

## COMMENTARY ON JOHN

### LESSON NUMBER 50

John 4:31 ***"In the mean while His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. <sup>32</sup> But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. <sup>33</sup> Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought Him ought to eat? <sup>34</sup> Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."*** ..... (John 4:31-34)

## TWO WORLDS COLLIDE

### INTRODUCTION

In our text, two worlds collide – one that is *"seen,"* and one that is *"not seen"* (2 Cor 4:18); one that is *"above,"* and one that is *"beneath"* (John 8:23); one that *"might be touched"* (Heb 12:18), and one that cannot be touched (Heb 12:22); one that is *"visible"* (Rom 1:20), and one that is *"invisible"* (1 Tim 1:17). One is *"temporal,"* and one is *"eternal"* (2 Cor 4:18). The devil is the *"god"* of one (2 Cor 4:4), and *"the true God"* is the God of the other (1 John 5:20). These worlds, or domains, are not compatible. Both are intended to be inhabited, but they cannot hold dominion at the same time. In the minds of men, only one can be prominent, even though, in the ultimate sense *"God Almighty"* is over them both (Rev 11:17). Both of these worlds have activities. Both of them culture a manner of thinking. However, as our text will confirm, they are not harmonious. The nourishment from the higher supercedes the nourishment of the lower.

If a person can recognize these distinctions, and accept them, he will be able to live victoriously. If he does not do so, he will constantly be defeated, overwhelmed, subverted, and made to live outside the circumference of the will of God. Further there are times when all those in Christ feel the influence of both worlds simultaneously. In such times, they are forced to make a decision. They cannot remain neutral in such a conflict. It simply is not possible. They will yield to one of them. If they are actually living by faith and walking in the Spirit, their faith and the Holy Spirit will move them to make the right choice, and they will experience satisfaction. If they are not in such a stance, they will be overcome and experience frustration, sorrow, and defeat. All of this occurs within fighting *"the good fight of faith"* (1 Tim 6:12), and earnestly contending for the faith (Jude 1:3). It involves laying *"hold on eternal life"* (1 Tim 6:12), walking *"in the Spirit"* (Gal 5:16), working out our own *"salvation with fear and trembling"* (Phil 2:12), and running the race to glory that has been set before us (Heb 12:1-2).

### I HAVE MEAT TO EAT

John 4:31 ***"In the mean while His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. <sup>32</sup> But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of."***

**IN THE MEAN.** Other versions read, *"in the meantime,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"in the meanwhile,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"meanwhile,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"While this was taking place,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"in between,"* <sup>ABP</sup> and *"While this was*

*happening.* <sup>CEV</sup>

The word translated *"in the mean"* [metaxu] has the following lexical meaning: "BETWEEN (IN THE MIDST); MEANWHILE," <sup>THAYER</sup> "OF SPACE; BETWEEN, IN THE MIDDLE OF," <sup>FRIBERG</sup> "OF TIME, BETWEEN-WHILES, MEANWHILE." <sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup>

This is descriptive of the period of time between the woman going to town, and returning to the well again. This was not merely a time of waiting. Both heaven and earth are working during this space. Because of this, minds are working, and mouths will be speaking. There was an established purpose being worked out. The first phase had just been completed in Jesus' speaking with the woman. Now, the work will be brought to culmination— and until that takes place, they are *"in the mean,"* or the *"meanwhile"* period. Jesus knew what was taking place, His disciples did not. While He has a perfect grasp of the situation, they are confused. So far as they knew, Jesus was wearied with the journey and had not eaten anything. They have brought back food, which they thought was the perfect adaptation to the situation. But there were things they did not see.

These *"meanwhile"* periods prove to be the undoing of many people. You may recall the five *"foolish"* virgins were overthrown during a *"meanwhile"* period – it lasted longer than they had expected, and thus they were not allowed to enter the wedding feast for which they thought they had prepared.

**What you do with the "meanwhiles" of life is important.** If you slip into the idle and unprofitable mode, you will be caught unawares by things you did not expect. If you have lived for a while, you already know this. This is an inherent danger that accompanies an inordinate desire for entertainment and casual living. No person can pass laws for how to handle these *"meanwhiles,"* or intrude into the affairs of others concerning such things. But the individual must learn how to handle such times – what to avoid, and what to culture. The disciples thought this was the time to eat, and ordinarily, that may very well have been the case. However, the Father's *"business"* always trumps other activities. That is how Jesus lived.

