



Shaqah®

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."
Colossians 2:8

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Step Into the Springs!

I don't believe I have to tell most of you that things here at Living Springs have not been the easiest. I always think back to times I thought things were hard and realize that those times were only emotionally and mentally preparing us for the increasing fight it would be to keep this ministry running. As most of you know the pandemic hit us hard, not just in that it closed things down for the time but for the way it changed the world in ways we will just never see reversed. The prices of everything we use for this ministry skyrocketed and while some things have stabilized to some degree other things have continued to climb! Not the least of such things is postage. I know I've said it before but I just have to say it again, I'm amazed at the miracle it's been that with increasing demand for our materials we have somehow had the ability to keep sending that increase out in spite of the price increases for doing it. I want to keep acknowledging that it's been nothing short of a miracle because it's been the kind of miracle I love to point to in talking about the Children of Israel traveling from Egypt to the promised land.

While it's very true the people of Israel complained endlessly to Moses that they didn't have water, food, safety, and everything else they wanted, God never failed them. The problem is that when we look at those stories and see the miracles God performed to accommodate the people and then make a statement like I just made, we do it with the thought that God did so many obvious miracles! I wouldn't want to put a damper on that for a minute because it's certainly true that only our God could make bread simply appear on the ground every morning and bring quail in such abundance that the people actually got sick of eating a bird some would consider a delicacy. Then there are those miracles God did to provide water for the people like turning

undrinkable water into pure clean water any of us would be happy to have - but bringing water from a rock? That's the definition of miraculous! These things and more cause us to say, "God never failed!" However, looking at the stories in this way are in truth forgetting the story of the prophet Elijah whom God took to the mountain where Israel as a nation had stood so many long years before as they took their journey to the promised land. The very same area where God gave the people what we call the Ten Commandments and gave Moses the broader Law. Elijah believed he was fleeing for his life from the evil of the world around him and there he would take refuge in a cave.

God would come to Elijah there and Elijah would experience a wind so strong it broke the rocks! However, God wasn't in the mighty wind. Elijah would experience an earthquake which had to be terrifying but God was not in the earthquake. Then Elijah experienced a fire that seemingly came from nowhere but through all these amazing and frightening physical events none of them ended up being the way God would communicate anything to Elijah. Then Elijah heard a still, not loud, not booming, but small voice. Elijah would go to the entrance of the cave, and still afraid of what he had just witnessed he put his mantle over his face. As any of us would, he wanted to know where this voice was coming from. Surely no one could survive the wind, earthquake, and fire that had just taken place! Sure enough, as Elijah looked out upon the landscape before him he found not another soul was around. However, the voice spoke to him, and why? Because it was in this still small voice God's presence was known. God would speak to Elijah and ask him why he was here instead of being about the business God would have him do. Elijah expressed again his fears about what was going on and God tells Elijah to get back to work; giving him instructions for the specific things he was to accomplish in spite of the fears he had. (I Kin. 19:1-18)

If we attend Bible classes through the years we hear this story told many times but it's one thing to hear it, it's another to take it to heart. With that we can add the story I love to teach where the apostles looked out from the boat they were in and saw who they finally realized was Jesus walking toward them on the water! Peter would request that Jesus let him come to Him and Jesus tells Peter to come. Peter steps out onto the water and begins to walk on it just as Jesus was walking on it. The problem for Peter was that for all his ambition to walk on the water, he found wanting can often be far more pleasing than having. Peter looked at the waves and felt the wind whipping across his face, and in that moment his fear of the physical events around him outweighed his trust in Jesus! The question the story has always made me ask is, what possible issue could it be for there to be wind and waves when one is already doing the impossible? Peter was already standing on water! That's not something humans can just do, and God wasn't in those waves or the wind. God was standing on the water just in front of Peter! (Matt. 14:22-33)

Both these stories express how much we lose focus on the real power of God and we lose that focus because we get our eyes on the circumstances of life. Elijah was already a prophet God had used to perform some amazing things through which showed forth the power of God. Peter had just the day before his venture out onto the water, witnessed Jesus feeding well over five thousand people with one child's lunch! (Matt. 14:3-21) Yes, God can do amazing things but where the real meat of our faith can be found is in the fact doing the spectacular has never been what God wanted us to focus on. God has used many spectacular miracles to draw man's eyes off the things going on in our day by day in order to get us to really deeply know what it means when He says He will never leave us nor forsake us! God had not forsaken Peter and that's why even as Peter began to sink into the waves he feared, Jesus was there to take his hand and lift him to safety. Peter was never in any danger that he didn't bring on himself. Elijah was determined to run from wicked leaders he feared but Elijah was never in any danger. That's why God sent him back to Israel to continue the work he never should have stopped. The same was true for the Children of Israel as they walked through the desert, a journey their own doubt in God's ability had made forty years longer than it was suppose to be. They thought they faced starvation; they thought they faced dehydration and threats to their lives from all sides but they were never in danger of any of that!

That's why the key scripture that really shows us the truth of how God never failed them is not any of those times they complained to Moses and God gave them a miracle no one could deny was a miracle. The real

testament to how much God never failed the Children of Israel is found in one small verse. In Deuteronomy chapter 29 verse 5 God points out that all the decades they had spent complaining about all the things they thought they didn't have, they had never complained they didn't have enough clothes, and why? Because without even noticing it their clothes had miraculously never wore out and their shoes had never needed replacing! God does so many things outside what we think to panic about we really never had/have a clue how much danger of going over the edges of life we've been if it were not for God! When I stop and think about that it makes me wonder just how many things God has done to keep us, sustain us, and bring us to this issue of *Shaqah* that for all the things we've feared running short on, we never even thought to worry about! So why are you reading this Step into the Springs segment instead of seeing Bible as a Book, Following the Biblical Stream, and What About God's Chosen People? I could honestly fill pages talking about all the things I feel have gone wrong over the months of our lives stretching back a long, long way but that's not really the answer.

