

John 6

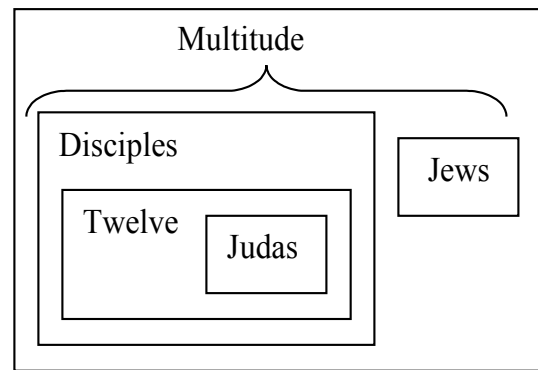
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Overview

Once again, we find the Lord out of Jerusalem. His claims to divine authority have brought the opposition of the Jews to a head. Now we go with him to Galilee to see how people there react to him.

The essential rhythm of the chapter can be traced in the different names for people that it uses: “multitude,” “disciples,” “Jews,” and “the twelve.” This chapter is John’s focus on “disciples”—ten of the 60 occurrences in the book occur here. And “the twelve” appears only here, other than 20:24.

We can summarize the entire chapter by saying that the multitude, initially favorable toward Jesus, becomes divided into supportive disciples and rejecting Jews, and even some of the disciples then fall away, leaving only the twelve (with an ominous note that even in this faithful core there remains a traitor). Thus the chapter acts out what the synoptics present as the parable of the sower. The difference is that the parable presents a set of disjoint classes, while in John there is some nesting.



Parable of the Soils	Feeding of the 5000
Way side: direct opposition of Satan	Jews
Stony Ground: no root, wilts under persecution	Disciples who went away, 60-66
Thorny Ground: distracted by cares, riches, lusts	
Good Ground: fruit	The Twelve

In the synoptics, the Twelve are disjoint from the Multitude. John blurs this distinction:

- 1-4, those who travel are Jesus + multitude, out of whom the disciples appear. In synoptics (e.g., Mark 6:30-32; Luke 9:10; but Matt 14:13 is more like John)
- 60-71 distinguishes between “many of his disciples” and “the twelve.” It has no parallel in the synoptics.

The point appears to be forcing even his disciples to be clear in their decision to follow him, recognizing the coming conflict. The successive sections of the chapter show the development or decline in faith of each group: Multitude, Disciples, Jews, Twelve.

1-4, Setting: Multitude and Disciples

After these things.—As in 3:22; 5:1; 7:1; 21:1, the phrase marks a shift between Jerusalem and out-of-Jerusalem, in keeping with the book's basic rhythm.

the sea of Galilee.—Suddenly the Lord is back in Galilee. We are not told about his trip. After the dramatic confrontation with the Jews in Jerusalem, John dramatically shifts our attention back to the region that has been more sympathetic to his teaching.

2-3, a great multitude ... his disciples.—Immediately, John makes the first distinction among the people. There appears to be a conscious echo here of Matt 4:24-5:2. In both cases,

- Multitudes are drawn to him because of the healings that he performs
- He withdraws into a mountain with a smaller group for teaching (explicit in Matthew; implicit in John, but presumed in the title “disciple,” *maq8t8s*, “learner, pupil”).

The distinction in motivation between these two groups will come up later, in v. 27, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” For many people, religion is useful only if it improves our condition now. It is true that “godliness [has] promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim 4:8), but “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor 15:19). The true disciple will be drawn to the Lord, not because of his miracles, but because he alone has “the words of eternal life” (v. 68), and will be found, like Mary, at his feet at every opportunity (Luke 10:39).

4 the passover ... was nigh.—This note sets the stage for the miracle that he is about to do. His lesson about the bread of life builds on and supplants the Jewish passover, the (not “a”) feast of the Jews.

5-15, Feeding the 5000: Multitude and Disciples

5 Jesus ... saw a great company come unto him.—Once again, we encounter the multitude. The Lord is involved with his disciples, and the multitude is approaching, threatening to disturb their fellowship together. In fact, from Mark 6:31, we know that this trip was intended as R&R for the Twelve after the Lord had sent them out on their teaching mission. They are trying to escape the press of the multitudes, who seek them out and pursue them.

Although the multitude is seeking something from the Lord (healing), they are not seeking what he finally gives them (food). He perceives their need, and provides it. Their role is limited to receiving what he initiates. Thus the feeding is an acted example of the Lord's words in 6:44.

He saith unto Philip.—Philip (like Andrew and Peter) is from Bethsaida (1:44), which is the nearest city to where they find themselves (Luke 9:10), so the question naturally goes to him. “You know the resources of this town, the shops, the people. Where does one go for food?”

6 this he said to prove him.—The Lord is testing Philip (and the others) along several dimensions here.

- Will they interrupt their retreat to care for the needs of the multitude, or will they cling to their private interests? Mark 6:36 shows that the natural inclination of the disciples was to send them away, not to care for them.

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- Where will they look for help? “Whence shall we buy bread?” He suggests they look for a store, all the while knowing that they are in “a desert place,” Mark 6:31.
- How will they respond to a problem beyond their resources? Even if there had been a store nearby, where would they get the resources to feed such a crowd?

Two of the disciples respond to the challenge.

7 Philip ... two hundred pennyworth.—Philip focuses on the cost of feeding such a crowd. Matt 20:2 shows that the penny, or denarius, was a reasonable wage for a day’s labor. So this would be about eight months’ wages, far beyond what this group would be likely to have in their pockets at this moment. And even then it would only provide “a little” for each of the multitude. Gill claims that a denarius would buy bread for ten men, so this amount would feed only 2000 people; they have 5000 men, plus women and children.

8 Andrew ... There is a lad here.—Andrew does a step better. Instead of focusing on what they don’t have, he focuses on what they do have.

9 a lad ... five barley loaves, and two small fishes.—Every element of his discovery emphasizes its weakness:

- “a lad,” whose meager lunch could hardly suffice for a crowd of 5000 men and their families;
- “barley,” the coarse bread of the poor;
- “fishes,” only two of them, just a relish to moisten the coarse loaves.

Andrew is apologetic for even suggesting such meager fare, but they form the basis for the Lord’s provision. Two parallels are worth making.

- The last time we met Andrew was also in the context of introducing someone (Peter) to the Lord (1:40), and we shall meet him once again (12:22), again doing the same thing. He is not as prominent as Peter or John, but his influence for the sake of the gospel is unquestionable, and an example to us all.
- God is not constrained by the amount of food available. Cf. Kittie Suffield’s hymn, “Little is much, when God is in it.” Many times, God’s people have been dismayed by the little they have in the face of what seem overwhelming odds.¹
 - Moses was discouraged over his meager skills: “they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice” (Exod 4:1). But the Lord challenged him, “What is that in thine hand?” and proceeded to work a great deliverance through him.
 - When God called Gideon, he protested, “my family *is* poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father’s house” (Judg 6:15). He tried to build up a great army to support him, but the Lord deliberately pared it down from 32,000 to 10,000 and then to 300 (Judg 7:2, 4, 7).
 - When Samuel told Saul that he was to be king, Saul protested, “Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the

¹ In addition to these examples, which focus on complaints about what people have, it is worthwhile to meditate on cases where people are discouraged over the magnitude of the problem (Elisha’s servant in 2 Kings 6:15; the king’s servant in 2 Kings 7:2)

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families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" (2 Sam 9:21), yet God wrought great victory through him at Jabesh-Gilead (1 Sam 11).

- When David offered to fight Goliath, Saul protested, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth" (1 Samuel 17:33), but David trusted in the Lord and was victorious.
- Naaman the Syrian despised Elisha's command to dip in the Jordan: "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" (2 Kings 5:12). Yet when he did, he was cured of his leprosy.
- The widow of Zarephath protested, "I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse" (1 Kings 17:12), but when she offered it to Elijah, it sustained three people through the famine (10-16).
- The impoverished widow of 2 Kings 4:1, about to lose her son to pay her debts, complained, "Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil." But God expanded it to fill every pot she could bring.
- The closest parallel, and one that our Lord may be consciously emulating, is 2 Kings 4:38, 42-44. Elisha's servant complained, "How can I feed a hundred men with this?" But there was enough and beyond.

The wisdom literature glories in the superiority of small wise things over powerful foolish ones:

Ecc 9:13 This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: 14 There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: 15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.

Compare Agur in Prov 30:24-28:

24 There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: 25 The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; 26 The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; 27 The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; 28 The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.

The key to understanding these is recognizing that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning [head, chief principle] of wisdom" (Prov 9:10; Job 28:28; Psa 111:10; Prov 1:7; 15:33). What makes these humble things powerful is not worldly learning, but their trust in the Lord.

The underlying principle is that of 1 Cor 1:26-29. God prefers to work with the poor and weak things, "that no flesh may glory in his presence." We should never despair at our small size or weakness in the world's terms, but just get about doing what the Lord commands, leaving the outcome to him. Being paralyzed at the thought of our weakness is just as fleshly as boasting in our personal strength. Both take our attention off of the Lord.