**MASTER, EAT.** Other versions read, *"Rabbi, Eat,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"eat something,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"Master, take some food"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"Rabbi, have something to eat"* <sup>GWN</sup> *"Teacher, eat something,"* <sup>WILLIAMS</sup> and *"the disciples kept urging Him."* <sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> They were respectful – *"Master,"* *"Rabbi,"* *"Teacher!"* However, they did not think it was proper for Him to go without eating. Perhaps they were thinking like Jesus' relatives when they saw Him consumed with ministering and said, *"He is beside Himself"* (Mk 3:21,31-35; Matt 12:46-47). The *"flesh"* cannot comprehend preoccupation with the work of the Lord. Such a life is thought to be a waste.

If you are living *"unto Him who died"* for us *"and rose again,"* you have surely experienced others questioning your motives, being confused by the manner of life you live. Those in the flesh simply do not understand a life lived for the Lord.

**I HAVE MEAT TO EAT YE KNOW NOT OF.** Other versions read, *"I have food to eat of which you do not know,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"that you know nothing about,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"of which you have no knowledge,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"of which ye are ignorant,"* <sup>MRD</sup> *"that ye have not known,"* <sup>YLT</sup> *"you don't know about,"* <sup>LIVING</sup> and *"I have food (nourishment) to eat of which you know nothing and have no idea."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

There is a form of nourishment that can strengthen the whole man – spirit, soul, and body. One time, when Jesus was ministering extensively, and said to His disciples, *"Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat"* (Mark 6:31). *"No leisure"* means no convenient time to eat. Probably unknown to the disciples at that time, they had

been eating some of the food to which Jesus now refers. Viewed from an even higher perspective, Jesus was doing the work that had been assigned to Him, and while He was doing it, the work itself nourished and strengthened Him. However, when it was completed, He needed to rest.

Normally, you would think of Jesus' ministry as only output – but here He affirms that it also involved input. He was eating as well as supplying, partaking as well as serving. There is a personally sustaining ministry that takes place when one is doing the work of the Lord. This was lived out in the Lord Jesus. Even in Him in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily (Col 2:9), while He was in the earth, this was not a permanent condition. When He was tempted of the devil for forty days and forty nights, He did not hunger until those days ended. It is written of that occasion, "*afterward He was hungry*" <sup>NKJV</sup> (Matt 4:2). However, while the temptation was taking place, and later while He was ministering He was being sustained both within and without. Moses spent forty days and forty nights with the Lord without eating (Ex 34:28; Deut 9:9,18). Elijah went for forty days and forty nights without eating, after eating one angelic-prepared meal (1 Kgs 19:8). There is a miraculous nourishment that defies fleshly explanation – a nourishment that sustains the soul independently of earthly food.

### **HATH ANY MAN BROUGHT HIM SOMETHING TO EAT?**

*"<sup>33</sup> Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought Him ought to eat?"*

**THE FACT OF LACKING COMPREHENSION.** There is an area of reality that can neither be known nor diagnosed by human knowledge and wisdom. It deals with things that are beyond the border of human experience – things that cannot be detected by human "senses" seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. Outside of these abilities, men can only philosophize, speculate, hypothesize, conjecture, theorize, and suppose – and none of those are authoritative, or can be used to establish what exists in that realm that is inaccessible to human senses. What men **imagine** concerning God, Christ, the world to come, the unseen world of spirits, the Word of God, etc., cannot be trusted, because all such diagnoses are nothing more than unenlightened guesses.

In Scripture, we frequently read of this kind of limitation. There is a state described as "*understood not*" (Psa 106:7; Dan 12:8; Mk 9:32; Lk 2:50; 9:45; John 8:27; 10:6; 12:6). This is a state that can only be addressed by an understanding **given by God**. Knowing this David prayed, "*Give me understanding*" (Psa 119:34,73,125,144,169). It is why Paul prayed for the churches, "*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened*" (Eph 1:17-18). And again, "*For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*" (Col 1:9). It is why he wrote to Timothy, "*Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things*" (2 Tim 2:7). In the arena of spiritual understanding the saying of Solomon applies: "*of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh*" (Eccl 12:12). This is why "*the Son of God is come, and hath **given us an understanding**, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ*" (1 John 5:20).