While I am the first to admit we've had our eyes far more on the problems of this world and life to really keep our focus on the work of this ministry like we should, I can't deny I came one day to this feeling of desperation over being able to get this issue out like I've only felt one other time in all the years we've been producing this publication. It's already the end of August and I've hardly had time to think, much less write those normal segments of *Shaqah*. We still have to edit, print, stuff the envelopes, buy the stamps, and allow the postal service time to get this issue to you before you'll read any of it. September & October's issue needs to be out more on time because as incredible as it is, it's time to create, manufacture, and begin sending out the 2027 calendar! So I asked myself, do we simply skip an issue of *Shaqah* for the first time in all these years as a way to simply make up a fraction of the ground we've lost so much of? However, it was in that moment I realized, God wasn't in all the things I was worried about. God was in the voice that reminded me of something we have been so far behind on for so many years now I've all but forgotten it's even part of this ministry's work. While it's true there are unwritten Q&A segments still waiting for my attention, there are also several finished writings that have never been sent to anyone other than the person who asked the original question. Thus, it is without further ado I say, there must be someone, or a lot of someones, who will really be blessed by what is according to our filing system, Q&A #22, for it is that Q&A which fills the remaining pages of this issue of *Shaqah*!

What About Predestination?

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Does John chapter 6 verses 37 & 44 teach predestination?"

The question posed was asking about the theology of predestination and if this is, in any way, the concept Jesus is teaching in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, specifically in verses 37 and 44. The first thing I will say about this issue is if you read these two verses, especially with the idea that predestination is a possibility, they do, at the very least, seem to say something about the issue. In verse 37 Jesus says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." This can be taken as Jesus saying The Father will simply bring Him (Jesus) certain people who are already predetermined to be saved, and they will, in fact, be the ones Jesus will take to heaven. This is further strengthened by the fact that in verse 44 Jesus says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." This clearly tells us it is not possible for a person to come to Jesus if God The Father is not the one who draws them to Jesus. If we couple that with the thought from verse 37 that all those who The Father "...giveth..." will, in fact, come to Jesus and be saved, there is the indication both sides of a predestination theology are present. It is to say, if you are not chosen of The Father, you cannot come to Jesus; and if you are chosen of The Father, there is no way you cannot be chosen by Jesus. You're either in or you're out!

However, the key to understanding all this is found in looking at ourselves and seeing how we are approaching this scripture. On that, there are three points. One, we must take the verses within the context of the surrounding conversation. Two, we must take the verses in the larger context of the entire Bible, especially the Hebrew Bible which is that part many people simply call the Old Testament. The third point, which can be a very large part of the problem or could simply be a tripping point that causes a slightly wrong prospective, is something I already referred to. We come to these verses with the theology of predestination in our minds as being a possible explanation. The reason I say this third point has a wide possibility is, if you are a person who desires to teach predestination these verses would certainly be part of the slate of scriptures you would point to. At the same time, you can be at the other end of things and be a person who does not believe in predestination, even hoping and praying it is not true, but still be affected by what you read on the basis such a theology is out there. You can be reading along, come to this conversation, and suddenly

find yourself wondering if those who believe in predestination might have a point! Before I say anything more, let me say that being open to allow The Spirit of God to show you the truth, no matter what you currently believe, is a good way to study the Bible! At the same time, we must be careful it is The Holy Ghost we are listening to and not the theologies of men. To help us in this process, we need to be scholars in our own right. To do this, we need to actively apply the first two points I mentioned. You must take the verses in the context of the entire conversation and the context of the Word as a whole!

The second of those two simply means, we need to be reading our Bibles purely for the sake of getting the words in our heads. Many people, especially those who begin reading the Bible for the first time but also many who have "studied" the Bible for years, will complain that they don't understand what they are reading. This is a truth I won't argue with for a minute! However, the reason this is true can be seen most clearly in the fact the complaint is almost always expressed by those who are reading the Bible for the first time. By no means is the Bible the longest book in the world. When compared to the writings of other religions one could easily argue the Bible isn't very long at all. However, the Bible is a complex book in that the reader must sew the information together. That is to say, God intentionally did not put His Word together like a children's story book or even a novel produced for entertainment. It's not put together like a history book either in that the books and stories are not arranged in chronological order. This last point is something many people find to be a much bigger "problem" than it is or should I say, when it's not a problem at all. The last major point I'll make on why people find the Bible to be confusing actually has to do with something many people who call themselves Christians and Bible teachers do which is to ignore the facts and treat the Bible as if it is a somewhat disjointed collection of moral tales patched together by a vague chronology and cohesion that is almost irrelevant to those who do not consider themselves scholars of the Bible in any form. I could elaborate on that point a great deal to argue against many who would say I'm wrong but I'll leave that for another time. The overall point I wish to make here is that all this makes the Bible appear to the first time reader to be very confusing because we simply are not used to reading a book or a collection of books put together like the Bible is.

So why does this argument that the Bible is hard to understand come from people who have "studied" it for

years? Same answer in truth. People refuse to read the Bible for what's there! People right from the start look at the Bible and attempt to put it into their box of understanding for how a book should be arranged, when what they should be doing is yielding to the fact that even the Bible's arrangement is showing us things. Am I saying it's bad to look for the chronological order of the events told to us in the Bible? No, but when that's our focus or even one of the answers to "How do I understand the Bible?" we miss the forest for the trees. In today's world of endless publications attempting to show us what the Bible means we lean far too heavily on the works of other men, and more times than not those works are not really the pure study guides they should be as much as they are commentary trying to defend or espouse certain beliefs, not the least of which is the defense of the Christian religion in general. In short, there is too much doctrine and too little knowledge base to most so called study guides. All this and much more I could fill pages of writing with is why I say, people need to read the Bible to simply have what's there in your own head. It's not the call to memorize the entire Bible but the simple grasp of what the books are and what stories they tell. Aside from any chronology you may have figured out or know, it's also about knowing the Bible for how it's arranged and accepting what I said earlier which is that the arrangement in and of itself has something to tell us. These are the keys to the Bible going from a hard to understand book to a book you grasp very well.

