

Christ makes clear in John's Gospel that He has come down that we might receive by faith the eternal life which He promises lost sinners. All through this Gospel there is the stated goal that, "we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing might have life in His name." (John 20:31) May these notes teach us the wealth that lies behind this promise of eternal life.

Mon/Tues: Read John 6 vs. 27, 33, 35, 39-40, 47-48 & 49-54

Bread of Everlasting Life

Today's verses are just a few of the many references to the "eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ" which fill *just this one chapter*, John 6. Christ declares that the reason He came down from Heaven is so that He could give His life to the world (John 6:33). Only by faith in Him as the "living Bread" can any sinner be "raised up at the Last Day," another important description of eternal life. Christ declares here that He is able to "raise up" those who believe on the Last Day of Judgment, saving them from the eternal death and judgment due their sins.

But here is the nub of offense which the crowd at the synagogue at Capernaum takes towards Jesus (John 6:42). They reject Christ's embassy from Heaven and will not bow the knee to Him as Lord, because He claims to have been sent from Heaven's throne to accomplish the Heavenly Father's will. They dismiss Him as just another revolutionary prophet from the sticks, doomed to fall like all the other peasant leaders before Him. Because He refuses to take up against the Romans the scepter of war-like king David (see John 6:15 where they try to force Him *to be that kind of king*) they will not respect His words from Heaven. They are not interested in the God of Heaven or His Son *if He won't give them Heaven on earth and fashion an earthly glory that exalts themselves and the earthly Israel*.

How amazingly patient Jesus is, repeatedly offering them this gift of eternal life. How lowly and humble Christ's answers are when they grumble against Him (John 6:41-43).

Meditate and Pray: Let us resolve with His grace and help *not to be like this crowd* (John 6:15). Let us resolve to heed Christ's words of life and to stick close to our Savior. Sing about such commitment to Christ, though we live in a world which rejects Him, using this hymn by Thomas Kelly:

1 They who confess the Savior here,
Must count upon the worldling's sneer;
Must reckon on his malice, too,
Nor fear to stand among the few.

2 How many, thro' the fear of shame,
Refuse to own the Savior's name!
Lest fools the question should renew,
And cry, Are ye deceived, too?

3 The fear of man thus brings a snare,
For few his frown and scorn can bear,
But they should think what Jesus says,
Them who confess Me I'll confess.

That we have loved the world too well;
O make us valiant in Thy cause!
And careless of the world's applause.

4 Ah Lord! with truth we all may tell,

5 While we despise the earthly scorn,
Let all our works Thy truth adorn!
And when Thy glorious day we see,
O let us be confessed of Thee!

Wed/Thur: Read John 6:40 & John 3:9-15**First Hand Knowledge**

To grasp the sheer scale of this monumental gift of eternal life which Christ came down to give, we must turn to Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21). Although he is a teacher, Nicodemus shows his ignorance of Heavenly things. He does not understand how the regeneration Jesus has just described (John 3:3-8) can take place. Jesus then responds in verses 11-13 as follows (in verses paraphrased by John Owen):

If I have told you earthly things and you believe not, (things wrought in the earth and in your own breasts,) how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things? ...

But, we could well wonder how a man should come to the knowledge of these heavenly things whereof they had never heard before, and which no other man could tell them of, since in verse 13 all men are denied an ascent into Heaven whereby they could know these things?

No man either has or ever had a full comprehension of these Heavenly things but Christ Himself alone ... He descended from Heaven in His Incarnation, whereby He became the Son of Man; and He is and was then in Heaven in the essence and glory of His divine nature ...

... Christ alone is meet and able to be the prophet of the church in the revelation of the Heavenly mysteries of the counsels of God.

But notice especially Christ's astounding claim in John 3:13. He claims that His eternal dwelling was in Heaven *before* He descended to earth. Only because of that eternal dwelling can Jesus then "be lifted up," (on both the Cross and then in His Ascension – both in view in John 3:14) to return into glory as our Savior. Without that "first hand knowledge of Heaven's glories" before time was, there is no dwelling in Heaven; no descent in the Incarnation and no resurrection and return to glory. Each piece of Christ's work from His descent from Heaven to His Return is essential.

Fri/Sat/Sun: Read John 3:14-17 & Numbers 21:7-8**Look and Live**

The glorious truth (John 3:14-17) is that the Lord of Heaven, Jesus Christ, *has* come down to abide among sinners. Moses lifted up the bronze serpent as a symbol that the curse of sin (death) had been exhausted, thus offering life from the dead for those poisoned ones who looked to Him on Moses' pole. So Christ on the Cross will be a beacon of salvation to all who look to Him by faith. Here is how Dr. Andrew Selle describes the amazing, life-giving hope which "Christ lifted up" gives to poisoned sinners in comparing John 3:14 with its prophetic foreshadowing in Numbers 21:7-8:

In your agony, you wonder why you are commanded to "Look to the serpent and live." Couldn't the Lord have come up with a nicer image to look at? Something encouraging like a fig tree laden with fruit. Or a basin with life-giving water. Or even a rainbow like the one God showed to Noah after the flood?

Then in your daze, you almost can hear a voice: "No my child. Stare long and hard at this emblem of sin – the snake. This is your life! Your sin aligns you with the devil. You're bitten, you're dying. Feel your leg and look at the brass serpent, and understand. Sin kills you. It kills everyone. It destroys souls. It's a fiery serpent ... "

... As you feel your life ebbing away, you comprehend. If you die, this is God's justice that you're bearing in your own body.

Oddly, these thoughts give you courage and compel you to look more carefully. You observe something else about the bronze serpent. It is not moving. It's not living. It's just dead metal. You know that you are looking at God's holy wrath on sin – the snake judged, lifted up in shame and executed. You gaze as God commanded, and breathe deeply, and breathe again. The pain is fading. In fact ... its' gone! You jump to your feet and see many others around you doing the same.

The Lord gave to the old Serpent the judgment it was due – but at the same time released you from yours. What a wonder of the Lord's mercy! You fall on your knees and face the Tabernacle. "This accursed thing, this emblem of sin, was lifted up. And now, that very thing that was a curse and death has become to me blessing and life."

Fourteen hundred years after this incident, Jesus chided Nicodemus, *You are Israel's teacher, and do you not understand these things?* He should have expected the holy Messiah to come and bear the sins of God's people and give them life. The Scriptures say so. The Gospel was always there in seed form. Now the Lord Jesus Christ declares it with crystal clarity, and the Church proclaims it to the nations.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life ... Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." Dear Friend! Look to Jesus! Believe and live.

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