10 And Jesus said.—Here is the secret for those who are small: do what Jesus says. Don't be preoccupied with our weakness, but with doing his will.

Men ... men.—The words are distinct in Greek. The first one is *anqrwpoi* “people,” while the second is *andres* “males.” The total size of the crowd was perhaps three times the stated number.

11 he had given thanks.—Our Lord consistently follows the Jewish practice of giving thanks for food, and by his example directs us always to acknowledge the source of the blessings we enjoy. 1 Tim 4:4-5 tells us that our thanksgiving sanctifies the food we eat—otherwise it would be profane, and we nothing better than beasts.

he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them.—Here is a reminder to us of the only way that we can be a blessing to others: by passing on what we have first received from the Lord. The disciples had no resources of their own, as the Lord has made clear by his questions. They can only be channels for what he provides. David had this insight a thousand years before, 1 Chr 29:14: “all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”

as much as they would.—His provision is completely appropriate to their need. No one goes away hungry. Yet “Christ did not provide great delicacies for the people, but they ... were obliged to rest satisfied with barley-bread and fish without sauce” (Calvin). His provision is ample but simple and unostentatious, an example for us in what we should expect from his hand.

12 Gather up the fragments ... that nothing be lost.—God’s bounty is no excuse for profligacy. Our natural and fleshly tendency is that when God pours out his bounty on us, we tend to become careless and wasteful. On the contrary, “unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12:48). The more bountiful God is with us, the closer accounting he will expect from us of how we have employed his gifts.

This carefulness not to waste shows the same consciousness at the end of the meal that the thanksgiving does at the beginning. Both acknowledge that the bounty is a gift from God, and that those who enjoy it are answerable to him.

twelve baskets.—God thus demonstrates the answer to Andrew’s question, “What are they among so many?” Answer: “Far more than enough.” The abundance of the provision is an example of God’s ability “to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph 3:20).

14 when they had seen the miracle ..., [they] said, “this is ... that prophet”.—They refer to the promised prophet like unto Moses of Deut 18:15. V.31 shows that what strikes them is the similarity between the Lord’s action and the manna that Moses gave Israel in the wilderness. Thus far their insight is more penetrating than that of the rulers of ch. 5, who had equally compelling evidence that the Lord was the fulfillment of Isa 35:6. Yet we immediately see that it is not sufficient.

15 they would ... take him by force.—The faith of the multitude, though superior to that of the rulers, still is defective. They completely miss the point of Deut 18:15, “unto him ye shall hearken.” Far from submitting to his authority, they want to use him for their own purposes.

he departed again into a mountain himself alone.—Actually, “the mountain,” the one mentioned in v.3, but this time alone, without his disciples, whom he left to make their way back to Capernaum.

There are two practical lessons for us in the Lord’s withdrawal.

1. Salvation is not of the will of man, but of God (1:13). The multitudes came to him (v.2), but he withdrew from them. Contrast the next section when the Lord comes to those who truly are his.
2. Times of great victory are hazardous. When things are going well for us, we may become preoccupied with our own greatness, or be swept away by the adulation of others. The Lord's example here is an important one. The reason for his withdrawal is given explicitly by Matthew (14:13): to pray. Compare Mark 1:35 (after his first sermon in Capernaum and the great healing). Similarly, times of discouragement tempt us to despair, and we need to withdraw: Luke 6:12 (after a Sabbath controversy and before choosing the twelve); Matt 26:36 (Gethsemane, after the betrayal).

16-21, Calming the Sea: Disciples

This section shows the development of the disciples' faith beyond that of the multitude. The multitude recognize him as the promised prophet, but here he leads his disciples to recognize him as divine, through three allusions to the OT.

16 his disciples went down unto the sea.—In 6:3 (cf. Matt 5:1), when the Lord went up into a mountain, the disciples followed him. Here, when he goes up into the mountain (15), they go the other way—the synoptics tell us, because he told them to (Matt 14:22; Mark 6:25). Sometimes he welcomes their presence, but at other times, he needs to be alone—or he needs them to be alone, so that they can be prepared to learn the lessons he has to teach them.

17 toward Capernaum.—Mark 6:45 says Bethsaida, a short distance to the east. They probably went there to await him, and when he did not join them, made their way back westward to Capernaum.

Notice now how the discouragements mount up as they expect him, yet “Jesus was not come.” So we are sometimes discouraged sometimes as we look forward to his return.

- “it was now dark,” with no clear guidance. Near Passover, the moon would have been full, but there may have been clouds. All they had was his instruction to go before him to Capernaum.
- “the sea arose.” The darkness threatens them with getting lost, but in the morning they can find their way back. The waves pose a greater threat, making their way difficult and raising fears of personal injury or even death.
- “five and twenty or thirty furlongs,” something more than three miles, which should have been enough to get them from the vicinity of Bethsaida to Capernaum. But Matthew and Mark say that they were now “in the midst of the sea,” whose overall dimensions are about 7 x 12 miles. So they have been blown off their course.

they see Jesus walking on the sea.--This is the first of the three OT references that lead them to recognize the Lord as more than just a prophet. The expression is a quote from the LXX of Job 9:8, in the midst of a recital of God's creative powers. The LXX adds a phrase: “who walks upon the sea as upon the ground.” The Lord's action here demonstrates that he is the sovereign creator described by Job. NB: the only places in the Bible that someone is said to walk on the sea are Job 9:8 and the records of this miracle by Matt, Mark, and John.

In Job 9, the Lord is responsible for shaking the earth and hiding the sun. The seaman's stanza in Psalm 107:25 also attributes to him the storm at sea: "For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof." The storm that so troubles them is not an accidental circumstance from which he delivers them, but something that he has brought upon them in order to teach them more about who he is.

Drawing nigh unto the ship.--contrast v.15, "he departed." When the multitude came to him with defective faith, he withdrew. When the disciples are in need, he comes to them. This is setting up the teaching of God's initiative in salvation that he will present in vv. 37, 44.

they were afraid.--The synoptics explain their fear on the grounds that they thought he was a ghost. Perhaps also they recalled the context of Job 9:8. In v.2-3, Job cries out, "how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand," and goes on to recite God's powers (including walking on the sea) as evidence of his absolute authority to judge. This, too, is part of the Lord's claim, reinforcing the point he made to the Jews in ch. 5.

20 he saith ... It is I.--We have heard "It is I" (Greek *ego eimi*, more literally translated "I am") only once before from the Lord, in 4:26, when he disclosed himself to the woman at the well as the Messiah. But it is one of John's favorite expressions. 14X it is used with a metaphor ("I am the door," "I am the good shepherd,"), 10x absolutely as here.

At 4:26, we commented on the phrase, "John uses this expression more than any other NT writer (24x; it appears only 24x in the rest of the NT, and no one else uses it more than 7x). See 8:58 for a clue to its full meaning. It is part of the LXX's translation of the divine name in Exod 3:14, and a common translation for the Hebrew *ani hw'*, which always refers to the Lord when it appears (as here) without complement (Deut 32:39; Isa 41:4; 43:10,13; 46:4; 48:12; 52:6). Thus it is part of the Lord's claim to be not just Messiah, but also God."

Thus the claim is a continuation of what he asserts by walking on the water. It is the second OT reference that he invokes to lead them to see that he is more than the promised prophet.

be not afraid.--This is an amazing word of comfort. He comes to them, weak, tired, fearful. By deed and word he asserts, "I am your creator, your judge, your sovereign Lord, the one whom all the earth should fear." And then immediately, he comforts them: "Be not afraid."

This assurance is not universal. In John 18:5-6, in the garden, he announces himself to those who come to arrest him with the same Greek words (there translated "I am he"), but does not add, "be not afraid," and "they went backward and fell to the ground" in fear.

Compare the picture in Esther 4:11. "whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live." There is judgment and death to those who come into the presence of the sovereign creator and judge, unless he holds out the golden scepter of his reassurance, "be not afraid." And just because he is so powerful, that assurance is all that they need. Rom 8:34, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." The scene is reminiscent of the Michael Card lyric, "To be so completely guilty, given over to despair, to look into your Judge's face and see a Savior there!"

21 they willingly received him.--Note the sequence of events: first fear, then his offer of peace, and then their willing reception. The actual narration deals with the boat trip, but given John's

emphasis on the verb “receive” (cf. 1:12), we should see it also as a metaphor for our salvation. Note two details of this sequence.

1. It must begin with fear stimulated by the awareness of our sin. Without repentance, we will never come to a full appreciation of the salvation that he has provided for us.
2. It must include our willing reception of what he offers.

immediately the ship was at the land.--The instant they received him, the journey was complete. He brought an end to the storm and delivered them safely to their destination.

This is not how Matt and Mark end the story. They note that the wind stopped, and then in due course the disciples arrive at their destination. John recalls the additional detail, that the arrival was immediate. In working this additional miracle, the Lord fulfills the promise of Psa 107:30, “so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.” As professional sailors, the disciples must have known this sea-farer’s psalm, and they would have recognized his third claim to be the one described in the OT as “the Lord,” Jehovah.