Thus, as we go back to our question at hand and talk about the doctrine or belief of predestination it's greatly helpful to approach such a specific subject with knowledge of God's Word as a whole to begin with. Such knowledge can move us very quickly from believing predestination is at least a possibility to knowing that's not what Jesus was saying at all! That said, when giving an answer to the question being asked here the first and most obvious thing to look at is the context of the conversation containing these verses, as well as the setting which brought the conversation(s) about. In doing this, we can talk about overall Biblical context along the way. The conversation we are looking at in chapter 6 takes place because of a specific incident, and that incident begins with the fact Jesus had been back and forth between Jerusalem and Galilee. In both places, He had healed the sick and drew the attention of many of the religious leaders as well as others. As Jesus taught the truth about Who He was/is, the religious leaders became more and more offended at the fact His teaching showed Jesus placed Himself equal with God. As we will go on to talk about, this is a great example of being stuck on the theologies of men instead of the truth of God's Word. Because the religious leaders were offended by Jesus' work, there became more and more of a rift between what the common man thought about Jesus and what the religious

establishment thought. The common man was growing in his desire to see what Jesus could provide, while the religious establishment saw Jesus as a threat to their power, with no discernible gain.

In order to see this clearly, we will start by jumping back to the beginning of John chapter 5. There we see that Jesus goes to Jerusalem, and while in Jerusalem, He heals a sick man on the Sabbath day. This draws the attention of the religious leaders which brings Jesus into a conversation about Who He really was/is. This conversation caused them to be wroth with Jesus, and it is directly connected to what Jesus says in chapter 6. Chapter 6 begins by telling us Jesus had traveled back to the north around the Sea of Galilee and there a great multitude of common people were following Him; largely due to the miracles they had seen Jesus perform. Because Jesus wants some time to teach His apostles, He leaves the coast of Galilee to go up into the mountains. This didn't do much for getting away from the crowds, for they followed Jesus even into this more rugged terrain. This brought about a situation where there were many people in a remote area and nothing for them to eat. Jesus ultimately takes care of this problem by feeding them all using only five barley loaves and two small fishes. After more than five thousand people had eaten their fill, there was still more leftover food than what they originally started out with by the count of twelve baskets full. This was perhaps one of the most large-scale miracles of Jesus and because it showed His power to take care of the people's everyday needs, it was about the most popular miracle Jesus ever performed.

This miracle impressed the people so much that verse 15 tells us Jesus went all by Himself even further into the mountains in order to escape the fact these people would have forcefully made Him their King but this was not the time nor the place for such a thing to happen. The apostles ended up going the other direction, and returned to the Sea of Galilee where they got in a boat and headed for Capernaum. That night Jesus would meet the disciples out on the water, by walking on the water. The next day the people would wonder how Jesus had gotten over to Capernaum, for they knew He had not gone with the apostles in their boat as they left the other side. In any case that fact did not keep the people from finding Jesus and continuing to seek after Him. When they found Jesus, they asked Him how he had gotten over to Capernaum but Jesus does not tell them how He had walked on the water. Instead, He begins the more important conversation about how their great desire to find Him was not rooted in the right reasons. This turns into a very similar conversation to the one Jesus had with the religious leaders in Jerusalem.

In His conversation with those at Capernaum, Jesus points out that what really interests them is the fact Jesus had the power to perform miracles such as feeding

them. Expanding on this, Jesus was telling them they desired the physical provisions He could miraculously provide, because those provisions are what they looked for in any earthly leader! Jesus explains they should not be chasing Him around just because they hoped to continually benefit from the physical miracles He was able to do. Instead, they should be taking the opportunity to receive of the provisions He could provide for their eternal future which was the true work He was sent to accomplish. Because Jesus had just fed so many of these people with the miracle of the loaves and fishes, Jesus uses food, specifically bread, as an illustration of what He was/is to us spiritually. Now, when Jesus was in Jerusalem, He had told the religious leaders that they and their ancestors put their trust in Moses who was just a man. However, Moses would be the first to accuse them of wrong doing because they obviously did not understand his message in that his message was about Jesus coming someday and the more basic point that God was the only One Who could truly provide for them both in that moment as well as into eternity. Jesus points out to them that if they were not already waiting for The Messiah and able to recognize Who He was based on the writings of Moses which they claimed to hold so dear, there was little chance they were going to be persuaded by anything Jesus had to say now as He stood before them!

Instead of recognizing Jesus as The Messiah based on what He said and did, the religious establishment chose not to believe Jesus was The Messiah because Jesus was not what the theologies of men had taught them The Messiah should be. On the other side of things, the people at Capernaum did not necessarily reject Jesus as The Messiah but they too did not recognize and/or accept and/or care for what purpose The Messiah was truly sent. If Jesus was The Messiah, the religious leaders wanted Him to provide deliverance from their Roman oppressors; much like Moses had been the great deliverer of their ancestors from the hand of Pharaoh in Egypt. The common people wanted a physical leader who would provide for them in much the same way Moses had provided food in the wilderness for their ancestors. What Jesus wanted the religious leaders to understand was, Moses could have done nothing to free their fathers from Egypt if Moses had not been following God's will to begin with. As Jesus talks to the common people, He points out it was not Moses who provided bread in the wilderness, it was only by God that such a thing could have happened. To both groups, Jesus is trying to get the point across that no matter what the work, or who the person was through whom the work was done, and no matter what the thoughts of those involved were, all things truly of God are done according to the will of God. Of most importance was/is the point, no man has the ability to dictate to God that He should do things

differently!

As Jesus talks to the common people in chapter 6, He explains to them, it is not The Messiah's work to simply provide year after year for their daily physical needs which is what they desired. Instead, God The Father had sent The Messiah to provide a different kind of bread; a bread which could provide eternal existence! Of course, regaining access to the Tree of Life is something that in one form or another people, the world over, have attempted to do throughout the centuries. Thus, upon hearing this, the people desired that Jesus give them the bread which could provide eternal life and Jesus tells them the problem is the bread had been right in front of them the whole time; they simply were not recognizing it! This, again, is because what they wanted was a bread which, like the Tree of Life, would sustain this physical life forever. That kind of desire is exactly why God took man away from the Tree of Life right after man first disobeyed God's commandment. (Gen. 3:22-24) If they, as well as any of the religious people, had truly known the Words of God they would have understood The Messiah was not coming to offer the continuance of this life. God had already determined that was not a benefit to man. Thus, The Messiah was coming to offer them something that would grant them a new life which was beneficial and Jesus (The Messiah) was/is the greatest of that provision!

