

GOSPEL OF JOHN 6:60-71

⁶⁰Many of His disciples, therefore, after they heard *this*, said, “Hard is this saying; who is able to hear it?”

- By verse 66, we are told many of the disciples left him and went back to their lives

“These are the difficult and hard-to-understand things of faith. Many could not endure this trial; they were scandalized, lapsed in their faith, and departed...God then, cannot be comprehended by rational thought, God is experienced only by the heart as a reality within us and around us. But for us to know God and His work, we must believe, we must bow (become humble) and obey – and here is the difficulty. Not to know in order to believe, but rather to believe in order to know! Faith demand humility, otherwise the teaching remains difficult and we remain on the level of our presumably infallible reason. (Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos).”

⁶¹But Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples were murmuring about this, said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶²“*What if then you should see the Son of Man ascending where He was before?*

“Flesh, in itself, is not life-giving; it is so only when vivified by the Spirit and received as the flesh (and blood) of the Son of Man. ‘Ascending to where he was before’ would thus mean receiving this life-giving flesh and blood not simply as a ‘medicine of immortality’ (St. Ignatius) but as *that which is sacrificed*, offered, ‘for the life of the world’ (6:51) and as that which brings recipients to share in the life-giving Passion so that they too will be ‘raised up on the last day’ that is, through their death and conformity with Christ...this is in fact how the Eucharist was understood in the early centuries in an immediate and dramatic manner (my martyrdom).” (Fr. Behr, *The Paschal Gospel of John*).”

⁶³“It is the spirit that makes alive; the flesh profits nothing. The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

Saint Chrysostom: “All these things are carnal, when it was needful to have understood it mystically and spiritually....‘The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life,’ that is, they are divine and spiritual, not having anything carnal, nor following the order of nature, but are free from such necessity, and are set above the laws set down for this world...But what is ‘understanding carnally’? It is looking merely to what is before our eyes, without imagining anything beyond. This is understanding carnally. But we must not judge thus by sight, but must look into all mysteries with the eyes within. This is seeing spiritually.”

“In our Church, life is the presence of the grace of the Holy Spirit. Without the awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit, the flesh, the perceptible elements of our worship, do not help us...Let us not get lost in rationalistic examination of words and visible actions. Let us not separate the Spirit from the perceptible things because these go together. The spiritual things are given to us through the visible things because we are also material.” (Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos)

⁶⁴“But there are some of you who believe not.” For Jesus knows from *the beginning* who they are who believe not, and who is the *one* who shall deliver Him up.

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⁶⁵And He was saying, “Therefore, I have told you, that no one is able to come to Me, except it be given to him from My Father.” ⁶⁶From this time on, many out of His disciples went away to the things left behind, and no longer walked about with Him.

Saint Chrysostom: “Well did the evangelist say, not that they ‘departed,’ but that they ‘went away to the things left behind’ (ἀπῆλθον εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω), declaring that they cut themselves off from any increase in virtue, and that by separating themselves they lost the faith which they had of old. But this did not happen to the twelve.”

“...they wanted the faith to agree with their own rational reasoning... But faith means to understand that your existence is not based upon your own knowledge and your own power, but in the love and the providence of the God of creation. Faith is abandonment of every self-confidence, self-sufficiency, and autonomy. The believer makes an absolute surrender to the Logos...” (Bp. Gerasimos)

⁶⁷Then said Jesus to the twelve, “You do not also wish to go away, do you?” ⁶⁸Then Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have *the* words of eternal life; ⁶⁹“and we have believed and have come to know that You are the Christ, the Son of God, the living *One*.”

[Jn. 6:69.] The force of the verbs is, “We have come to believe and have come to know. The use of this tense indicates that a past event that is now completed has a continuing effect. Thus, literally, Peter is saying, “We have come to believe and still believe and we have come to know and still know.” (Orthodox New Testament Note)

Theophylact: “God gives to all, and some use the gift well and guard it, thus manifesting the grace of God. Others having received the gift, discard it, so that it appears they had received nothing... He makes them responsible for the decision to follow Him or not. He wants them to follow Him, not out of shame, but in anticipation of the grace they will receive by doing so.”

⁷⁰Jesus answered them, “I chose you twelve for Myself, did I not? And one of you is a devil.” ⁷¹Now He was speaking of Judas Iscariote, Simon’s *son*, for this one was about to deliver Him up, being one of the twelve.

“When John, writes the words *one of the twelve...one of you is the devil* (a slanderer, the devil, the chief slanderer), he is trembling with agonizing emotion, but still he writes it down. The danger of faith is great even for the believers. (Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos)

Theophylact: “This reminds us that it is not God’s way to compel us to virtue either by force or by necessity. When He chooses us, He does not restrict our free will. He does not force us to be good, even when we are inclined to do evil. Instead, He earnestly invites us to help ourselves to the good things which in His Kindness He has spread out before us. Our salvation depends upon our free choice.”