The salvation metaphor may extend to this as well. The instant the Lord saves us, we have eternal life, and are seated with him in heavenly places. Our lives here on earth may involve much struggle and sorrow, but there is no question that we are “at the land whither” we go.

22-59, Bread of Life Discourse: Multitude, Disciples, and Jews

After explaining how the people rejoined the Lord, this section describes a conversation between the Lord and two groups, first the multitude, then the Jews. The conversation is based on, and offers a spiritual interpretation of, the feeding from the first part of the chapter.

22-24, Setting

The introductory verses to this section are the last reference to the “multitude” (translated “people”) in the chapter. They are already in a state of amazement over the miraculous feeding of the previous day. Their wonder is increased when they realize three things:

- “there was none other boat there,” except the one used by the disciples
- the disciples left in that boat without taking Jesus with them
- Jesus himself was not there any longer (v.24).

What had become of him? He had not left by boat, and enough of them were encamped along the road that they would have seen him if he had left by the way they came.

Fortunately for them, there was much navigation on the lake. Boats from Tiberias visited Bethsaida (v.24), and they were able to engage them in their search for Jesus. The next village along the shore was Capernaum, and they may have learned that several of the disciples were from there as well, so to that town they direct their steps.

23 after that the Lord had given thanks.--John reminds us once more of the means by which the food was increased. The people are seeking for Jesus, but their minds are not focused on the one to whom he appealed and who actually empowered the miracle. Thus John emphasizes their carnality.

25-40, Conversation with the Multitude

When they find him, they engage him in conversation. The engagement is very similar to that with the woman at the well in ch. 4: see handout for comparison that shows the same five elements. The repetition of these elements suggests that we have here a pattern for how we ought to engage people about the gospel.

Jesus attracts attention with a surprising action

In both cases, the Lord begins with a surprising action that arrests the attention of his hearer. He violates Jewish custom in asking the woman for a drink; he surprises the multitude by disappearing in the middle of the night.

25-27, First Exchange: Physical vs. Spiritual Sustenance

25 when they had found him.--They may have known that he had ties to Capernaum, or perhaps they saw the disciples heading there. In any event, they seek him out. Their desire for more food is coupled with curiosity about his departure, and when they find him, this is the first question on their mind: “when camest thou hither?”

As often in his conversations, the Lord does not directly answer their question. He retains control of the conversation and steers it to his purposes. His response has two parts, a statement and a command.

26 Ye seek me, not ... but ...--His statement acknowledges their curiosity, but does not become distracted with the exact answer to their query. To tell them that he walked there over the lake during the night would only distract him from the point he wants to make, using the feeding the day before as a symbol of his offer of eternal life.

The contrast he draws between miracles and food is an important one.

In v.2, their main motive for following him was to see miracles, and 2:23 tells us that this was a common motive. This is by and large the motive of a *spectator*. Most of those who came were not themselves in need of healing. If they were, they could not have made the trip into the wilderness. He did heal some sick in the crowd (Matt 14:14; Luke 9:11), no doubt carried there by their friends, but most of the crowd came for the show.

In feeding them, he does a miracle that directly touches them all as *recipients*. He has led them into a situation where they recognize their own need (for food) and are powerless to meet it, and has showed that he can provide for such universal needs, not just for special cases of healing.

27 Labour not ... but--Now he declares the theme of this discourse. Just as they recognize their need to come to him for physical food, he wants them to see their need for the spiritual food that he can give. This is exactly how he began the interview with the woman of Samaria, contrasting her physical water with spiritual water.

Labour is an imperative, a command. They are responsible to do something, and he emphasizes this with a command.

- In their daily lives, they are accustomed to laboring to acquire food that “perisheth,” that disappears and must be continually replenished, like the water that the woman of Samaria must come daily to replenish water that once drunk leaves her to “thirst again.” The setting of this discussion will remind them of that. He fed them yesterday, but this

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morning, having passed the night in the open and now hiked back to Capernaum, they will be hungry again. In fact, their diligent seeking of him is an example of laboring “for the meat that perisheth.”

- He urges them to direct their efforts to “meat that endures,” food that lasts, comparable to the living water that springs up inside the believer.

Everlasting life.--Food is necessary for life. The Lord compares the temporary satisfaction derived from physical food with the limited length of the life that it supports. There is another kind of food, one that endures for ever and is appropriate to a life that never ends.

which the Son of man shall give unto you.--The contrast between “labor” and “give” is striking, but not unprecedented. We are to “labor” for our physical food (2 Thes 3:10, 12), and yet we recognize that it is the gift of God (Matt 6:11 “give us this day”). Compare Psa 104:14 (“He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth”), 23 (“Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening”), 27 (“These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season”).

In the same way, he wants them to understand that the spiritual food he offers is a gift of God, yet it must be appropriated. Calvin: “the spiritual food of the soul is the free gift of Christ, and ... we must strive with all the affections of our heart to become partakers of so great a blessing.” They have sought him out (labor) to receive more temporary food (gift). This same energy and dedication must mark their quest for a higher and more lasting bread.

the Son of Man.--The capacity in which he grants them this gift is as the Son of Man. John is the least likely of the four evangelists to use this title of our Lord. He would much rather describe him as “the son of God” or “the Son” absolutely in reference to the heavenly Father.

We suggested in discussing the last use of this title, 5:27, that the Lord has in mind the prophecy of Daniel 7, in which the Ancient of Days grants all dominion to one like unto the Son of Man. They wanted to make him a king (v. 15). He is indeed a king, and one of the main responsibilities of a king is to feed his people. Hammurabi boasts that he “firmly founded the farms of Kish, ... broadened the fields of Dilbat, ... heaped up the harvests for Urash; ... provided food and drink for Lagash and Girsu.” No doubt they had this responsibility of a king in mind when they sought to elevate him in v.15.

for him hath God the Father sealed.--Though he is a king, his authority does not come from their democratic acclamation, but from the Father’s declaration. It is unusual for a “person” to be sealed. The expression is naturally applied to letters (Esther 8:10), contracts (Jer 32:10), tombs (Matt 27:66), and other things whose authenticity is to be guaranteed by ensuring that they have not been tampered with. Besides our Savior, the only other people said to be sealed in the NT are believers (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30). The Lord’s seal, the Father’s declaration of his authenticity, consists of the attestation at the baptism and the miracles that he did.

Note that here, as in ch. 5, he does not rely on his own authority, but explicitly depends on the Father’s authentication.

28-29, Second Exchange: Need for Belief

This topic is the last one he brings up with the woman. Here it comes up early in the conversation. He has a set of topics he wants to cover, and the emphasis is on covering them, not necessarily on the order.

28 do the works of God.--Most commentators understand this as “godly works”: “What work does God require that we do in order to receive this bread?” But *ta erga tou qeou* elsewhere in the Greek Scripture (Psa 63:10 [64:9 ET], 65:5 [66:5 ET]; John 9:3) and other Greek writings of that era (Tobit S 12:11; Josephus War, 5, 378) always means “the work that God does.” (*ta erga tou kuriou* can mean either; compare 1 Cor 15:58 and Jer 31:10 LXX, 48:10 MT). I think their statement is facetious (compare John Brown). “You’ve got to be kidding. Only God can produce food that lasts for ever. How could we ever conduct such a work?”

29 This is the work of God.--The Lord picks up their facetious phrase, but turns it to the singular. “You’re right. You can’t do what is necessary to gain this bread. It is indeed God’s work in you.”

believe on him whom he hath sent.--Here is the miracle, the divine work, that must happen in them. The attitude required of them is constrained as to its nature and its object. Its nature is belief—trust and commitment. Its object is Jesus as the one sent by the Father, not just a pious teacher. In the conversation with the woman this point is developed over two exchanges. The first deals with the need to worship God in spirit and in truth, corresponding to the need for belief; the second deals with the Lord’s identity as the Messiah, the one whom God has sent.

30-33, Third Exchange: Answering an Appeal to Tradition

In both conversations, the ones our Lord is addressing seek to divert the discussion by appealing to alternative authorities. The woman pointed to Jacob, from whose well they were drinking. The multitude in ch. 6 recalls the miracles wrought by Moses.

30 What sign shewest thou then.--Calvin: “This wickedness abundantly proves how truly it is said elsewhere, *This wicked generation seeketh a sign*, (Matthew 12:39.) They had been at first drawn to Christ by the admiration of his miracles or *signs* [6:2], and afterwards, through amazement at a new *sign*, they acknowledged Christ to be the Messiah, and, with that conviction, *wished to make him a king* [6:15]; but now they demand *a sign* from him, as if he were a man unknown to them.”

31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert.--Moses provided their ancestors with food for forty years. They clearly still want Jesus to be their continual source of physical sustenance.

as it is written.--They quote Psa 78:24 in support of their claim that a true leader should provide for them in this way. It is worth noting that even carnal people can quote the scriptures, sometimes in support of their carnality.

32 Then Jesus said unto them.--There are only four points in the life of Christ that people request a sign: here and

- 2:18, when he cleansed the temple;
- Matt 12:38 = Luke 11:29
- Matt 16:4 = Mark 8:11

In these other three cases, he offered them only the promise of his resurrection. Here, his response is quite different. He corrects them on three points.