Now, understand that in chapter 5 as Jesus talks to the religious leaders in Jerusalem, He talks to them more directly than He does the common people, and He does not use illustrations. These leaders, scholars, etc. should have known the Bible for themselves very well. That being true, they should have recognized the message of John the Baptist was that The Messiah was just over the horizon. They just didn't seem to understand with what anticipation they should now be looking for The Messiah. If they had truly listened to John, they should have immediately recognized Jesus was The One they had been looking for; just by the work Jesus began to do did among them. Any shock about the fact a man already living among them was, in fact, The Messiah, should have been taken care of by the fact John was sent to shout from the rooftops, The Messiah was already among them! John was someone the Scripture had told them would be part of The Messiah's appearing for this very purpose! (Isa. 40:1-5, Matt. 3:1-3)

Jesus goes on to point out that even without John they should have been looking for The Messiah at all times, simply based on what Moses had said. However, instead of watching and waiting in anticipation which would have caused them to recognize Jesus for Who He really was/is, they got upset that Jesus' teaching included statements that clearly show He saw Himself as equal to,

and specifically sent by, God. Jesus points out that someday, when someone they know little to nothing about comes along directly touting themselves to be The Messiah, and doing the things man would like to see happen, they would be convinced that person was The Messiah. This would happen in spite of the fact what should have convinced them was the scriptures they had known all their lives were being fulfilled by Jesus before their very eyes. The fact The Messiah should be recognized in this way was exactly why Jesus did not come proclaiming Himself to be The Messiah but fulfilling the scriptures through his actions and words. A man such as Jesus being The Messiah may have upset them but this would not change the fact Jesus had been and would continue to do the work of The Messiah. Because they were not waiting and looking for The Messiah the Scripture had told them would come, they determined the work and words of The True Messiah were heresy and punishable by death!

In chapter 6, if we jump over verses 37 through 44 into the teaching segment that follows, we see Jesus using the illustration of Him being Bread, to point out He, being in the flesh, is about proving God's plan for what can be our continuance after this current flesh dies. Jesus comes down to saying His flesh was in fact food and His blood drink. Jesus said this because His body and blood would be sacrificed in doing the ultimate work The Messiah was sent to do. That in no small way would happen due to what the religious leaders had determined was the right way to handle Jesus. Thus, Jesus was pointing out that physical food could not bring life eternal as God intended man to have. A different kind of plan was needed for that and Jesus' body and blood would show that plan; proving God's power to provide eternal life! Shedding this physical form through death and relying on God's power to bring about new life was/is the plan since we were removed from the Tree of Life. The process The Messiah would go through in dying, being buried and raising from the dead showed us we must one day die believing God has the power to give us something better than the life we now live. Believing we can be partakers of what Jesus demonstrated God and only God has the power to provide! This is a subject the life, death, burial, and resurrection of The Messiah shows us is a very real physical thing, not some spiritual unknown. Jesus lived and walked among us, then He literally died on a cross. If we are going to be saved from this world of sin, we cannot make our goal the maintaining of these physical forms. We must someday willingly give up these physical forms, meaning our flesh will someday have to come to an end. Every human who ever has and will live eventually will die. That's inevitable! However, that fact provides the opportunity for us to be transformed into what we saw Jesus become post resurrection. Partaking in this process means the work Jesus accomplished using His physical body and blood is

truly a substance our existence needs far more desperately than the food which sustains the physical existence we currently have!

Simply put, Jesus was illustrating that they needed the true work He had come to show, not the physical things they had their eyes on at that point. The miracles they had seen Him do were a way of getting their attention so He could lead them into the true work God sent The Messiah to do! However, we are told in these verses that this conversation disturbed many of the people who heard Jesus speak that day. Their minds were still on the idea of physical food for this physical form to live this physical existence and it was disturbing to them to think Jesus was offering His body and blood as nourishment for that. The people listening to Jesus knew of the false practices of those who were worshipers of the creation rather than The Creator. (Rom. 1:25) They knew of the practice of drinking the blood of an animal that had been killed for food, in order to "thank" the animal for giving its life so one might eat its flesh to sustain one's own flesh. They also knew the Law of Moses expressly forbid this practice, but these facts should have helped them see the truth of Jesus' words, not miss it! (Gen. 9:1-4, Lev. 7:26-27, 17:7-14, 19:26-28, Ps. 16:1-4)

Because of what the Law of Moses says, they should have known Jesus was not talking about what goes in at the mouth and out into the "draught." (Matt. 15:7-20) Jesus was speaking to them about the fact that what could only be represented in the sacrificing of animals and the observance of things such as Passover, could and would be literally fulfilled in the physical work of The Messiah! This is the point Jesus was trying to make the night before His crucifixion when He held an early Passover Seder with his apostles. At that time Jesus tells them the Passover cup was His blood and the unleavened bread was His body. They had practiced this representation all their lives, just as their fathers had before them for many generations. They also would continue this representation for an undetermined number of generations to come in the future. When pagans drink the blood of animals, they believe they are doing the actual thing of value. However, Passover, and the sacrifices made at the temple, were and to this day still are/would be, only representation of something which only The True Messiah could and has accomplished! This is a fact all those who study the Word of God should understand! We should also understand that when things are only a representation, there is need for them to be fulfilled in truth. The Messiah came to bring that truth, making what is only represented in Passover a reality as He gave His life on the cross, was buried in a tomb, and rose again! (Heb. 9:1-10:22) If nothing else Jesus ever did convinced those who knew the Law of Moses, His work on the cross should have, for this was fulfilling the scriptures in a way no other human ever could have or ever would!

