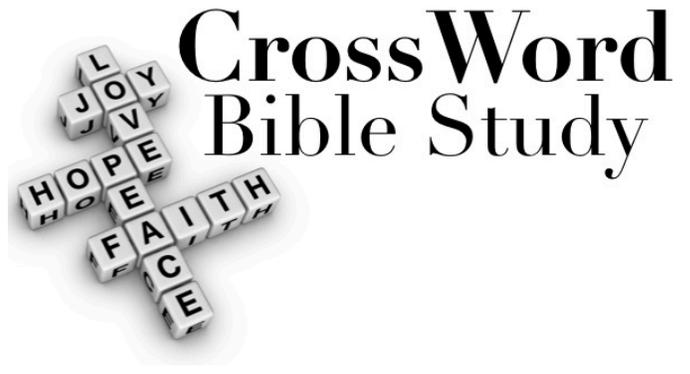




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St. John's Gospel

Packet #9

Review of: John 6:22-71

Preparation for: John 7:1-52

Lecture Date: Dec. 5, 2018

REVIEW OF LECTURE ON JOHN 6:22-71

Introduction

This is the second part of chapter 6, which is the longest chapter in John's Gospel. Last week we discussed the first 21 verses which covered Jesus' fourth and fifth signs (miracles): the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes and Jesus Walking on Water. This week we are covering Jesus' famous Bread of Life discourse.

In verses 22-71 St. John emphasizes that the doctrine of Jesus' Real Presence in the sacrament of the Eucharist is intimately bound up in the reality of the Incarnation. Since the very beginning this teaching has been hard for some people to accept, and many turn away from Jesus because of it. It is hard teachings like this that will eventually cost Jesus His life.

The Son of Man

When morning comes the crowd finds that Jesus isn't with them anymore and sets out to find Him. The day before they were fed by Jesus, but that was yesterday, and they are hungry again now. They come to Capernaum confused by how Jesus got there (not knowing he had walked on water the night before), but Jesus, knowing their hearts, knew that they didn't really care about Him; they just wanted more food. So Jesus warns them, "Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him God the Father has set His seal" (John 6:27).

In calling himself “the Son of Man” Jesus is referring to the prophecies of Ezekiel, who was called the “Son of Man” by God. In this, Jesus is describing Himself as a prophet sent to do the will of God. At the same time, Jesus is claiming to be the fulfillment of the prophecy found in Daniel chapter 7: “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14).

The Seal

Jesus drives the point home in saying that “God the Father has set His seal” on the Son of Man (John 6:27). In Jesus’ day, seals were a means of identifying ownership and establishing authenticity. This imagery can be found in other places in the New Testament, especially in the Revelation to John, where in chapter 7 the servants of God are marked on their foreheads with the “seal of the living God” (Rev 7:1-8). Jesus is saying that He comes from God the Father and has His seal of approval.

The Scandal of Grace

Chapter 6 contains three big scandals. The first one occurred in John 6:15, when the people, misunderstanding who Jesus really is, struggled to make Him their earthly king rather than actually believe in His words. The second scandal begins in verses 28-29. The people want to know what it takes to be saved. They were stuck in a mindset that salvation is attainable through good works alone. Their whole belief system had developed into a complicated system of rules on how to maintain cleanliness and not break the law, so imagine their shock when Jesus tells them that the only thing they need to do is to believe in Him.

The scandal here is that salvation is entirely dependent on God’s grace which comes through belief in his Son, Jesus Christ. Human pride refuses to accept that there is nothing a person can do to achieve their own salvation. People wish to make themselves equal with God, having a 50/50 relationship, rather than being recipients of the free gift of grace.

The Bread of Life

The crowd, getting increasingly bewildered, starts asking for a sign, forgetting the great miracle of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes which happened only

yesterday. St. John records them as beginning to complain, or grumble, amongst themselves, which should remind the reader of the Israelites in the Old Testament who complained amongst themselves against Moses and God when they were in the wilderness.