- **Moses ... my Father.**--They have not mentioned Moses explicitly, but the Jewish tradition was that “there arose up three good providers, or pastors for Israel, and they are these, Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam; and three good gifts were given by their means, and they are these, the well, the cloud, and the manna; the well by the merits of Miriam; the pillar of cloud by the merits of Aaron; the manna, by the merits of Moses” (T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 9. 1, Seder Olam Rabba, p. 28, cited by Gill; Edersheim also references T. Ps. John on Deut 34:8). Against this background, it seems that they are misquoting Psa 78:24. By “he gave,” they understand Moses, but the text is quite clear that the reference is to God. Cf. Exod 16:15, where Moses tells the Jews of his generation, “This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.” Our Lord is correcting this Jewish understanding that lies behind their claim. They commit the persistent human error of focusing attention on God’s gifts and his agents, and not giving him the glory.
- **That bread from heaven ... the true bread from heaven.**--Their second error is in idealizing the manna itself. Like the food the Lord produced the day before, it was miraculous, but it was still “meat that perisheth,” able to satisfy only for a time, able to sustain only temporary human life. It was a shadow, a picture, a type of the true heavenly bread, which he seeks to bring to their attention.
- **Gave ... giveth.**--Their third error is in glorifying the past and not recognizing what is happening in their own day. They boast of what their ancestors enjoyed. Jesus is telling them about something that is at hand for them now.

33 For the bread of God is he which.--Perhaps better, “that which.” He is indeed the bread of life, but his point here is to define the true heavenly bread, the bread of God, by two of its characteristics, before revealing himself as that bread in v.35. How will they recognize the true bread?

- **cometh down from heaven.**--True heavenly bread must have a heavenly origin.
- **giveth life unto the world.**--True heavenly bread must have an effect and a scope worthy of its divine origin. Its purpose is not to feed just one company of run-away slaves, but to give life to a lost world-system.

The Jewish sages themselves recognized that the manna was only a type of a greater divine blessing, which they understood to be the Law (see discussion in Edersheim, ch. 32). The Lord is about to claim that he, the Word of God, is the ultimate fulfillment.

Fourth Exchange: Request for the Gift

The people in John 6, like the woman in John 4, finally ask for the sustenance of which the Lord is speaking. His response to both points out their sinfulness (her adultery; the Jews’ unbelief). However, they come in different places. Her request comes at the middle of the conversation in ch. 4, and he finally does describe the living water in claiming to be the Messiah. Their request is the last round in this conversation, and he appropriately shows them that he is the answer to their need.

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Note how different this approach is from a “four laws” gospel that responds to any indication of interest on the part of the hearer with unadulterated encouragement. People must be confronted with their sin. Without repentance there can be no salvation. Getting them to the point of desiring the gift is only the first step; they must recognize that they cannot merit it on their own.

His response is longer than everything he has said up to this point. Its purpose is to show that he satisfies the two requirements of “the bread of God” that he has pointed out in v.33. It has two parts.

- In v. 35 he claims to give life to the world.
- vv. 36-40 are a chiasm (cf. Leon duFour, NTS 7 (1961) 249-55) centered on v.38, which claims that he has come down from heaven.

Evidence for 33b, “that which ... giveth life unto the world”	
35 I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.	
Evidence for 33a, “that which cometh down from heaven”	
36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.	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.
37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.	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.
38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.	

35, Jesus gives life to the world.

Here is his central claim, stated in terms of the metaphor. Both the manna and the multiplied sardine sandwiches are meant to point to him, the true bread of life, which will satisfy forever those who partake of him by coming and believing.

It is interesting to trace the combination of figure and interpretation in this verse and two parallels to it, 40 and 54. All three verses sample different quadrants of the same conceptual structure, which uses figure and interpretation to expound a cause and its effect. Here is the overall structure:

	<i>Cause</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Literal	Come, believe	Receive eternal life; rise from the dead
Figure	Eat, drink	Never hunger or thirst

Here, the cause is described literally, while the effect is figurative.

In terms of satisfying the requirements of v.33, the “give life” is satisfied by the promise that his people will never hunger or thirst. The scope of this gift (“the world”) is guaranteed by the offer to whoever will come and believe. It is not restricted to any nation or culture, but is open to “whosoever will.”

36-40, Jesus has come down from heaven.

v.38 clearly responds to the second requirement of v.33, that the bread of God must have a heavenly origin. The Lord claims such origin, and backs it up by tracing his authority to the Father, as in ch. 5. He has come to do the Father’s will.

That will is spelled out in vv. 39-40. Note the reference to the Father’s will at the start of each of these. The reference to resurrection at the end of each takes us back to the claim of v.35 that he is the life-giver.

36, 40, see, believe.--These two verses lay out the Father’s requirements for enjoying the life that the Lord offers. One must see him and believe, verbs that are central to both of these verses.

v.40 is the completely literal version of the 2x2 matrix of figure/interpretation and cause/effect. This is the plainest, most straightforward explanation of our Lord’s role as the bread of life. Faith in him brings everlasting life.

His listeners have seen—but they have not believed, as evidenced by their stubborn demand for yet more signs. By pointing this out to them, he is highlighting their sin, just as he did to the woman at the well.

37, 39, the Father’s gift.--After the rebuke of v.36, these two verses explain how sinful people can have access to this heavenly bread. The reception, like the provision, rests on the Father’s initiative. Jesus does not offer it on his own authority, but in obedience to the will of the Father. Those who partake of it do not do so on their own merits or initiative, but because the Father has given them to the Son. We have here an expansion of the claim in v.29 that believing on Jesus is “the work of God,” a miraculous event beyond mere human ability.

Both of these verses make two points.

- The Father has given a people to the Son. He has chosen them and enabled them to come. Much of evangelism focuses on our love for the Lord and the need to “give ourselves to him.” It is startling to see this perspective, that the giving is done by God, and that we are an indication of his great love for his son. The perspective is startling, but hardly new—see Psa 2:8, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” There are three actors in the drama of salvation: the Father, the Son, and the Redeemed. We tend to focus too much on those aspects that center on us, and we pay too little attention to what this drama has to teach us about the relation between the Father and the Son.
- The Son will give life to all of those whom the Father has given him. None will be overlooked or lost. Those who do not believe have not frustrated the Father’s gift to the son. They have simply given evidence that they are not part of that gift.

It may seem strange that the Lord would preach election in an evangelistic setting, but he is countering their inappropriate initiative in v.15. They must realize that the new order that he has come to initiate is not theirs to manage. They must cast themselves on God's mercy as suppliants and recipients.

41-59, Conversation with the Jews

41-42 shows a repeated heading. The speakers are introduced twice, once in 41 and again in 42. John thus marks a distinction between the two verses, which function at different levels. 41 introduces their concern with his twofold claim: "I am the bread [v.35] which came down from heaven [v.38]." Then 42 focuses in on "came down from heaven," while 52 focuses on "I am the bread."

41, The Murmuring Jews

The name for those who speak with him changes at this point. Up until now it has been "the people," lit. "the multitude." Now it is "the Jews." Notice also the verb used to describe their speech, "murmured." This is a clear echo of the common statement in Ex 15, 16, 17, Nu 14, 16, 17 of how the people murmured at Moses. The Lord is compared with Moses, and these Jews with the rebellious children of Israel.

Israel's murmurings in the wilderness were focused on two themes:

- Lack of food and water: Ex 15:24, 16:2; 17:3
- The leadership and authority of Aaron and Moses: Num 14:2 (bad report of the land); Num 16:11, 41 (rebellion of Korah).

These are the same two themes we have here. The first focuses on his claim to be the bread of life, taken up in 52ff, while the second focus on his claim to have come down from heaven, considered in 42-51.

There is a solemn warning here about murmuring against the Lord. Those who murmured died in the wilderness. Similarly, we will see that the Lord's words here are calculated to harden the Jews in their resistance. We need to take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief that can keep us out of the land of promise (Heb 3:11, 12).

42-46, Murmuring about his origin

Their first murmuring can be compared with Israel's murmuring against the authority of Aaron and Moses in the rebellion of the sons of Korah in Num 16:3, "And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?" So the Jews here reject the Lord's claim to come down from heaven, with the special authority that this would imply.

Their murmuring (42) is that they know Jesus and his parents and therefore he cannot have a heavenly origin. Cf. 7:27; 8:41. They were expecting a supernatural Messiah, not one begotten of natural means (whether legitimate or illegitimate). Jesus is just like they are, so they will not recognize him as the Messiah. There are two errors here (Calvin):

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1. An error of fact, in thinking that they knew his parents, when in fact Joseph was not his father. They must have known the irregularities surrounding his birth (8:41), and should have known from Isa 7:14 that this could be a divine sign rather than a shameful condition. This error should warn us against jumping to premature conclusions in questions of fact. “There are ... many who frame for themselves monsters, that they may make them a pretense for hating the Gospel.”
2. An error of theology, in thinking that if he is human, he cannot be the Messiah. “We are guilty of excessive malignity, if we despise the Lord of glory because on our account he emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant” (Phil 2:7). This error should warn us not to despise the Lord’s humility, or to evaluate it by the world’s standards, but rather to welcome it as the means by which he draws us to himself.