This is why at that Passover Seder the night before His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples, no matter how many times the future years brought the representation of Passover around for them to perform, they should from that point on, do it in remembrance of the real thing which He was about to accomplish through the cross! (Luke 22:13-20)

This brings us to a great point! As we discuss Biblical things, we often do what we are doing in this article which is talking about how off from the truth many of the Jews were at any given time. This causes many non-Jews to be very high-minded, as if somehow they are not or do not make such mistakes. This is ridiculous because, in fact, the Jews are only showing us human problems we all have. We should be humbled to think we might make the same kinds of errors! In fact, the story we just covered brings us to a great example of something non-Jews error on, and it's a big one! A lack of Biblical knowledge which is very similar to the misunderstanding of the people that day in Capernaum, is what caused later churches to misinterpret the events of what they call "The Last Supper." We, just like so many who lived in Jesus' day, really do not know Jesus as The Messiah! This is shown in the fact we do not know the scriptures He was to fulfill and thus, we do not understand a lot of what He did even as much as the people of His day did. Many in the church have no idea that what they call "The Last Supper" is, in fact, a Passover Seder, and even many people with some knowledge of The God-given feasts will dispute this because they do not really understand what a Passover Seder is. We may have heard and even readily repeat the information that Jesus is The Passover Lamb, but most non-Jews know little about what this means. Many know nothing about the details of how Jesus fulfilled the representation of Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and even Firstfruits in His death, burial, and resurrection. This has opened the door for non-Jewish religious leaders to use Jesus' Passover Seder as an excuse to bring the pagan practice of drinking blood as a form of worship, right into our churches and without a thought about it, many Christians have been following this man-made religious practice for centuries!

Now, not all churches teach that the blessing over the "communion" elements actually make them the body and blood of Christ. However, just the concept of making a ritual which is not done by the commandment of God, such as Passover is for the Jews, to replace, mimic, and/or overshadow one that is commanded by God, shows a very fleshly thought pattern. The ritual of communion was established by "church fathers," and is one of many reasons churches fail to teach the feasts God gave to the Jews in the Law. The issue of communion is a perfect example here because there are many people who are very unwilling to even consider one of their church's rituals

could be a fallacy, no matter what the Biblical evidence! Individuals not considering the Word of God for themselves and holding It higher than the traditions of men, was the core problem in this entire situation we have been discussing. The fact many people can be so fleshly minded they are of no spiritual good is the reason Jesus' illustration caused many of the people that day in Capernaum to be so disturbed that they left off following Jesus that very day and never came back! Jesus knew this would happen but even after this, Jesus turns to ask His twelve handpicked apostles if they themselves would do the same? Peter answers by posing the question of, where would we go? They knew Jesus was The One Who spoke the words of life! They understood what the religious leaders and many of the people did not. If the truth is showing you something you do not like, or initially understand, it is irrelevant because there is no alternative to the truth! You must seek to understand the truth, not believe you have the right to change it and/or hold to traditions of men that run contrary to it. You can not seriously believe God will accept you in spite of the fact you do not accept His ways, and that brings us to our main point! (Matt. 10:27-40)

The difficulty in teaching about predestination is that the truth of salvation comes down to a choice and we understand when it comes to God, He is not just any individual making choices, He is the all knowing God Who created the universe! This causes people to think about such ideas as those presented in John 6:37-44, from the standpoint that if God knows everything, then He already knows who will and who will not make it to heaven in the end. At first glance this may seem like predestination. However, there is a difference and that difference is each individual. We each have a choice, and while our choices cannot force God to do or not do anything, the choices we make do affect God's choice for each of us as individuals. Let me say that again, our choices affect what God does with us as individuals! This is made clear to us in the fact stories, such as the ones we have been discussing here, show us. God is not asking us to strike a bargain or make some kind of deal with Him. What God is offering is very much so a, take it or leave it, kind of thing! That is why Jesus did not go running off after those who left Him that day and say something like, "Now, I can see I've upset you but don't just go away angry. Let's see what we can do to fix this." Instead, Jesus turns to those who had it right in their minds and asks them for their opinion on what He just said. Their answer shows us the contrast between those who make the right choice and those who do not!

It is very appropriate that verses 37 & 44 are the two asked about, because while all we have talked about so far is trying to explain the point, these two verses are the point! The opening statement of Jesus in verse 37 is, "All

that the Father giveth me shall come to me;...” This is not talking about God's will as in who He has predetermined is allowed to come to Jesus, versus others who cannot. It has to do with the fact God has set, what is for lack of a better term, the rules or one might say, “conditions” under which salvation is possible to be granted to any individual. These conditions were not manufactured as human existence moved forward through time. They are not based on any individual or group of individuals' mindsets, desires, preferences, etc. Thus, they are not prejudice toward any particular group or personality. The conditions were set at the beginning of time. They are embedded into the creation of our universe! (Matt. 25:31-34, Luke 11:47-51, John 17, II Tim. 2:16-21, Heb. 1:8-14, Rev. 13:4-9) This is why violating the way God created us to live is called “sin.” We say sin is disobedience to God because we must live in the ways God created us to live or we are destroying ourselves along with others. This is why those who believe they do not have to care about God's conditions but God is somehow still obligated, or will be willing, to save them anyway, are going to find they are wrong and missing the entire point!

What makes humans different than all the rest of creation is that we were not programmed to preform a task. This does not mean we were created without a purpose, and while we can't understand all the dynamics of why God created us, we should understand we were created to commune with God. (Rev. 4:11) That being said, we should also understand that while we were built with all the abilities to commune with God, we were still not programmed to fulfill even that purpose. This is why we say humans were given a free will! From the foundation of the world God has known there would be those who do not want to live for the purpose He created them for. This is simply the nature of giving individuals a free will and if we understand this we know predestination cannot be true. It is not that God predetermined or even desires there to be those who do not make it to heaven where we will be uninhibited to do exactly what God created us for. However, a free will demands God respect the fact there are those who do not want to live for that purpose! What Jesus is mainly trying to deal with in chapters 5 & 6 is the fact this is even true of many people who think and say they want it but in reality do not!

There are many individuals who simply do not understand what is being offered, and if they really did understand, it would be clear to them they do not want it. Seeing clearly who does and who does not desire is made somewhat easier by the fact many people show they do not want what God is offering by simply not being willing to hear the explanation of what the offer is. There are even individuals who think they can reject what is being offered,

and/or reform what is being offered, to be what they want, and this simply cannot be done. Thus, what Jesus is explaining is that He (Jesus) is the only way anyone is going to obtain eternal life. We can live how we want in the here and now but Jesus is the only door God has opened in order for us to enter into the place where we can live God's intended life for eternity. This means all those who have and will commune with God must ultimately come through the saving power of The Messiah's work in order to obtain eternal life and eternal life will only be granted to those who desire God's created way for their life. The judgment between those who do and those who do not truly want this is in the hands of The Father and The Father alone.

