

Sent: Thursday, January 22, 2015 12:32 AM

Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study

Last nite we addressed Jesus' discourse on the "Bread of Life"--Lesson #15, covering John 6:22-71. This followed last week's lesson on Jesus' "feeding of the 5,000, and then "walking on the water." In fact, the discourse took place the "next day," according to John (John 6:1). Its timing was perfect--just as God's timing always is! The feeding of the 5,000 clearly sets the stage for Jesus' "ultimate revelation" to the crowd--as well for the disciples (and for us!). And the "walking on the water" episode stealthily prepared the disciples for Jesus' strong and "difficult" words which were to follow! Jesus' discourse represented, in essence, His "coming out" declaration--and it took place in the synagogue in Capernaum, not far from the very place where He was "born" into this world, and where He spent the first 30 or years of His life!

The crowd that "tracked Him down" in Capernaum was looking for more displays of Jesus' power to heal sick, satisfy the hungry, and generally provide for the physical needs of the people. When Jesus said they simply needed to "believe in Him whom the Father (His Father!) has sent," they asked for a "sign" (of all things!), that they might "see and believe!" And, probably thinking back on the feeding of the 5,000, they noted how "their fathers" had eaten "manna" in the wilderness--and seemed to imply that Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 was "small," by comparison!

They had no idea what they were saying, or about to hear! Jesus said it was not Moses but God (His Father!) who had provided the bread in the wilderness and it had only sustained the children of Israel for just another day (for 40 years of course!), but that they all had eventually died! And that the bread that was now "coming down out of heaven" (speaking of Himself) would give "life to the world!"

But He really shocked them all when He said: "I AM the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst!" But He didn't stop there! He went on to declare that "everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him (speaking of Himself!) would have eternal life, and that He Himself! would raise him up on the last day!" But there was more! He said that He was the "living bread that came down out of heaven and that the "bread that He would give for the life of the world" was "His flesh!" Wow!

(Just as one needs to take and eat bread to get nourished physically, one also needs to believe and receive Jesus to gain eternal life! Jesus is to soul what bread is to the body!)

But it didn't even stop there! He said that "unless they ate His flesh and drank His blood," they would "not have life in themselves"--and He repeated that same claim a couple of more times! What in the world was He saying, many of His listeners were wondering! Wasn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph??? The people there thought they knew who He was!

(As we discussed last nite, Jesus was obviously speaking metaphorically about His upcoming death on the cross, where He would give His life, and shed His blood as the "supreme sacrifice" for the remission of sin. He gave Himself as the "bread of life," but added "blood" to provide "atonement" and "redemption"--a ransom for sin! He was the "Lamb of God," as John the Baptist

prophesied, who came to take away the sin of the world. But nobody at this point, including His disciples, could grasp it!)

Well, John says that, as a result, "many of His disciples" (not including the 12, presumably!) started drifting off and, John writes, "were not walking with Him anymore!" The 12 disciples themselves were confused and "grumbling"--and Jesus, noting their reaction, asked whether His words were "causing them to stumble..." and how they might respond if (when!) they saw "the Son of Man ascending to where He was before" (picturing His coming resurrection and ascension, following the crucifixion--although not understood yet by them)!

(*The idea of "stumbling" reminds us of the words of the Apostle Paul, in I Cor. 1, about how the "cross"--the whole idea of Jesus "shedding His blood for the remission of sin--was, to the Jews, a "stumbling block" and, to the Gentiles, "foolishness!" But to "those who are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.")

When Jesus asked Peter whether he too would "go away," he responded as one who had just been rescued from a terrible storm on the Sea of Galilee: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!" Whew!

Well, the disciples would someday be able to put it all together--but it would take awhile! Imagine the scene, almost a year later, as recorded by Matthew (26:26-28), when, on the night of the Passover, Jesus would gather His disciples together, "in the upper room"--just before He would be crucified--and "institute the Lord's Supper!" Matthew writes that "while they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body!" And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the Covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." Get the picture?

And, as you all know, it became a "sacrament" of the church, as taught by the Apostle Paul, in I Cor. 11:23-28--to "do this in remembrance of" Him--for what He accomplished "once and for all" when He gave His life as a ransom for sin!

Well, there's more to this text than we could reasonably cover in one lesson, but here's some additional "food for thought:"

1--Jesus, in this passage, is obviously "revealing, foretelling, unveiling (you pick the term!) a lot about His upcoming death on the cross--as well as His resurrection and ascension--things too difficult for His listeners, at this point, to fully understand. But it would all come together after He ascends up into heaven and the church age--under the "new covenant"--would emerge!

2--The "cross of Christ" continues to be a "stumbling block," and "foolishness" to many in our world today--but has been, and is, and forever will be the very "center-piece" of the Christian worldview, as Jesse noted in His sermon this past Sunday!

3--Jesus came down from heaven, not to please the crowd, but to "do the will of the Father"--which meant giving His life as the "ransom for sin" and, in the process, to experience the "full wrath of God upon Him," for us (again as noted by Jesse in Sunday's sermon)!

4--There's nothing we can do to "work for," or "earn," salvation and eternal life! But we already know that, right?

5--Jesus twice in this text said that "no man can come to Him unless the Father draws him"--and yet, that "all the Father gives Him will come to Him...and that the one who comes to Him will in no wise be cast out!" And that's got to be very encouraging to all of us, especially for those caught up on the doctrine of election, and predestination, etc.

6--It's never been easy to follow Jesus! And that's something we can probably all identify with!

Well, I hope you were challenged, as I was, with this passage! And I hope we all better understand and appreciate what Jesus did for us by coming down from heaven to give His life for us! And maybe, having studied this passage, we'll be better equipped to share the story with others who struggle with the message--and some of the words that Jesus Himself spoke! And maybe what we've learned may even have some effect on the way we approach and celebrate the Lord's supper!

Well (my last well!), this lesson certainly revealed a lot about the presentation, and "revelation" by Jesus Himself, as recorded by John, of who He was and is, and what He came to do, and has done, and continues to do for those of us who choose to follow Him! As we move into Lesson #16, we'll continue to see an "escalating conflict" between Jesus and the Jewish hierarchy--and we'll become even more aware of the challenge involved in following Him!

Thanks again, men, for your support, including the way you helped in "feeding the multitude" of MOBsters in our session last nite! Special thanks to Bob P. who always "sets the scene" for (and cleans up after!) our gathering! And also to Paul and Scott who made it possible for us to see the "bread of life" story dramatized through the lens of a great video production!

Have a great week, men!

Lowell