The Jews' point of contention was that it seemed like Jesus couldn't be bothered with their concerns. In fact, He seemed not to care what they thought of the statements He was making, namely, that He is the "bread of life" (6:35), that He came "down from heaven" (6:38), and that the bread He will give for the life of the world is His flesh" (6:51). In these three statements Jesus is saying that (1) He is greater than Moses because the bread He gives will satisfy eternally, (2) despite having earthly parents He is actually divine because He has come down from heaven, and (3) Jesus would have to die for them, and only then would they be saved.

The Scandal of the Eucharist

Jesus has just said that He came down from heaven, thereby making the claim that He is divine and sent from God the Father. This has served to sufficiently shock the Jews, but He takes it a step further in claiming, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day" (6:53-54).

Compare John 6:52-59 with Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, and Luke 22:14-23. The Gospel according to John does not record the Institution of the Lord's Supper, frankly, because the other three Gospels had already recorded it. The narrative found in John 6 is intended to complement what was already believed and practiced throughout the 1st Century Church. This passage has long confounded Christians in later centuries who find it completely normal that God took on human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ so that He might dwell with His people, yet find it absurd that Jesus Christ might take on the form of bread and wine in the Eucharist so that He might remain with His people for all time. The true meaning of what St. John is trying to say here can be gleaned by the reaction of the crowd to Jesus' words. Jesus meant what He said, and it was up to them to either take it or leave it. We read that the vast majority of them decide to leave it.

The Crowd Walks Away

When the crowd does leave in confusion and disgust, Jesus does not turn to His apostles and explain to them the real meaning behind His words; rather, He challenges them to either accept what He's said, or they can leave too. Peter correctly answers,

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68-69).

Questions on John 6:22-71

Read Notes and References again and answer questions 1-4.

1. What is the implication of Jesus referring to Himself as the Son of Man? What does it mean that God the Father has set His seal on Jesus (see Hebrews 1:3)?
2. How does the Jews' complaining against Jesus relate to the complaining of their ancestors in the desert (see Exodus 16:2-8)? Who are the Jews rejecting when they complain against Jesus?
3. Jesus tells the crowd that the bread of life He can give them to live forever is actually His flesh. What is their reaction? How does Jesus respond?
4. How do you prepare yourself to receive Jesus in the sacrament of the Eucharist? What does the Church prescribe as requirements for receiving the Eucharist?

Preparation for John 7:1-52

Read Deuteronomy 16:13-17, Deuteronomy 10:16 and Leviticus 23:33-36.

Memory verse for the week ahead

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” (John 7:37-38)

My Time Has Not Yet Come

John 7:1-13

1. What occasion does the Jewish Feast of Booths celebrate (see Deuteronomy 16:13-17)?
2. Why didn't Jesus take his brothers' advice and go immediately to the feast?
3. When and how did Jesus go up to the feast?

Jesus Speaks Openly

John 7:14-36

4. What do the Jewish leaders mean when they say: "How does this man have such learning, when he has never been taught?" What is the source of Jesus' authoritative teaching?
5. Read Deuteronomy 10:16. How did Jesus compare circumcision on the Sabbath with His healing of the lame man?
6. What does Jesus mean in John 7:33 when he says: "I will be with you a little while longer, and then I am going to him who sent me"?

Rivers of Living Water

John 7:37-44

7. Read Leviticus 23:33-36. To the Jews, what was the significance of the last day of the Feast of Booths?
8. When there is confusion and disagreement in the crowd, what is it over? How do we reconcile this disagreement as Christians?

Nicodemus Stands Up for Jesus

John 7:45-53

9. Jesus' own disciples struggled to believe that He was the Son of God. Recall times you've struggled to believe in Jesus and to trust in His divinity. What specific things did you do to persevere in your faith?
10. How does Jesus' public teaching on the last great day of the Feast of Booths relate to the night conversation He had with Nicodemus (refer back to John 3:1-15)?