When Jesus says in verse 37, “All that the Father giveth me...” He is talking about those whom The Father has/will choose for salvation base not on predestination but on the fact these are the ones who truly desire the things of God. When Jesus says those individuals, “...shall come to me;...” He is talking about the fact that because He is The Way The Father has chosen to grant what we need to continue for eternity in the ways of God, everyone of these individuals will simply have no trouble or complaint in following this path! That is a very big key and it boils down to a simple truth that is based on the fact those who do have trouble with it are showing they are not truly desiring the things of God. They may want any number of the benefits they believe come with going to heaven but they reject the foundational premise for why such a place exists. This is the contrast between those who walked away from Jesus that day because they did not like what He had said and the apostles who said, where else could we go? For those who wanted what God was offering it was clear they had found the purpose of life in walking with Jesus because walking with Jesus was walking with God in human form. If they were to walk away from that there would be no other place to go in order to find any value for their existence!

To make the dynamics clear, Jesus goes on to say, “...and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” The system simply works all the way around. If you are chosen by The Father for salvation, The Father will give you to Christ for the purpose of walking with Him and in turn that walk will lead to eternal life. Here, Jesus is just trying to make the point clear once again that He and The Father work hand in hand. If you are one of those chosen by God The Father, then there is no reason to believe you will be rejected by The Son. That's just not how it works! Jesus goes on to take away any doubt on this subject by pointing out in the next verse that He came down to this earth from where The Father is, not to do what He (Jesus) wants, but to do what The Father wants. In the next verse,

Jesus says The Father's will is that The Son lose none of those who have been given to Him. In a large way this explains why Jesus was willing to go to the cross in spite of it not being necessary for God to obtain the power to grant new life to those who have and would/will die.

Jesus was determined to do The Father's will and not lose any whom The Father had given Him. Since it's always been and will be in our hands (while living in the here and now) to choose to have a relationship with God (faith) or walk away from it, the ultimate way for Jesus to ensure those who desire a walk in faith never doubted God had the power to fulfill His promises was to demonstrate the dynamics using His own death! This is certainly not predestination but the assurance that the ultimate benefit faith is able to bring is permanent and unshakable. If it were not, God would not have chosen to provide salvation in this way. Simply put, we call it the plan of salvation because each one who has been given to The Son is assured there is a plan to handle the inevitable fact we will one day die. Jesus has already demonstrated that truth! To be truly saved is to be saved from death by being raised to life in a form which can never be corrupted by sin ever again. Thus, we describe it as, "eternal life." This is in no small part why only those who desire to be free from sin can be made part of the plan!

In verse 40, we don't want to miss Jesus telling us something very important. From childhood I have been taught the truth that there is only one door of salvation and it is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. From my own study of the Scripture, I know this to be an unshakable fact! However, many Christians miss a simple truth which is right there in what Jesus tells us. There are two ways to get to Jesus! Only one of those is through The Son directly. This is the one those claiming to be Christians are heavily into and have attempted to make into a formula for salvation. However, the other explains why we call the Christian message the Gospel. The word "Gospel" means good news. The good news is that God has in fact provided the plan of salvation for all those who have, do, and will desire God's created purpose for their lives! If men such as Noah, Job, Abraham, etc. lived before Jesus ever came, how could they be saved through The Son? The answer is not a bunch of deep religious theology about how their sin was swept under a rug through the practice of sacrifice, blah, blah, blah. It is simply that even before there was good news to share about how God had, in fact, provided Himself a Lamb, they believed God had the power to resurrect those whom He chooses long before Jesus physically demonstrated it! (Gen. 22:8) They knew this because they already had a direct relationship with God. They, as much as (or in many ways more than) any one of us who has lived on this side of The Messiah's coming, knew they needed to walk in faith in order to have any hope of life beyond their physical death. The fact they

never knew God in the form of a man the way Jesus came and lived does not negate the fact they still knew God! They knew Christ because they knew God, and Jesus is God! (John 1:1-18, Phili. 2:5-11) Because they knew God, they knew The Messiah would come and prove God's promises were true! What we are talking about in these stories in the Gospel of John is just the opposite fact in that those who did not recognize Jesus as God, or simply as The Messiah, while He walked among them, proved they did not truly know God in the first place. If they had they would have recognized Christ!

A main point of sending Jesus to this earth was that it might convince many to accept God's created purpose for their lives who for many reasons had/would not have accepted it the way those people of times before had. One of the whole points of sending The Son in the flesh was to make God more accessible than man could ever imagine God could be on this earth. We know this because of what is said in verse 40 of John chapter 6. Jesus says, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life:..." Jesus had already explained that He was The Son sent by God The Father. Thus, we can rephrase what Jesus said and say - it is The Father's will that by seeing Jesus, people might believe in God's plan and come to the choices God The Father needs them to make in order to grant them eternal life! Clearly, this is God giving us a chance to make our own choice and to draw in those who have not as yet made the right choice. The Father's will has always been that the life He created us to live be open to everyone and that we desire to live it. Those who desire to live it and believe in God The Father, will find it very good news to hear The Son has proved the salvation they need to truly come to The Father is real and something God Himself was willing to demonstrate in the flesh. Those who come to The Son and find He is the way to God The Father will certainly find The Messiah's coming very good news! (John 14:1-11) To believe in predestination is to believe all this effort God has put forth to make sure we have the freedom to choose and the ability to see the choice before us, is untrue and unnecessary!

Predestination cannot be true; because if we understand the Word, we should know humans were designed for a purpose and God provides salvation for us to continue in that same purpose in spite of finding it best to remove us from the Tree of Life. In making us individuals with a free will, God shows us He wants us to have the option to walk away if that is what we desire. If He had not wanted us to have that opportunity, He simply would not have planted the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and given us the ability to walk away in the first place. This is why Peter says what he does in II Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not

willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” These are the terms. We should make no mistake about the fact God desires to save every last one of us. At the same time, there is a condition, and Peter tells us the condition is repentance which within reference means we turn from the life we could have by going our own way in the here and now and begin to seek God's purpose even while in the here and now!