The Lord’s answer (43-51) has two parts. 43-46 responds to their accusation about his origins, while 47-51 urges them on to their second question, concerning the bread that he offers.

Murmur not.--What a shock it must have been to them when he said this. They were speaking “among [them]selves,” not for his ears, but “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes [and ears] of him with whom we have to do,” Heb 4:13.

No man can come ... every man.—These statements are both based on the quotation from Isa 54:13 that comes between them, “They shall all be taught of God.” Consider first the quotation, then its relation to the two conclusions that the Lord draws from it.

45a, all taught of God.--This refers to Zion’s children in the promised Messianic age. All of them are instructed by God. This is in contrast to the Mosaic era, when God commanded men to teach his people (Deut 4:5, 14; 6:1). The Jews made a great deal of who your rabbi was, the person under whom you were taught. Isaiah anticipates a time when God himself is the teacher, a time eagerly awaited by the Psalmist (25:4; 34:11; 119:12, 64, 108) and finally realized in the NT era (1 John 2:27). Both of the statements that the Lord bases on this verse draw also from the broader context in Isaiah 54.

44, No man ... except ... raise him up.--This verse is a strengthened form of v.40, the literal statement of his offer.

- “come” is associated in 35 with “believe,” which is the condition in v.40. Let there be no mistake: the unbeliever must come to Christ. The promise is not that the Father sovereignly saves us, but that he sovereignly draws us, and we respond. If we diminish either God’s sovereign enabling or our real and personal response, we have compromised the Scriptural teaching about salvation.
- “no man ... except the Father ... draw him” reflects “the will of him that sent me.” They question his divine authority, so he emphasizes that the Father’s will is so strongly tied up in the process of salvation that without it no one can be saved. Notice two words:
 - “Can” indicates ability. No man is able to come without the Father’s drawing.
 - “Draw” refers to what a cow or ox does with a plow (Deut 21:3) or what a soldier does with a sword (Judg 20:2, 15, 17, 25, 35, 46), or what you do to rescue someone from drowning (2 Sam 22:17). It is not rough; Cant 1:4 uses it to describe how a lover allures the beloved. Still, it indicates the control of the Father over the process. When I was young, I wrote a song about election that said “I couldn’t help but come.” Later

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I modified it to say “I couldn’t wait to come.” The Father does not bring us against our will, but rather he changes our will so that we want to come to him.

- “I will raise him up” is the conclusion of the effect in v.40. The Lord is preoccupied with this aspect of salvation throughout this chapter: vv. 39, 40, 44, 54. It is particularly appropriate in emphasizing his divine authority, for it is the point he urged on the Jews in Jerusalem in 5:21, 25, 28.

How does this relate to Isa 54:13?

- If all the citizens of Zion are taught by God, it follows that no one can be a citizen of Zion who is not so taught. That is the condition anticipated in v. 44, where the Lord explains it as being drawn.
- The half-verse that he does not quote, “great shall be the peace of thy children,” anticipates the promise to raise his people at the last day.

45b, every man.--The second statement he also derives (“therefore”) from Isaiah. It is parallel to v.44 at three points.

- Both verses deal with “coming” to Christ. v.44 tells who cannot come, while v.45b tells who does come.
- “heard and ... learned” correspond to “draw” in 44, with special emphasis on Isa 54:13.
 - Note that they emphasize the human response to the Father’s teaching. Hearing is not enough; the Jews had heard what the Father taught through Moses, but they had not learned.
 - At the same time, there is no contingency here, no addition of human merit to the Father’s drawing. The Hebrew verb “to teach” literally means, “to cause to learn.” If the student does not learn, teaching has not taken place. One can reject counsel, or reproof (Prov 1:30), or words, or law [direction] (Jer 6:19), without changing their fundamental character. But a teacher has not taught if the students have not learned. Compare the rustic use of “learn” in English as a transitive verb, “I’ll learn you not to act that way.” Those who “hear and learn” are the very ones who are “taught of the Father.”
- “Every man” balances “no man” in 44. Some might think, “The Father’s drawing is needed for salvation, but perhaps someone could resist it.” But it is effective as well as necessary. Every man whom the Father teaches will come. Cf. v.37. Paul develops this idea most fully in Rom 8:29-30 and Phil 1:6.

It’s easy to see how Isa 54:13 implies that every man who is taught of the Father will hear and learn. That’s what it means to be taught of the Father. But what about the verse in Isaiah justifies the “therefore” that every one who is taught of the Father will come to Jesus? For this, we must consider the broader context of 54:13, specifically vv. 5-7. The chapter anticipates that the nation, formerly alienated from God by sin and under a decree of divorce from him, will be called (v.6) and gathered (v.7). The Lord identifies his call to his hearers with this prophetic summons.

Not that any man hath seen <pf> the Father.--At first glance, this verse seems an awkward insertion. Some (e.g., NET Bible notes) suggest it is an addition by the writer rather than a word

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from Jesus, but this doesn't solve the problem (if it is by the writer, why did he add it?), and in fact we can show that it isn't true.

To understand what the verse is doing here, we first need to recognize its place in a series of verses in John about seeing God, and we shall review these verses.

This verse turns the corner on an important progression of verses concerning "seeing the Father" in John. All of them use the perfect tense of the verb *horaw*.

1:18 summarizes the entire progression, which moves through three stages:

- The impossibility of seeing God: "No man hath seen <pf> God at any time"
- The special relation that the Son enjoys: "the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father"
- The knowledge of God that he makes possible: "he hath declared him."

The first point is taken up in 5:37: "Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen <pf> his shape."

Then this verse gives us one exception: "he which is of God," *ho wn para tou qeou*, has seen the Father.

Because of this revelation, both believers and unbelievers can be said to have seen the Father—the one to their blessing, the other to their condemnation:

- 14:7, 9 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. ... Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen <pf> the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?
- 15:24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen <pf> and hated both me and my Father.

Note that this sequence shows that the verse could not be an addition by the author, who would at the time of writing understand the truth of 14:7, 9.

Now we are in a position to understand why this verse is here. The Lord has been explaining the hardness of heart of the Jews by telling them that the Father's teaching is necessary and effective in drawing people to him. But it is possible to misunderstand this insight. The Jews might cast his quotation from Isaiah back at him as indicating that the only way to come to the Messiah would be through the OT law, and themselves as its custodians. So the Lord must point out the no one can see the Father and receive his teaching except through the Son, "the one who is of [from] God." The Father must reveal the Son; the Son must reveal the Father. Salvation is not only a work of God rather than of man; it is a work of the Father and Son together (and, as the rest of the NT makes clear, of the HS as well). Compare Matt 11:27 (spoken in the context of a condemnation on Capernaum, where he is now teaching): "no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

47-59, Murmuring about his offer

Though the Jews do not speak until v. 52, the Lord sets up their question by turning to the second object of their murmuring. His comments in 53-59 repeat almost verbatim many things that he says in 47-51.

Structure

The first paragraph has three parts.

1. It starts with a simple, literal statement.
2. Then it moves to the “bread of life” metaphor from the discussion with the multitude, including a reference to the manna, v.31. The key points of this metaphor are repeated twice, though the manna is only mentioned once.
3. Finally, he moves to an even stronger metaphor, the notion of his flesh as the bread.

This stronger metaphor greatly offends the Jews, leading to their second question. His response amplifies the flesh metaphor with an even more offensive reference to drinking his blood, before returning to the comparison with the manna. He never returns to the completely literal statement, nor does he repeat the interpretive “I am the bread of life / living bread” of 48 and 51a. Thus this section is an incomplete chiasm, with each panel introduced by “Verily, verily,” and centering on the Jews’ final question.

See handout for structure. We will work down the two together until we get to the stronger metaphor, where the differences require us to move sequentially.

47 Verily, verily.--This solemn introduction marks the change in subject, and helps invite comparison with the second panel after their question.

47, Unpaired Literal Statement

He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.--Here is a plain, literal statement of his message, comparable to v.40 at the end of his discussion with the multitudes. Physical bread conveys temporary, physical life. Belief on the Lord Jesus gives everlasting life.

By repeating the literal message, he gives them one last chance, before diving deeper into parable and metaphor. The purpose of his parabolic teaching was not to make truth clearer, but to hide it from scorers, Matt 13:10-13. the more resistant they are, the more obscure he makes the truth, so as not to cast it before swine (Matt 7:6). It is significant that this literal statement is not repeated in the second panel. By that point he has given up on them.

Mild Metaphor: Comparison with Manna

48, 51, I am the bread of life / living bread.--This is another interpretive help that is lacking in the second half. The only hint of it in the second half is the Lord’s claim to live “by the Father,” which we shall consider below.

The difference between the two versions is very slight. “Bread of life” is the broader term, indicating simply that the bread is associated with life without specifying how. In fact, it is “of life” in at least two ways. First, it is the Lord Jesus, who has life in himself (5:26, cf. 57b), and is

thus “living bread” (the more precise meaning of the second version). Second, this bread gives life to those who partake of it.

