

### 23. Jesus Saw Many People Stop Following Him

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what it means to eat the flesh of Jesus and drink His blood. We saw that many of the Jews listening to Jesus had no understanding of spiritual things and so they had no idea what Jesus meant and they totally misinterpreted what Jesus said. In our topic today, we are going to see that many of the Jews in Galilee, stopped following Jesus.

Jesus had just told the Jews that those who eat His flesh and drink His blood would have eternal life. We see the response of many who claimed to be His disciples in John 6:60-62, “Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this*, said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can understand it?’ When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, ‘Does this offend you? *What* then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?’” We see that many of the people that were in the synagogue at Capernaum that day claimed to be disciples of Jesus. Later, Jesus would say in John 8:31, “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.’” Jesus said that those who are true disciples will abide in His Word.

Many of these who claimed to be disciples of Jesus said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?” Jesus actually used this statement to separate those who were true disciples from those who just claimed to be disciples. Here, we see that this group said that the statement of Jesus was a hard saying. The word translated “hard” means *harsh, rough or stiff*. This word is used in Jude 15, where we read, “‘To execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.’” We see that the ungodly speak harsh words against Jesus. Here, those who claimed to be disciples of Jesus claimed that His words were “harsh.”

They said that because his words were harsh, they could not understand the meaning of what Jesus was saying. Jesus knew the thoughts of these people and knew that they were complaining. As a result, Jesus asked them if what He had said offended them. The word translated “offended” means *to cause a person to begin to distrust and fall away or to cause a person to stumble*. Jesus used this same word when He said to His disciples in Matthew 26:31, as the disciples ate the Passover supper, “Then Jesus said to them, ‘All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: “I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”” In that case, the disciples forsook Him and fled. Here, we will see with these who claimed to be the disciples of Jesus most would turn from Him as a result of the message of Jesus about the fact that He is the bread of life.

Jesus also asked these people here what they would do if they saw the Son of Man ascend where He was before. This speaks both of the fact that Jesus had already existed before He came to this earth and also of the fact that He would return to heaven. These two things caused many that were there to think more about whether they would continue to follow Jesus because both facts pointed to the fact that Jesus is God. Jesus went on to say in John 6:63-65, “‘It is the Spirit who gives life;

the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, ‘Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.’” Jesus knew that many of those there that day did not believe that He was God.

Christ pointed out the fact that it is the Holy Spirit that gives life. Christ had told Nicodemus earlier in John 3:6, “‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’” In that verse, Jesus made it clear to Nicodemus that physical birth produces only physical life. A person must be born of the Holy Spirit to have spiritual life. Here, Jesus says the same thing to all those who were gathered to hear Him that day. He told them that physical life has no value for eternal life. Jesus also said that the words that He spoke were both spirit and life. These words had their source in the Holy Spirit because the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are One. These words told how to receive spiritual life because Jesus told them that day how to have eternal life.

Jesus knew that many of those there that day did not have a true belief. John 2:24-25 says, “But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men*, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.” Those verses at the very beginning of the public ministry of Jesus showed that He was God and knew the hearts of every person. In the same way, Jesus knew the heart of every person that heard Him here, in John 6. He knew those who believed and those who did not believe. He also knew the one that was there that day who would later betray Him.

Then, Jesus reminded those who were present that day what He had said earlier in His sermon. John 6:44 says, “‘No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.’” Now, Jesus told them the same thing in words that were a little different. Jesus said, “‘Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.’” Many of the people there had come to Jesus that day because Jesus had fed them the previous day. They were not coming to Him for spiritual life. Instead, they were coming to Him for more physical food. They were not being drawn to Jesus by the Father for spiritual life.

We see that the words of Jesus caused many people to make a choice that day. John 6:66-71 says, “‘From that *time* many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’ But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?’ He spoke of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.’” Here, see that many people made the choice that day that they would not follow Jesus any longer. In doing so, they showed that they did not have spiritual life.

When these people were all gone, Jesus turned to the twelve who were still with Him. Jesus then

asked them the question, “Do you also want to go away?” Here, we see that Jesus also gave the twelve the opportunity to follow the crowd of those who had just left. However, Peter spoke for eleven of the twelve who still remained. Peter began with a question, “Lord, to whom shall we go?” At least, Peter, Andrew, James and John had all known John the Baptist. John 1:37 says, “The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.” These two were Andrew and John. John the Baptist had said that Jesus was the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world. Then, Jesus had begun doing signs so that His disciples would believe. John 2:11 says, “This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.” Just the previous day, Jesus had given a sign by feeding five thousand men with the lunch of a boy. John 6:14 says, “Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.’”

Early that morning, Jesus had come walking to them on the water during a storm. Peter had even started to walk on the water to Jesus. When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, Matthew 14:32-33 says, “And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’” These men had recognized that Jesus came from God and that He had the words of eternal life. Eleven of those men knew that their hearts had been changed by Jesus. They had come to believe in Jesus. They had seen that Jesus is the Christ that had been promised throughout the Old Testament. John 1:12-13 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” They had believed and understood that Jesus was the Son of the living God and they had received Him. As a result, those eleven had received eternal life.

However, Jesus knew the hearts of all twelve. Jesus knew the heart of Judas Iscariot just as He knew the hearts of the other eleven. Jesus had even chosen Judas to be one of the twelve so that the Scripture could be fulfilled. Jesus knew the heart of Judas Iscariot but He did not tell the eleven that He was referring to Judas. This is shown by what is said in Matthew 26:20-22. There we read, “When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they were eating, He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.’ And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, ‘Lord, is it I?’” Each one of the eleven wondered if he could be the one who would do such a thing. None of the others even suspected Judas. Jesus described the character of Judas that day even though He did not name him. Jesus said that one of them had a devil. The word translated “devil” means *the false accuser or the slanderer* and is usually used to refer to Satan. Jesus clearly understood the character of Judas.

We have seen that there were many people who had followed Jesus just for the earthly benefits that they could receive. They did not have true belief and quickly chose to stop following Him once they saw that He was not going to give them more physical food. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that there are many people with the same heart attitudes today. They will claim to follow Jesus for a time because they are seeking earthly benefits. However, they do not have true belief. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children discern that many do not have true belief.