

Many of Christ's disciples had begun to question his teaching. Their objections were centered on two of his proclamations concerning his saving work. He had declared that he was the "bread" that had come down from heaven and that we must feast upon him in order to have eternal life. And he had also insisted on the necessity of an intervention, a sovereign work of God on behalf of sinners, if they were to be delivered from sin and its consequence.

The claim that sinners must feed on Christ caused the initial discontent it would seem, but things would not end there. The Lord had already told them that, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out." (6:37) This was a reference to the eternal work of the Father on behalf of his people whom he foreknew. They were, in eternity, given to the Son in a redeeming covenant. And everyone of them would be saved without exception. Man centered "ways" of salvation are full of uncertainties. But God's way of salvation is not. The Father will honor his word to his Son. All that He gave to the Son will come to him. This is a great encouragement to those who desire to evangelize the lost.

The Lord asked them if they had taken offense at his teaching concerning his body and blood. He now would clarify what he meant by feeding on him, and he would reassert the truth of God's sovereign work in salvation. That he was not speaking in a literal way about his body and blood becoming our life and nourishment, is made clear it that he asked them, "Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." (6:62-63)

The Lord would die in the place of his people on the cross. He would be raised on the first day and would soon thereafter ascend into heaven. This would prove that he was the righteous Son of God. This would prove that he alone held the power of

salvation. And the Holy Spirit, by the word of God, would bring Christ and life to the objects of his love.

“But there are some of you who do not believe,” he told them. He knew this because he knew not only who did not believe, but also who would betray him. And then the Lord repeated his teaching about the necessity of the Father’s work on behalf of those who are saved. “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” (6:65)

This clear affirmation of our need for the Father’s permission even to come to Christ for salvation was the final blow. How they must have resented this teaching! Were they not the children of God by heritage? Were they not far more righteous than the nations, the Gentiles? Were they not scrupulous in keeping the letter of the law. If anyone deserved heaven, surely it would have been them.

And now this upstart Rabbi had dared to introduce a teaching that took salvation completely out of their hands, and placed it in the hands of God alone. It was at this point that many of his disciples forsook him. They went home. They had followed the Lord and listened to his teaching for a time. No doubt much that they heard was received with joy. But this was too much. Jesus of Nazareth had undercut their world view. He had to be rejected.

The Lord asked the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” It was Peter who answered for them. He told the Lord that they had no other place to go. It was Jesus who had the words of eternal life. They had come to believe in him. They had professed him as the “Holy One of God.” They were certain that he was the promised Messiah. However deficient their understanding of his person and work was, they believed him to be the Savior. All of them save one. Even among the Twelve, there was an imposter, Judas Iscariot, who did not believe with saving faith.