The repetition of this “I am” marks two statements about a heavenly bread that nourishes forever, the first embellished with a reference to the transitory value of the manna.

49, 58b, your fathers did eat manna ... and are dead.--Here is the ultimate answer to the people’s explicit question in v.31, a question that was no doubt also on the minds of the Jews. “Don’t be so confident in your heavenly bread. All those who consumed it are now dead.” In fact, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, they died in the wilderness. It not only couldn’t give eternal life, it couldn’t even sustain them long enough to get into the land of promise—a subtle warning to their descendants who continue in their practice of murmuring.

50, 51, 57, 58, come / came down from heaven, Living Father sent.--These four clauses all emphasize the origin of the bread, corresponding to the Lord’s heavenly authority. According to v.33, the two criteria for identifying the bread of God are its heavenly origin and the life it gives to the world, and here we have its heavenly origin reasserted.

Note two variations across the four instances.

- 50 uses the present tense in contrast with the past tenses in 51 and 58. Contrast particularly v.58, where otherwise the wording is identical. It is reminiscent of the present tense in 3:13, emphasizing the Lord’s deity and continuous access to heaven. The Father’s sending of him was not just a historical act at one point in time, but a continual authorization of his mission. Compare the later teaching that the HS proceeds (present tense) from the Father and the Son, 15:26. The implication is that the Father is continuously aware of and concerned with how they receive his son.
- v.57 makes the notion more specific by claiming that the Lord was sent by the living Father. As in ch. 5, he couples his audacious claim to divine authority with a sober recognition that he acts under the Father’s authority. He does not act arbitrarily or on his own initiative, but only in submission to the Father’s direction. This principle forms the basis for the means by which he gives us life. Because he is sent by the Father, he lives by the Father, and so we derive our life from him.

Eat and live.--The next set of correspondences all have to do with the promise that those who eat shall live. We have already seen multiple times that just as the bread represents the Lord Jesus, eating represents belief. Thus this four-fold statement is making the same point as 47b, “he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”

This is the real contrast with the manna. The Lord’s bread provides eternal life, not just temporary sustenance of a life that will end.

Strong Metaphor: Eat My Flesh (introduced)

51 The bread that I will give is my flesh.--Up to this point, the metaphor has permitted a gentle interpretation. Jesus is bread in the sense that he provides life. Eating is a picture of belief. But now the imagery takes a physical and violent turn. The Lord expressly defines the bread as his flesh, and says that he will “give” it “for the life of the world.” If we survey instances of giving flesh in the LXX, the picture is harsh:

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- Deuteronomy 28:55 So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates.
- 1 Samuel 17:44 And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.
- Ezekiel 32:5 And I will lay [give] thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height.

Giving flesh is a violent action, a scene of carnage and death. Yet he engages in this action willingly: “I will give.” And he does it in order to provide life for others.

52, Center: The Jews’ Question

This violent metaphor arrests his hearers.

How.--Their question suggests several levels.

- What is the mechanism of this giving? It is one thing for a conqueror to give the flesh of his victims to the birds and beasts, but quite another for someone to give his own flesh. Will he kill himself?
- How could such a thing be legitimate? The Law of Moses forbids murder, and the only flesh that can be eaten is that of clean animals—never human flesh. How could he consider doing such a thing?

Note that he spoke only of giving his flesh, not of anyone’s eating it. The Jews introduce this verb to the discussion of his flesh. The combination of “eat” and “flesh” in the OT does not simply mean “dine.” It is a much harsher expression, suggesting cannibalism:

- Lev. 26:29 And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.
- Psa. 27:2 When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.
- Eccl. 4:5 The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.
- Isa. 9:20 And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm:
- Isa 49:26 And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.
- Jer. 19:9 And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.

Their interpretation is unjustified. If they had been paying attention to the interplay of literal statement and metaphor in 35 and 40, they would realize that the appropriate action with the

spiritual food that the Lord is describing is coming and believing, not literal eating and drinking. But they are determined to find fault with his words.

Stroke.--The verb indicates angry contention. They were emotionally aroused, and apparently they found themselves in disagreement with one another. The point of this chapter is the progressive division among the people over Jesus, and this is the first of several explicit references to this division in John. See also 7:40-43; 9:16; 10:19. John is notable for identifying sympathetic figures among the Jews (Nicodemus, friendly pharisees in 9:16), and perhaps some of them were beginning to get the picture.

among themselves.--As with their first question (41-42), their discussion is among themselves, and not intended for the Lord's ears. But he who knows the hearts discerns their hypocrisy and responds to them.

53-58, Strong Metaphor: Eat My Flesh (developed)

The exposition of the metaphor repeats the two points made when the Lord introduced it, and adds a third. He does nothing to alleviate their objection to the harsh image of cannibalism, but only strengthens it.

Eat my flesh.--He picks up their extension of his claim. Contrast his directness with the political instinct to win over the adversaries and put a spin on everything. "You are offended by my reference to giving my flesh, and by the implication that you must eat it. Yes, you must eat my flesh." He varies the verb across the four repetitions of this theme.

- v.53 repeats their verb *esqiw*, which is the usual verb for eating.
- vv. 54, 56 use the somewhat stronger, coarser verb *trwgn*, often applied to animals—compare the distinction in German between "essen" and "fressen," or in English between "eat" and "devour."
- v.55 uses a verbal noun *brwsis*, translated "meat" but better rendered "eating." The corresponding verb appears in the NT only in 6:13, but it is common in the LXX, especially for sacred meals, such as eating of sacrifices. This correspondence is extremely important here. They thought the Lord was talking about cannibalism. In fact, he is looking forward to his role as sacrifice as prophesied in Isa 53:10. The guilt offering, like many of the others, was eaten, at least by the priests (Lev 7:6). One who eats the sacrifice participates in a communal meal with God, the one to whom the sacrifice has been offered. The Messiah comes to give a gift to God (in fact, two offerings—his flesh and his blood), and here he invites people to sit down at God's table.

Drink my blood.--This is the added element, and is very similar across the four repetitions. "Yes, you must eat my flesh—and what is more, you must drink my blood as well." Even if the Jews had succeeded in decoding the sacrificial reference in the requirement to eat Messiah's flesh, they would stumble on this, for eating the blood was explicitly forbidden (Lev 3:17;7:26; 17:12,14; 19:26; etc.). This prohibition marked a limit on the fellowship between believer and God in the Old Testament. People might share in the meat of the offering, but God reserved the blood for himself alone. Thus these shocking words actually mark the greater efficacy of our Lord's sacrifice compared with those of the OT. They could only atone—cover over sin. His would remove it completely, and bring the believer into true and unfettered fellowship with God.

Life.--These statements make the link with the promise of v.51 that he will give his flesh for the life of the world, and with the requirement of 6:33 that the true bread must give life. But they are the most varied references across the four repetitions of any of the three elements. Consider each in turn.

- 53, “ye have no life in you.” The Lord here recalls his claim of 5:26, that he and the Father have not just the derivative breath of life in themselves, but life itself. This sets God apart from the creature. Here he claims that the Jews do not have this self-contained life—but implies that those who eat his flesh and drink his blood do have it.
- 54 recalls the mixed figurative and literal statements in vv. 35, 40. The comparison with the fully literal statement in v.40 shows that eating and drinking are a picture of faith in Christ, not a literal statement in themselves referring to the Eucharist.
- In 55, it is reflected only in the adjective “indeed” (“true”), suggesting the superior effect of this food compared with ordinary food. The life that it offers is eternal, not temporary like the life sustained by ordinary food.
- 56 describes the effect of the food as a mutual indwelling of the believer and the Lord. “Dwelling” or “abiding” (Gk *menw*) is an important theme in John. John uses the word more often than any other Bible book (40x in the gospel, 24 in 1 John, 3 in 2 John). In terms of occurrences per verse, 1 John leads, followed by 2 John and the gospel. This is the first use of the verb to describe the relation of the believer abiding in Christ, and of Christ dwelling in the believer. For this reciprocal relation, compare
 - 15:4-5, Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, ye are the branches: **He that abideth in me, and I in him**, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.
 - 1 John 3:24, And he that keepeth his commandments **dwelleth in him, and he in him**. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.
 - 4:15-16, Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, **God dwelleth in him, and he in God**. ¹⁶ And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love **dwelleth in God, and God in him**.

What is the relation between this mutual indwelling and eternal life? Recall the events in the garden of Eden. God told Adam that if he disobeyed, he would die. Though physical death ensued, this was hardly the greatest consequence of his sin. He was cast out of the garden, separated from fellowship with God. Now the Lord restores that lost fellowship. Believer and Savior can dwell together, in conscious enjoyment of the fellowship that was interrupted by sin.

He repeats the complete set four times to hammer the point home, as though he were saying, “You heard me. This is what I said.” Given the intensity of the image and their initial reaction, it seems clear that he is trying, not to clarify the situation for them, but rather to obscure it and confirm them in their unbelief. Though harsh, this strategy is consistent with his policy in Matt 13:10-15.

