming God because He was claiming to be God. Heaven is where God is so only God could come from heaven.

Who were “the Jews”?

This term is used to refer to the Jewish religious leaders. They were the Pharisees and Sadducees who make up the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling body that was presided over by the high priest. John himself was a Jew and so was Jesus. Indeed most of the early believers were Jews. But it was the Jewish religious leaders that defined what it was to be a Jew in their society during the time of Jesus.

6:42 – Why did Jesus’ analogy of himself offend the Jewish leaders?

The logic was that since they knew Jesus’ parents, He couldn’t have come from heaven. The flaw in this logic was that the Jewish leaders really didn’t know Jesus’ true parentage. The Jewish leaders missed what their own Scriptures had prophesied...

Isaiah 7:13 - Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

What does Jesus’ claim to be the bread of life represent?

This refers to the Lord’s life-giving role, that He is the only source of eternal life.

6:43 – Why did Jesus tell the Jews to stop grumbling among themselves?

Certainly the grumbling served Satan’s purpose more than His since it would turn people away from Him. Also, this language should have reminded them about the time when Israel was not satisfied with the manna from heaven alone. (Numbers 11, 14, and 16).

6:44 – Who comes to Jesus?

Only those who are drawn to Jesus by the Father will come to Jesus. It is the Father who helps people see their need for Jesus and prompts them to turn to Him for their salvation.

If no one can come to Jesus except those drawn to Him by the Father, do we really have free will?

We still have to do the coming to Jesus part. A person can be drawn to Jesus and still reject that prompting by not following through to come to Jesus.

Matthew 22:14 – many are invited, but few are chosen

6:45 – Who comes to Jesus?

Those who are open to God by listening to the Father and learning from Him will come to Jesus. Please not that listening to the Father is not enough, there must also be learning. A person can only learn if they are receptive to the message and motivated to apply what they hear.

How does God teach us?

God teaches us through His Word (the Bible), our experiences, thoughts from the Holy Spirit, and relationships with other Christians.

6:46 – Does hearing and learning from God mean that we have seen God?

No, only the Son has seen the Father... We have seen the Son who has the same nature as the Father but even then we have not seen Him in His full glory. We are limited by our mortal bodies. But when we are resurrected, we will be able to see God...

1 Corinthians 13:12 – Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

6:47 – Who has everlasting life?

Those who believe in Jesus have eternal life. To believe in Jesus means that you believe Jesus is who He claimed to be and trust in Him for your eternal salvation.

What is significant about the tense used here?

The believer has eternal life starting in the here and now; we do not have to wait for some future event. It is also significant that act of believing is a continuing thing. Those who continue to believe are the ones who are saved. There is no such thing as a true believer changing their mind and becoming an unbeliever. People can imitate believers then stop imitating but if they truly believe in Jesus there is no turning back.

How does it benefit us knowing that our eternal life begins the moment we believe?

Having eternal security frees us to enjoy life... Jesus said:

John 10:10 - I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full

Not having the specter of spiritual death hanging over us makes life worth living. It gives us a sense of purpose to prepare for eternity and gives us courage to take risks that would be foolish otherwise.

6:48-50 – Why was what Jesus offered Israel better than what Moses and all the prophets offered them?

The manna was a physical and temporal bread. The people had to eat it within a couple days and it sustained them for a day. They needed this bread every day and it could not keep them from dying. However, the spiritual bread that Jesus provided was good for eternity and consuming it gives eternal life.

6:51 – What is this bread that Jesus offers us?

Jesus describes this bread that offers us as His flesh... that is His body that He gave as a sacrifice on the cross.

How does one consume the bread that Jesus offers?

Eternal life does not come from seeing what Jesus offers or recognizing its origin, that it is from heaven; but from taking it in, making it a part of our life. Thus we must be united with Christ by believing that His death paid the penalty for our sin and that His resurrection authenticated that He was who He claimed to be. Being united with Christ also means that we devote ourselves to living as He requires, depending on His Word for guidance, and trusting in the Holy Spirit for power.

Is eating the bread that Jesus provides a one-time event or something we need to do daily?

Both; once we truly believe, we'll always believe. But just as the Jews depended on manna for their daily strength, we too should depend on and desire having Christ in our lives every minute of every day.

6:52 – What did the Jewish leaders think Jesus was talking about?

The Jewish leaders were missing the point thinking that Jesus was speaking about physical matters when He was in fact using a physical analogy to explain a spiritual concept.

6:53 – What does this verse remind us of?

This is an obvious reference to the Lord's Supper, an ordinance that Jesus instituted to remember what He did for us.

