



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 6:60-71 Commentary New International Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

(John 6:60) On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

Having studied the previous verses, we can see why those who followed Jesus did not and could not understand all Jesus meant, and even if they had understood they still might have quit following Him. Some people quit doing something when things get difficult, while others can see enough value in what they have learned thus far to persevere until they know the value or lack of value in what they are learning. It was once said of a certain philosopher, “It would take a lifetime to understand him, and it would not be worth it.” By the grace of God, Jesus can be understood, though not exhaustively, and understood well enough to receive Him as the Giver of eternal life—it is worth the effort to study and learn more about Jesus throughout one's lifetime, and God's children will do so forever.

(John 6:61) Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you?”

John emphasized and illustrated in his gospel that Jesus knew what people thought. He knew in advance the result of His teachings and discussions with those who came to Him. Jesus knew that He sometimes had to teach in figurative language because if He had not done so it could have led to His death before He finished teaching what He came to teach. He knew He could later explain His true meaning within His figurative language to His disciples for them to teach the full meaning after His resurrection. He knew that He would lose a great deal of popular support if He continued teaching the truth as He did, but during the subsequent centuries the Holy Spirit has helped believers come to understand His teachings and live according to them. Jesus was not only striving to teach the crowds around Him but generation after generation after them through His followers as they taught and interpreted the Bible and His words. Jesus did not come to be the most popular rabbi of His time. Jesus came to teach the truth, as difficult as the truth might be to understand without further study, and to lead people to believe in Him as the Savior of the world that they might receive eternal life.

(John 6:62) Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!

In order for Jesus to fulfill and make possible what He told people in the preceding verses, He had to die a sacrificial death on the cross, rise from the dead, ascend into heaven, and give the Holy Spirit to those who entrusted their lives to Him. At this moment during His ministry, He could not explain all this to His disciples or to the crowds. His disciples would need to keep following Him to learn these facts and, following His crucifixion, death, and burial, they would need to experience the fulfillment of His teachings about His rising again on Resurrection Sunday and afterwards. Those who obeyed and followed Jesus did eventually see Him ascend where He was before. We read in Luke 24:50-52, “Then Jesus led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.” Though His disciples did not understand His words at that time, after more experience with Jesus, they would and did—so can we with study.

(John 6:63) The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.

The flesh cannot give life; it must have life or nourishment given to it; therefore, the flesh is useless regarding trying to live on flesh alone or in trying to receive and enjoy eternal life now and forever through the flesh. In the first use of spirit in this verse (lowercase “spirit” in KJV and NRSV — uppercase “Spirit” in NASB and NIV) in the words “the spirit that gives life,” we know that God is the source of all life and only God has life in and of himself (that includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). God does not depend on anyone or anything outside God’s eternal nature to exist and have life. The spirit within life or within flesh depends on the Spirit; that is, God, and there can be no life in the flesh if there is no spirit given and sustained by God. In the second use of spirit in this verse (lowercase “spirit” in KJV, NASB, and NRSV — uppercase “Spirit” in NIV), we learn that Jesus’ words give spiritual and eternal life. Apart from receiving Jesus and His words into one’s life, into one’s heart and mind, it is impossible to have spiritual and eternal life. Jesus came in human flesh to teach the words His Father gave Him. He also suffered, died, and rose again in human flesh, but His words give spirit and life to those who believe in Him. To eat His flesh is to eat or take into oneself His words and believe them.

(John 6:64) Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.

As the Son of God, Jesus had divine foreknowledge. Nothing ever caught Jesus by surprise; although it is surprising that despite all Jesus’ signs and teaching some simply would not believe in Him as a person sent from God. Jesus chose the twelve knowing who would betray Him and knowing the Scripture that foretold one of His followers would betray Him. In Psalms 41:9, we read, “Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me.”

(John 6:65) He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.”

Those who come to Jesus do so because the Father has made their coming to Jesus possible. The Father has removed roadblocks and stumbling stones and granted understanding, enough understanding, for someone to go to Jesus and keep learning from Jesus so they might believe Jesus and believe He is the Savior of the world. With deep humility instead of arrogance and pride, the followers of Jesus know that they trust in Christ as Lord and Savior because of what God the Father through the Holy Spirit has done in their hearts and minds—Jesus’ words and the Spirit have given them life and they are children of God.