59 in the synagogue, ... in Capernaum.--John wants us to understand that while the miracle with which this chapter began took place in the wilderness, the teaching itself was delivered in the appropriate setting for Jewish instruction. “In the synagogue” is literally “in synagogue,” as

though we were to say “in church” (Morris). Not only is this in a regular Jewish worship setting, but it is in the town he has chosen as his headquarters (2:12), the home of the nobleman whose son he healed (4:46). Here, if anywhere, we would expect the Messiah’s message to be received. Thus the rejection that he experiences is all the more telling. Westcott compares the events in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16ff). Luke suggests that Capernaum was initially more receptive to his teaching than Nazareth, but even there he ultimately was rejected, Luke 10:15. This sermon of John 6 may in fact be the turning point between Capernaum’s initial receptiveness and their ultimate rejection.

This outcome is an illustration of the common misalignment between religious institutions and true spiritual life. It has been said that going into a church doesn’t make you a Christian any more than going to a garage makes you a car. Sadly but truly, the institutions that owe the most to God’s revelation are often most hostile to it.

60-71, Offense and Withdrawal: Disciples and the Twelve

The distribution of titles shows how unbelief splits off the murmuring Jews (41, 52) from the multitude (22, 24) at large. The group that is left is called his disciples (60, 61, 66), but even that is not solidly for him. This section shows how the twelve are distinguished from the disciples (67, 70, 71), and even within them there is a division. Truly, he “came not to send peace, but a sword,” Matt 10:34.

60-66, Many of his disciples

The “disciples” were in focus in the first part of the chapter, during the feeding and the boat trip. Now they return, but in a less favorable light.

This is a hard saying.--There were some who were more favorably disposed toward the Lord than the Jews, yet even they are repulsed by the strong imagery that the Lord has used. Note that they cast blame on the revelation rather than assuming responsibility themselves for their lack of understanding. They complain that the saying is hard, when in fact the hardness is in their hearts. Cf. Heb 5:11, “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.”

heard ... hear.--Those who heard complain that they cannot hear. The word play highlights two different meanings of hearing: audible sensing and obedience. They had heard Jesus, but were unwilling to submit to his words. Contrast v.45. We may be regular in attendance on the teaching of God’s word, and may even commit great portions to heart, but if we do not obey, we show that the Spirit is not at work in our hearts.

61, His disciples murmured at it.--Like the Jews, these wavering disciples do not address the Lord directly, but murmur to one another. It is not wrong to have doubts and fears in the Christian life, but the true believer and the pretender differ in how they deal with them.

- The true believer will take them **to the Lord**, “casting all your care upon him,” 1 Pet 5:7, and will find that he is able to encourage and strengthen. We have a great example of this in the frequent pattern in the Psalms, in which the Psalmist recalls a time of trouble, remembers how he cried *privately* to the Lord, and now *publicly* gives thanks to the Lord in the congregation of the righteous: Psa 13, Psa 18, and especially Psa 22. The privacy

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of the complaint is seen in the contrast between David's outward warrior persona and the inward sense of weakness and need that he reveals in the Psalms.

- The pretender will complain **to those around him** and weaken their hands.

Let us resolve not to discourage God's people with murmuring, but to take all of our complaints to the Lord, and then share with others how he has delivered us.

Jesus knew in himself.--As with the Jews, so here the Lord does not need to hear their complaints. "All things are naked and opened unto" him, Heb 4:13; he "searcheth the reins and heart," Rev 2:23. This aspect of his divine power is particularly clear in John:

- 1:48, he knew Nathanael's heart before speaking with him.
- 2:24, he discerned the false faith of the miracle followers in Jerusalem.
- 5:42, he knows who has the love of God and who does not.

Ultimately, he brings us all to confess with Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things," 21:17; cf. 16:30.

62 and if ye shall see.--The Lord's retort shows his diagnosis of how they were offended. The sentence is grammatically incomplete. If we complete it, we would get something like, "If you are offended by X, how will you feel when you shall see ...?" What is the X?

It helps to note the tension between "son of man" and "ascend up where he was before." "Son of man" emphasizes the Lord's humanity. It seems incongruous that a man should claim to have been in heaven, and to anticipate ascending there.

The Lord called himself not only "son of man," but also "son of God" (5:25, and by frequent references to God as his Father). This is consistent with the people's desire to make him a king (6:15), for "son of God" is a coronation name (Psa 2). The oriental ideal for a king is that he should live forever (1 Kings 1:31 to David; Neh 2:3 to Artaxerxes; Dan 2:4; 3:9 to Nebuchadnezzar; 5:10 to Belshazzar; 6:6, 21 to Darius), and in fact he has been promising his people eternal life. How then can he die, offering his flesh and blood as a sacrifice?

So we might reconstruct the whole statement this way:

- If you are offended that the glorious son of God must be humbled to die as a sacrifice,
- how will you feel when the lowly son of Man ascends to where he was before?

If they have been offended with his **humiliation**, will they also be offended at his **exaltation**? They know the promise that the Messianic son of Man will be exalted to dominion in Dan 7:13. Are they ignorant that he must first be humbled to die according to Isa 53?

63 spirit ... flesh.--This verse can be understood in many different ways. Here is one way to unfold it.

1. The teaching has two halves: a contrast between spirit and flesh, and a characterization of the Lord's teaching.
2. The characterization draws on the contrast. The spirit quickens (gives life); the words are spirit and life.
3. I suggest that he presents the first as a general principle, almost a proverb, of which the second is an application. Let's examine each of these roles in more detail.

The **proverb** recognizes that the world is divided into two domains, or kingdoms: that of spirit and that of flesh. Ultimately all value resides in the spiritual. This is a very general principle that was widely recognized in antiquity. It lies behind Plato's notion of the ideal, for example. It is central to the biblical distinction between an eternal uncreated God, who is spirit, and the physical world that he created. Our Lord has already invoked it with Nicodemus in 3:6, contrasting the birth of the flesh with the birth of the spirit. The modern world denies this distinction, but it is central to biblical thought and values. If we focus our attention only on the physical, we will miss the whole story.

When he says that "the spirit quickens," it is likely that he is alluding to the creation story in Gen 2:7, where God "breathed into [Adam's] nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." "Breath" here is Heb. *nešimah*, Greek *πνοή*, while "spirit" is *ruach/pneuma*, but the Jews of the time understood that the "breath" was a result of God's "spirit." Philo (On the Creation, 46.135) says that Moses

asserts that the formation of the individual man, perceptible by the external senses is a composition of earthly substance, and divine spirit. For that the body was created by the Creator taking a lump of clay, and fashioning the human form out of it; but that the soul proceeds from no created thing at all, but from the Father and Ruler of all things. For when he uses the expression, "he breathed into," etc., he means nothing else than the divine spirit proceeding from that happy and blessed nature, sent to take up its habitation here on earth....

Compare also Paul's contrast in 1 Cor 15:45, "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." Man's breath *is* life; God's spirit *gives* life. Apart from the work of that divine spirit, the body is only lifeless clay.

Against this background, we should understand the Lord's first statement as generic and proverbial. "As we all know from Genesis, it is God's Spirit that gives life. The flesh by itself is just dead clay, and worthless. So in every domain, the earthly, fleshly component is of no value; one must seek the role of the spirit."

The **application** of this principle is to the words he has just spoken. These words are spirit; they give life. (The repetition of the concepts "spirit" and "life" shows that he is drawing directly on the proverb, and not changing to a different sense of "spirit," as some commentators assert: Calvin, "he now applies the word *spirit* in a different sense".) They are offended at the physical notion of eating his body. But we have seen from the comparison of vv. 35, 40, 54, that eating corresponds to coming and believing. The appropriate object for the verb "eat" is something physical and fleshly. The appropriate object for the verb "believe" is his word. Here he declares the word to have priority over the flesh, and belief over eating. Those who understand him to speak only on the physical level are dealing with worthless flesh. They must penetrate to the spiritual level and believe what he is saying.

64 But there are some of you that believe not.--The "you" are the disciples (cf. 60-61). Even among those who think of themselves as his disciples, some do not believe. They have made a choice to associate themselves with Jesus, but they have not appropriated the new life that he came to give.

This statement is remarkable both for the *fact* it sets forth and for the Lord's *attitude*.

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- The *fact* is that outward association does not guarantee inward appropriation. Going to church, associating with Christians, even thinking of oneself as a Christian does not mean that one is truly a believer. Israel in the wilderness had the mixed multitude (Exod 12:38; Num 11:4), as did those who returned from Babylon (Neh 13:3). The Lord warned that the tares would grow among the wheat (Matt 13:25), and John in his first epistle speaks of those who went out from the believers because they were not of them (1 John 2:19).
- The Lord's *attitude* is the opposite of what many ministers today exhibit. They seek to attract and retain as many people as possible. The Lord quite candidly challenges even those who are following him concerning the depth of their commitment. When a church member challenges a biblical truth or refuses to live according to the Scriptures, modern pastors are tempted to compromise the truth so that the doubter won't leave. The Lord directly challenges the doubters to consider their own spiritual state.