Matthew 26:26-28 – While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them,

saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (NIV)

Please note that the promise in John 6:53 is not limited to when we take the Lord's Supper since we can partake of Jesus anytime.

6:54 – What will be the result of uniting with Christ?

Those who trust in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for their salvation have eternal life and will be resurrected when the Lord returns.

6:55 – How does Jesus describe the food and drink He has made available to us?

Jesus said His flesh is real food and His blood is real drink. This is a reference to the eternal nature of the spiritual sustenance that Jesus provides. Physical things in the world will be burned up but that which is spiritual will last into eternity. Thus it could be argued that the spiritual realm is more real than the physical world which is passing away. People who describe the "real" as that which is worldly have a worldly perspective... it benefits us to have an eternal perspective.

6:56 – Where is Christ for those who partake of His spiritual sustenance?

Christ is in us when we believe in Him. Jesus promised us that He would be represented in us with the presence of the Holy Spirit...

John 14:16-17 – I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

Just as Christ and the Father are one (John 10:30), so too are Christ and the Holy Spirit because God is One (Mark 12:29).

6:57 – How does the union Jesus has with the Father help us to better understand our union with Christ?

As the Son depended on the Father for His life when He was in His mortal body, so too the believer who feeds on Christ will live because of who He is and what He has done. That is why the resurrection of Christ is so important. Not only did it authenticate that Jesus was who He claimed to be, it demonstrates to us the wonderful future God has in store for believers.

Why is the Father referred to as the living Father?

God is living Himself and is the source of life.

6:58 – So in summary, what is the difference between the manna and the bread that Jesus offers?

The difference is life and death. Manna had no intrinsic spiritual value whereas the bread that Jesus offers has great spiritual value in that it provides us eternal life.

6:59 – What was significant about where Jesus taught this message?

Jesus taught in a synagogue which was the center of Jewish social life and presided over by the Jewish religious leaders. Capernaum was a city where Jesus did a lot of His ministry teaching and performing miracles. Jesus condemned the city because the people there largely disregarded His message rejecting Him...

Matthew 11:23 – Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. (NIV)

It is interesting to note that virtually all of the Israeli cities mentioned in the New Testament have people living in them today but Capernaum is a notable exception... it is basically an archeological site.

6:60 – Who had trouble understanding Jesus' talk of consuming His body and blood?

Many of the disciples or followers of Jesus had a hard time understanding this teaching. But the 12 accepted Him despite this difficult teaching (see John 6:67-69).

Why do you think Jesus used such a harsh teaching?

Jesus wanted people to count the cost of following Him. On another occasion:

Luke 14:25-28 – Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?" (NIV)

Those who followed Jesus so that they could feel good about themselves would eventually be disappointed. Only those who were willing to accept Jesus as the absolute Truth would be able to weather the difficulties of living in this fallen world. Jesus sought to separate the true believers from the ones following Him for the wrong reasons.

What are some of the wrong reasons people followed Jesus?

When Jesus ministered in His mortal body, people followed Him thinking He'd establish a new political party to challenge the authority of Rome. Others were fascinated by the theological discussions that Jesus continually got involved in and the miracles always drew a crowd as well. All of these were valid to introduce people to Jesus but not sufficient to make people real disciples. Likewise, people

have wrong motives for being Christians today... Some people get involved in church for the social contacts or because they are fascinated with spiritual topics.

6:61 – Should the good news about Christ be offensive?

Yes and no... if a person's heart has been prepared for the gospel by the Holy Spirit, then it will be received with joy. But those who reject the preparation of the Holy Spirit hardening their heart against Him will be offended by the gospel because it shatters traditions and challenges their world view. We do however need to be careful that the way we communicate the good news about Christ is not offensive.

1 Corinthians 13:1 – If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

6:62 – What did Jesus propose to help the Jews grumbling about His difficult teaching?

Jesus dealt with the problem of the Jews not believing that He had come from heaven by suggesting that they would come to believe this if they saw Him go back up to heaven. Indeed, those who stayed with Jesus and saw Him in His resurrected body would see this:

Acts 1:9-11 - He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

However, even seeing such a miracle would not help people to believe in Jesus because they first need to be drawn to Him by the Father (see John 6:65).

6:63 – How does John 6:63 provide the key to interpreting Jesus' discourse about eating His flesh?

If there was any doubt before, this verse makes it clear that Jesus intended for people to apply a spiritual interpretation to His words. Indeed, what Jesus said here made no sense if it is taken literally. Jesus had used physical analogies to explain spiritual concepts before when He described the new birth to Nicodemus.