Adam and Eve were innocent of the knowledge of good and evil. Their choice in taking of the fruit they were told not to take of was a choice to walk away from that innocence into a place where they would be responsible for their every action. This led to them doing exactly what God said they would do and that was to fail in making it through even the very first day of having the knowledge without doing something worthy of the judgment of death. (Gen. 2:17) Now, after they took the fruit, all following humans were/are born with the knowledge and just like Adam and Eve, we are not able to live perfectly by it. (Isa. 64:6-9, Rom. 3:20-26) However, the truth Adam and Eve were created with has not changed. No one, two, three, or any larger group of humans can take from all other humans, or an individual, their chance to have what Adam and Eve were created to have. (Rom. 5:12-21) God is no respecter of persons! (Col. 3:23-25, I Pet. 1:15-21) The question may no longer be, will we remain innocent of sin or will we remain untouched by sin and its destructive power? However, that does nothing to change the question of, do we desire sin over the ways of God? If anything is true, it is that we should fear sin more than Adam and Eve ever did before they had knowledge of good and evil. We can see the destructive power of sin and know why it is sin to live contrary to the ways of God, even in the most minor ways. We should completely understand why, if we desire the ways of God, we must turn from sin, which is what the word “repent” more generally means, and attempt to live our lives in righteousness no matter how much or how many times we may fail to be perfect! The dynamics of repentance and righteousness are not set so the opportunity of salvation will be limited to a few elite who do very well walking the road of righteousness but so all, no matter how good or bad we have ever been, will have the opportunity to show our desire for God and His ways which will cause us to be chosen for salvation by God The Father!

“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” Romans 4:3 Salvation has always been and will always be by grace, through faith! (Eph. 2:8-9) The grace of God is what gives us an opportunity to know God in spite of our sin. With this we must understand, while it is not The Father's will anyone miss out on salvation, it is not The

Father's will to take everyone on to the place prepared for those who desire Him! The key we must soak into our minds is that God is Holy. He cannot tolerate sin. (Ex. 19, Lev. 20:7-8, Matt. 5:48, Heb 12:14, James 1:13) If we are ever going to have a peaceful, happy, healthy existence, we cannot have sin in and around us as well. This world is the proof we need to never doubt that fact for all of eternity! Now because these facts are true, sin must someday be permanently disposed of in order for us to live directly with God in a perfect place. Sin cannot be completely disposed of while we live in this flesh, because at all times man has the ability to enact his free will and sin without God's direct intervention to stop it. (Rom. 7:18-24) That is how God set it up. If it were not this way, we would not truly have a “free” will. However, this is why God had to take away our access to the Tree of Life after man chose to take of the knowledge God didn't want us to be initially responsible for. (Gen. 3:22-24) Living on and on without the ability to come and live directly with God, in a place where sin can't touch us, is pointless! However, if we are simply going to die someday without the hope of salvation from sin, no matter what we desire, living in this sin-filled world is pointless! This simple understanding is what compelled men such as Noah, Job, Abraham, etc. to believe God had a plan of salvation even if they had not see it or completely understood its dynamics. From creation forward it was never God's desire that any of the people in His creation fall into sin. Once they did, it was never God's desire for us to have no path of escape from it. At the same time, not everyone wants to escape!

The people Jesus was talking to in the situations we have been discussing are great examples. Many of these people did not want to get out of their sin-filled life. All they wanted was for God to reverse or ease the destructive consequences sin brings to this life. They believed and/or desired this to be the work of The Messiah, and when it became apparent to them that was not going to be the case, they were no longer interested. This is why the gateway to salvation is not to be predestined but to be chosen! We have a large part in the choice but we must understand that we do not control it. Again, this was the problem those who Jesus was dealing with had. They thought they could dictate the details of their salvation but this kind of thinking is exactly why we are told it is not our choice but God's. God lays out for us the things He desires of us. He shows us from the very beginning He wants a relationship with us and that is why He created us. Faith is the Biblical word to describe the relationship we can have with God and it is a relationship we could not have if God was not first willing to offer us that chance. This may cause some to think about predestination but Romans 12:3 knocks that down by

warning us not to believe we are some kind of special predestined group of individuals because we have faith. God has granted every person an opportunity to have a relationship with Him; it's just up to us whether we will choose to take faith over the sin of this world. The bottom line is that we simply cannot hold onto sin and still see God, but we have that choice before us nonetheless. (Heb. 12:11-17)

In truth, there are people all around the issue. There are many people who believe they have done enough to earn salvation but the Bible counters this idea by telling us salvation is a free gift and not something we can earn. (Rom. 3:20-31, 5:14-16, Eph. 2:8-9) Again, this shows us not predestination but the simple fact only God can and does choose who truly is desiring the path He created us to follow. Those who really are desirous of God and His ways come to know, through their relationship with God (faith), that no matter how bad they have ever been, no matter how far they have currently made it on the road of righteousness, God is with them. If they do not desire to turn from God and His ways, God will make what they desire a permanent reality! (John 10:9-10, I Thes. 4:13-18, Rev. 22:1-5) On the other side is the fact that no person who does not truly desire the ways of God will be able to force, connive, bargain, or simply fall into salvation. This is the predetermined dynamics of salvation, not the predestination of certain people to obtain salvation while others cannot! This is what Paul is speaking of when we see the actual use of the word "predestinate" in Romans chapter 8, and Ephesians chapter 1.

Starting in verse 26 of Romans chapter 8, Paul says The Spirit helps the fact we are so weak we don't even know what to pray for in order to receive, work, and walk in the will of God. However, that's alright for the one who truly desires the things of God, because our willingness to yield to God allows The Spirit to pray for us. In allowing this, we can rest easy knowing whatever happens is alright because even things which at times seem bad can be for our good if we truly yield our lives to God. In verse 29 Paul begins to lay out the dynamics in light of a future where ultimately everything that has ever happened here turns out to be good for those who make it to the place God has prepared for eternal existence. (John 14:1-3) The plan of salvation - even before it was known anyone would need it (meaning before the taking of the tree God said not to take of) or the determination was made as to who would receive it - was that we be saved through the process Jesus demonstrated when He died on the cross and shed His blood. Salvation is all about us being raised from the dead in like manner as Jesus was raised. In the way humans are able to perceive time, Jesus did it before any other human experienced it in order to show us it was possible and available.