(John 6:66) From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

Because of Jesus’ teaching about himself, insisting that people must remain in or with Him to receive eternal life, because Jesus said God the Father must draw to Him those who came to Him, and because the Father (for reasons known to Him) did not do the necessary work in the lives of those who refused to believe in Jesus, many stopped listening to Jesus’ teaching. Knowing these facts, Jesus never tried to “scare” “threaten,” or “argue” someone into following Him. Jesus told people the truth and left the results with His Father.

(John 6:67) “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

Jesus asked the twelve if they were going to follow the crowd and leave Him too. He asked this to test them; to enable them to test themselves or examine their reasons for following Jesus and discover together the depth of their commitment and intentions toward Him, for He knew their hearts. The question is a good one for all believers to ask themselves. When questions and difficulties arise, will we follow the crowd that no longer believes in Jesus? Will we keep believing and reading the Bible? Will we keep believing what the Bible teaches about Jesus and keep following the Jesus of the Bible?

(John 6:68) Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Peter's confession here is similar to his confession to Jesus in Matthew 16:16, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Peter knew the alternatives to Jesus: he had heard the teachings of John the Baptist, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees. He had heard Jesus open up the true meaning of the Bible to His disciples. There were none like Jesus. Furthermore, even though Peter did not understand all Jesus taught, he had heard and seen enough from Jesus to know that Jesus' words gave eternal life. As Jesus explained in John 6:65 and elsewhere, the Father had revealed Jesus to Peter, Peter had a foretaste of eternal life, Peter knew Jesus' words were spirit and life, and the Father had drawn Peter to Jesus.

(John 6:69) We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

The relationship of those who continued with Jesus began with Jesus calling them to follow Him, and they came to **believe** He was the Messiah. As they followed Jesus, they saw the signs of Jesus and based on what they saw and understood of Jesus' teachings, they came to **believe** Jesus and **accept** Jesus as more than the Messiah, and as the Person Jesus said He was. Given more time to hear Jesus teach and with the help of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, they came to **know** that Jesus is "the Holy One of God." The title "Holy One" in the Old Testament was reserved for God, and no doubt the Father through the Holy Spirit revealed to Peter that this title belonged to Jesus as the Son of God. We read these words of Jesus to Peter in Matthew 16:17, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven." In the Old Testament, "Holy One" is a title used for the LORD. In Isaiah 43:15, God said to the prophet Isaiah, "I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King." In Acts 2:27, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter applied a Psalm to Jesus' death and resurrection, saying, "For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption" (Jesus' body did not decay). During Job's suffering, in Job 6:10, Job declared, "This would be my consolation; I would even exult in unrelenting pain; for I have not denied the words of the Holy One." In the Book of Acts, Jesus' disciples exemplified the truth of Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."

(John 6:70) Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!”

Jesus did not deny, but accepted, Peter’s confession. Jesus added that He had chosen the twelve, and when He did He knew that one of the twelve was a devil (an evil one), who would be His accuser and betrayer. Jesus affirmed that He had not made a mistake in judging Judas’ character. When Judas later betrayed Jesus, He did not want anyone to think that He had made a mistake in judgment, so Jesus told them in advance—Jesus chose a betrayer to fulfill Scripture. The context of Jesus’ teaching affirms that Jesus talked about eating His flesh and drinking His blood with relation to His coming death for the forgiveness of sins, a teaching Judas spurned.

(John 6:71) (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

As chapter six concludes, John tells his readers the name of the disciple who would betray Jesus. Judas’ father’s name was Simon, and Iscariot means either he was a man from Kerioth located in Moab or means assassin. He was the only one of the twelve disciples who was not Galilean. Judas was the treasurer for the twelve and he stole money from their common purse. He loved money instead of God; thus, his betrayal of Jesus for money was consistent with his moral character as a thief.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What are some things we can do when we find it difficult to understand some teachings in the Bible?
2. When Jesus talked about His ascending to where He was before, why do you think He did not at the same time tell His listeners all about how and where He descended?
3. What are Jesus’ spoken words?
4. What did Jesus know about those who heard Him speak?

5. Why do you think Jesus asked His disciples, “Do you also wish to go away?”

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