6:64 – Who was among the followers of Jesus?

There were unbelievers among the followers of Jesus.

How did Jesus know which of His followers were unbelievers?

Jesus was God and omniscience is one of the characteristics of God. Jesus did not have to make a judgment as to whether a follower was a believer or not due to their actions, He could tell from the beginning without them having to outwardly reveal their inner thoughts.

6:65 – Who would and would not believe Jesus?

No one can believe in Jesus unless the Father has made it possible for them to believe. This is what coming to Jesus is all about, believing that He is the Son of God and that His death on the cross paid the penalty for my sin.

6:66 – What result did the frank words of Jesus have?

Many of those who had been following Jesus stopped following Him. The more people heard Jesus' message, the more they divided into two camps: the honest seekers wanting to understand more and those who rejected Jesus because they did not like what they heard.

Matthew 10:34-36 - Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' (NKJV)

The ministry of Jesus divided the true believers from the false. Likewise today, where a person stands regarding Christ and His Word reveals whether they are believers or not.

Why did Jesus' words cause so many of His followers to desert Him?

- They may have realized that He wasn't the conquering Messiah that they were looking for.
- He refused to respond to their self-centered requests.
- Jesus emphasized faith and not deeds.
- His teachings were difficult to accept and they found some of His words to be offensive.

Do you find some of Jesus' lessons to be difficult?

Jesus makes it clear what God has in mind regarding perfection and the standard to than is humanly possible to achieve. His equating anger with murder and looking with lust as adultery is a high standard, particularly if the eye that causes you to sin should be plucked out. God takes sin very seriously.

What are the potential responses to the discouragement, doubt, or confusion that results from the hard teachings of Jesus?

Some may be inclined to give up, others to ignore teachings they don't like or just reject Christ. But when we as believers encounter these difficult teachings, we should seek God's wisdom to help us to understand what they mean and how we should apply them to our lives. And we should have the courage to act on God's truth.

6:67 – Why did Jesus ask His twelve chosen disciples if they also wanted to leave Him?

There can be no fence-sitting with Jesus, no middle ground. Either they trusted in Him or they didn't. When Jesus asked the disciples if they would also leave, He was showing them

that He was not taking their faith for granted. God is the consummate gentleman who doesn't want to force anyone into a relationship with Him against their will.

6:68 – What was the response of the twelve disciples?

Peter spoke for the others as he often did saying that there was no other that they go to for eternal life.

Was Peter's statement one of faith or did He completely understand what Jesus has been saying?

Peter accepted what Jesus had to say on faith without completely understanding what He had been talking about. Peter certainly wanted eternal life and he believed that Jesus was the path to spending eternity with God.

Do people today give much thought to eternal life?

Why or why not?

Eternity is an uncomfortable subject for many people. This is especially the case in our country where life generally goes so well. Death and disease are usually distant and unreal. Life in this world with its pleasures and possessions are too cherished to consider forsaking; so people put off considering eternity indefinitely.

6:68-69 – Who did Peter say that Jesus was?

Peter referred to Jesus as "Lord," and essentially said that Jesus was "the only way to eternal life," with "the words of eternal life," and was "the object of their belief, and "the Holy One of God."

Was Peter's understanding of Jesus correct?

Peter's understanding of Jesus was correct but He had not yet applied all of this truth to his life. This process works in us as well: when we first believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord, our understanding is correct but limited. As we mature in Christ, our understanding of the breadth and depth of Jesus' saving work and Lordship grows.

6:70-71 – How was it that Judas was a devil?

Judas Iscariot would be the one who betrayed Jesus. Per John 13:2 & 27, Satan put the idea into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus then possessed him to carry out the betrayal. Judas gave in to evil thinking thus opening himself up to the control of the devil.

Was Judas a believer in Christ?

No, because fallen angels can not possess believers because we have the presence of the Holy Spirit. However, we can still be susceptible to temptation from demons so we should guard our heart from evil thoughts.

Jesus selected the disciples so why did He select one who would betray Him?

Jesus came to die. Jesus willingly went to the cross for our sakes. Jesus having a betrayer was necessary because it was prophesied that this would be the case...

Psalm 41:9 - Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. (NKJV)

Judas did not believe Jesus but did not leave like the other unbelievers... where do we see this today?

Judas stayed close to Jesus for personal gain. While many people turn away from Jesus when they hear the real message, some stick around for approval by family, friends, status, or business contacts. All people either accept or reject Jesus and you can not tell by whether they are in church or not.