Thus, verse 30 says, with this predetermined plan of salvation in place, God, from the very beginning of time, called to those who desired His ways and not only did He call them, he justified them. This was/is done by the fact God did not make salvation the determination of man but of God! If you do not like who or how God chooses individuals for salvation, you have no one to argue with but God because He and He alone makes the choice! God also acknowledges these individuals by sending them forth to do His work which, if nothing else, is to grow on exemplifying the life Jesus lived. (Acts 5:34-42) This will certainly be true in the last days of this earth as Jesus will resurrect or transform all those who have been chosen up to that point in time and they will rule and reign with Him for a thousand plus years. (Rev. 20:1-6) There will be in this, great acknowledgment of those whom God has chosen! In verse 31, Paul tops all this information off by asking, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Because all this is true, we certainly should desire to be on God's side of things no matter what the price!

In Ephesians chapter 1, we see Paul starting out with greetings to the church in Ephesus, and then going into a praise of who God is and the plan He has set in place. Paul is speaking about how we should be thankful God has had a plan for saving those who desire His ways, right from the very start. Paul is speaking to the point that salvation was not an afterthought God came up with once it became necessary. God did not just come up with it because it turned out there were, in fact, people who desired to serve Him even after man's fall into sin. Paul is speaking to the fact God had a purpose for humans from the foundation of the world and even if it took God The Son coming down in human flesh and give His life to convince us, God was going to maintain a way for that purpose to be fulfilled. In verse 11 Paul makes what we have been talking about very clear when he says, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:..." In Christ we have obtained an inheritance. Not just any inheritance but the same inheritance all those who came before us desiring God's ways have obtained. We have obtained it because it was always God's plan for humanity that those who desire His ways have eternal life for the purpose of fulfilling the will God created humanity to fulfill. God provides eternal life through Jesus Christ, and even though Jesus did not come for many, many centuries after the fall of man into sin, it has always been in God's plan to do what is necessary to show us His will. Thus, those whom God desires to redeem has not changed and/or morphed through time on the basis God realized He was going to have to settle for whatever man, or the majority of men, were/are willing to give Him.

This goes hand in hand with what is said in Ephesians 5:25-27, where we are told Jesus is coming back for a church without spot or wrinkle. There seems to be those all through time who have believed because they are in a certain group or organization, they are the ones whom God will take with Him. There have been many church organizations that have actually written it into their doctrine. They believe only those who are part of their church are going to make it to heaven, or be the ones resurrected in the last days. Then there are those who simply believe, whether in writing or just in their mindset, which is made obvious by the things they say and do, that Jesus is going to accept whatever church there is when He comes. In this, what we are talking about again, is the thought that we can somehow bend, manipulate, steer or obligate the choices God can or will make. People just don't seem to understand that what makes you in or out is not that you have been predestined for one reason or another but that there is a predetermined plan of God you either desire or reject! In sending Jesus, God was/is working on and for the same plan which is based on the same will that caused Him to create us in the first place. Those who want God and His ways, even though they are not forced or programmed to, were, are, and will be the ones God desires to give eternal life to. That fact has not and never will change!

Predestination simply does not resonate with the entirety of the Word. The truth we just covered does. Galatians 6:7-8 says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." No matter what rituals we choose to take part in, no matter what we say we desire, and no matter how much we may even be fooling ourselves, if the things of the flesh are what we want over the ways of God - we will not see heaven! However, if the things of God are truly what we want, there is no way anyone or anything can take it away from us! This is why in Matthew 25 Jesus talks about separating the sheep from the goats at the final judgment. There is need for a final judgment to do this, because in the here and now, as we each walk this earth, we all intermingle with each other and each of us have a chance to choose. In the end of all this, only God can truly judge who desired what. One of the most pointed scriptures on this is found in Matthew 7, where in verse 21 Jesus says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." That statement, "...will of my Father..." is key to what we are talking about here!

Going back to John chapter 6 and continuing on

down the verses from verse 40, we see in the next couple of verses, the religious men talked among themselves about how upset they were that Jesus had the nerve to say He came from heaven when they knew who His parents were. Jesus tells them not to talk among themselves, but to be a part of the conversation He was trying to have with them. Then He says in verse 44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:..." What Jesus is simply pointing out here is that the plan and the way God The Father has chosen to go about saving us has to be attractive to us in order for us to accept it. This is speaking about our free will, once again. If we are the kind of people who want God to provide us with a Tree of Life that will sustain this life, then we are not going to be excited to know the plan of God is that we die! If we just want God to make this life and world a better place, in spite of the sin which will always be with us here, then we are not going to like the fact God intends to bring this entire existence to an end; replacing it with a new heaven and earth! (Rev. 21:1-4) The only way we are going to be attracted to the true work The Messiah was sent to do is if our relationship with God is more important than anything else and what we want above all else is to be with God! (Job 13:13-16)

Those who are going to be ultimately chosen of God for salvation and raised up by The Messiah at the last day, are those who have an attitude that sounds a bit like a children's book. They are the people who live with the determination - I will live for God here, I will live for God there, because I would live for God anywhere! The sad truth is, the stories we have been studying here show us clearly there are many who are interested in God in one form or another. However, their desire is for what the power of God could create and/or provide if they were allowed to use it as a tool to do what they want. This makes a theology like predestination a dream come true, but in the end they are in for a rude awakening. There is certainly no shortage of people who think this way in today's world. Thus, God is trying to warn all of us, that is not how the system works and if it were possible for the system to accept such ideas, there would be no need for salvation because there would be no such thing as sin! Sin is the destruction of the things God created for us and the ways He created us to live. It cannot be allowed to go on for eternity. Thus, those who desire it will not go on as well. You can like it or not but that is how it is and the fact many do not like it is why salvation would be useless if God simply granted everyone, or even a predetermined group of individuals, salvation. Make no mistake about it, God The Father will be the ultimate judge, but the reason He has to judge is because each one of us has a choice to make! (Josh. 24:15)

*Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by
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