For Jesus knew.--He who can respond openly to those who murmur in secret (vv. 43, 53, 61), know the state of Nathanael's heart before he meets him (1:47), and tell the Samaritan woman of her sin (4:18) knows the true attitude of those who affiliate with him. This is another assertion of the truth of Heb 4:13. Within the disciples he can discern three groups:

- those who do believe
- those who do not believe
- among those, the one who would betray him.

The third category is John's first reference to the coming betrayal. It emphasizes just how far from him a "disciple" can actually be.

65 No man can come ... except it were given unto him.--As earlier (vv. 37, 39, 44-45), the Lord does not hesitate to tell people that their coming depended on God's initiative. Here he repeats this teaching to explain ("therefore") why it is that many who voluntarily associate with him, yet do not believe. Association with Christ depends on the individual, but true saving faith depends on God. This teaching seems harsh, but it removes every ground of pride and fleshly glory.

It is instructive to review the verbs describing what the Father does and what we do in salvation.

The Father's actions include

- *giving* believers to the Son, 37, 39, in accord with Psalm 2:8
- *drawing* believers, 44
- *teaching* them, 45
- *giving* them the ability to respond, 65.

Our response (the literal truth behind the figure of eating and drinking) is to

- *see* the Son, recognizing him as the Messiah, 40
- *come* to him, 35
- *believe* on him, 35, 40, 47

66 many of his disciples went back.--This teaching of God's sovereignty in salvation is deeply offensive to the flesh, and it led to many who thought of themselves as disciples distancing themselves from the Lord. If it had this result with them, we ought not to be surprised when people reject it today. And we must be careful not to compromise our message or water it down for the sake of attracting people—the Lord's example shows that it is a valuable doctrine precisely for determining who is really saved and who is not.

67-71, The Twelve

So far, we have heard of the multitude, the Jews, and the Disciples. At v.67, we encounter yet another term, the twelve. John refers to this group only four times (3x in this paragraph, and once in 20:24), far fewer than the synoptics. He uses it without introduction, suggesting that he expects his readers to know the synoptic history. Unlike the multitudes and disciples, who associated with Jesus of their own initiative, the twelve were chosen by him to help him in his ministry.

67 Will ye also go away?.--This group ought to be the most faithful, but he challenges even them.

This question guards us against two possible misunderstandings of God's sovereign call.

- It is not just those who think they are in control of their relation with Christ who are at risk of being rejected. Even those assigned to a work by the Lord may not be called. He can use and then discard "vessels of dishonor," 2 Tim 2:20. He gives even his hand-selected assistants the option of departing, along with the unbelieving "disciples."
- The call cannot be separated from the response. Those whom God draws, come to him. Those whom he teaches, learn and believe. Those to whom he gives life, enthusiastically grasp and cling to it. We cannot see the call, but we can see its results in the life of the believer—and without those results, there is no basis for claiming the call.

The rest of the paragraph shows that this invitation to depart is not purely rhetorical, by distinguishing two categories even within the Twelve.

- Peter (68-69) speaks for most with the eager response of a true believer.
- The Lord's reference to Judas (70-71) anticipates one who will in fact depart.

68-69, Peter will not go away

Peter expresses the faith of eleven of the disciples. They see no alternative to Jesus, because of what he *has* and who he *is*.

Lord, to whom shall we go?--Contrast the verb that describes the offended disciples, "went back" ("departed") with Peter's ("go to").

- The offended disciples were repelled by Christ. They "went back," departed, went away, without any destination specified. They were offended by the Lord's words, and felt that they could do very well without him.
- Peter has no such sense of personal adequacy. He is acutely aware of his need, and knows of nowhere else that it can be satisfied. Whether Christ's words offend him is not the question. He has no alternative.

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When you are ill, you must choose whether to go to the doctor or not. His medicines taste yucky; his surgery hurts. The departing disciples are offended by the discomfort of the treatment and neglect to treat their disease. Peter knows his illness and sees no alternative but to take the cure.

thou hast the words of eternal life.--Christ is unique first because of what he *has*: the words of eternal life. Peter's expression here is an acknowledgment of v.63. Peter understands that

- Christ's words are the spiritual reality lying behind his imagery of bread, flesh, and blood,
- they are not only about eternal life, but actually convey this life,
- eating and drinking are metaphors for the response of faith.

This is a good place to summarize the three levels at which the Lord describes what he has to offer people as the basis for their faith. These are correlated with his hearers.

- To the disciples, he offers his words (v.63), which is what Peter here treasures.
- To the multitudes, which includes both sympathetic and antagonistic people, he offers the metaphorical "bread of life," 35, but includes the literal teaching, v. 40.
- To the antagonistic Jews, he takes the metaphor further, and speaks of eating his flesh and drinking his blood (53-58).

It is important to note that the flesh/blood metaphor is not something he presents to his followers, but rather to his enemies. It is an instance of the parabolic blinding described in Matt 13, not at all a privileged explanation of the Eucharist intended for the faithful. Because it draws on sacrificial language, it does contain revelation about the Lord's sacrifice, which in turn is pictured in the Lord's Supper, but we ignore the very important distinction among the different audiences if we understand this text as an exposition of the Eucharist.

thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.--Christ is also unique because of who he *is*. Peter focuses on his office and the authority by which he holds it.

- He is "the Christ," the Messiah, the one promised throughout the OT. This is what Andrew first told him in 1:41. It is how the Lord identified himself to the woman at the well in 4:25,26. In feeding the multitude in the wilderness, he has shown himself to be the promised "prophet like Moses."
- He is "the Son of the living God." This is the point emphasized in the great chiasm of 5:19-30. He bears authority from God. Peter calls him "the living God" to emphasize that he is the source of the life that Peter craves, and that he has found through the "words of eternal life."

69 And we believe and are sure.--Literally, "believe and know." Note the *distinction* between the verbs, as well as their *order*.

- In contrast to common speech, "believe" does not mean simply to acknowledge the truth of something. Otherwise it would be redundant with "know." The metaphor of eating makes this clear. Eating is appropriation, taking essential nourishment into our bodies and trusting that it will strengthen us and not harm us. Belief is accepting the message and relying upon it for our eternal life.

- We might think that the order should be “know and believe.” How could someone trust in a message before knowing it to be true? But in spiritual matters, faith comes first, enabled by the drawing and giving of the Father, and then knowledge results. The Lord confirms this point in 11:40 (“if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God”) and 7:17 (“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”). 8:31-32 (“if ye continue in my word ... ye shall know the truth”)

So Peter is saying that having committed himself to the Lord, he enjoys full assurance that the Lord is who he claims to be.

70-71, Judas will go away

The true believer recognizes the soundness of Peter’s logic, but there are some, even among those who seem devoted to the Lord, who do not, and who will depart from him given the appropriate circumstances. Judas is such a one.

70 Jesus answered them.--Only Peter spoke, but he spoke in the name of them all (“to whom shall *we* go”), and the Lord responds to them as a group.

Have not I chosen you twelve.--Again John shows his knowledge of the calling episode in the synoptics, when the Lord set apart twelve to be with him in his earthly ministry.

one of you is a devil?--Better, “the devil,” “Satan.” Technical justification:

- *diabolos*, the word here translated “devil,” is the common LXX translation of *hassatan*, and elsewhere in the NT always refers to Satan (the KJV also translates *daimon* “demon” as “devil,” so we can’t use the English word as reliable guidance);
- lack of the article is explained by Colwell’s rule, just as in 1:1 “the Word was God.”

What does this mean? People often compare Mat 16:23 and parallels, where the Lord addresses Peter as Satan. Eph 2:2 warns us that Satan constantly exerts his influence over Adam’s children, and Peter shows how (at least before the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost) he may tempt even the saved. Judas shows the danger of yielding to this influence. He was constantly motivated by Satanic influence, 13:2, and ultimately possessed by him, 13:27.

Westcott suggests that *diaballein*, the verb behind *diabolos*, has the basic meaning of turning good into evil, and Judas was following the Lord only in order to pervert his teaching and influence for selfish purposes.

Why would the Lord choose one whom he knows to be diabolical as one of his disciples? To illustrate the distinction between outward association and inward dedication. Even in the synagogue of Capernaum, Jews can deny him; even in the church, those recognized as Christians can betray him. We must constantly be on our guard for the tares among the wheat, for those who, though among us, are not of us (1 John 2:19).

71 He spake of Judas Iscariot.--John adds this note. The Lord did not at this point reveal the identity of the betrayer, but simply warned the twelve not to become self-confident in their association with him.

John and the Synoptics

This paragraph (67-71) invites comparison with the description of Peter's confession in Matt 16:13-23.

Similarities:

- Peter confesses the Lord to be "the Christ, the son of the living God"
- Follows (Matt 16:5-12) on discussion of metaphorical bread ("leaven of Pharisees and Sadducees," motivated by feeding of the multitude, 16:9-10)
- The Lord warns of Satanic influence in one of his disciples (16:23, calls Peter "Satan")

The major distinction is that in Matthew, the *same* disciple both utters the confession and shows Satan's influence, while in John, they are different.