The reason the disciples did not understand what Jesus said was **not** because they lacked mental aptitude. It was not because they were uneducated. "*Spiritual*

*understanding*" (Col 1:9) is transcendent understanding that comes from God. Any form of religion that can be successfully comprehended and addressed by human wisdom cannot possibly be true – even if it seems extraordinarily simplistic. God does not require men to have a wisdom or understanding that He does not give. That is a monumental lesson to learn!

**NOTICE HOW THE DISCIPLES REASONED.** This is before any of them received the Holy Spirit, which reception took place on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). They did not consider a special kind of food that could sustain Jesus. They did not ponder the possibility that God could, and probably did, sustain Jesus. They did not consider that Jesus speaking with the woman was associated with any practical satisfaction and sustenance. At that time, they actually thought eating took the precedence over ministry. They thought that the nourishment of the body, at least at that time, was more important than the sustenance of the soul. These men had been with Jesus. They had seen Him turn water into wine (John 2:9-11). Yet, they could not yet associate that with other things Jesus could do.

At this time, so far as they were able to discern, someone must have given Him something to eat. That apparently is the only possibility they could imagine. That revealed the extreme limitation of their understanding at that time. They could not yet think of God as *"able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"* (Eph 3:20). O, they no doubt knew well of Israel being fed with manna from heaven (Psa 78:24). They knew about a widow who had been sustained all through a famine (1 Kgs 17:9-16; Lk 4:25-26). However, without the illumination that comes from God, they could not associate those clear and concise texts with the circumstance they were now confronting. Surely, they thought, someone must have come and given Him something to eat.

Nothing like this is ever reported of the disciples of Jesus after they had been born again and given the Holy Spirit. When they faced a lame man asking for alms, they knew what to do (Acts 3:1-7). When they confronted opposition, they knew what to do (Acts 4:23-31). When they perceived liars within the church, they knew what to do (Acts 5:1-10). When they confronted a sorcerer who had deceived an entire city, they knew what to do (Acts 8:18-24).

Now, within the framework of the New Covenant, men are given to reason properly. Their thoughts do not gravitate to the flesh. Their judgment becomes more mature, as well as their response to otherwise confusing circumstances. All of *"the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* are hidden in Christ (Col 2:3), and the saints have been joined to Him (1 Cor 6:17), have been baptized into Him (Gal 3:17), and called into fellowship with Him (1 Cor 1:9). Now they can become more and more able to think and judge correctly, not being constantly confused by circumstances. This is the heritage of all believers.

### **A SPECIAL MEAT**

*"<sup>34</sup> Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."*

**JESUS SAITH TO THEM.** When Jesus spoke to His disciples, He was not merely talking, but was teaching and instructing them. He was doing more than simply sharing His thoughts with them. He was tutoring them, orienting them for the work that would be assigned to them. He was not speaking to them as their Friend, but as their Master.

**MY MEAT.** Other versions read, *"My food,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"I am fed by"* <sup>CEB</sup> *"My nourishment,"*

NLT *"That is food for me,"* <sup>IE</sup> *"The food that keeps me going."* <sup>MESSAGE</sup> He was speaking of what nourished and strengthened Him – what brought Him enjoyment, aptitude, satisfaction, and refreshment – what revitalized Him. This included both the inward and the outward man.

**IS TO DO THE WILL OF HIM THAT SENT ME.** And what was it that particularly nourished Jesus? Other versions read, *"do the pleasure of Him who sent Me,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"do what the One who sent Me wants,"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"obey what God wants,"* <sup>IE</sup> *"be obedient to Him who sent Me."* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

Some of the versions misrepresent this text with the words *"obey,"* <sup>IE</sup> *"obedient,"* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *"should do."* <sup>DARBY</sup> Jesus was obedient, or obeyed God (Phil, 2:8; Heb 5:8), but that is **not** what Jesus is referring to here. A different word is used here that is properly translated *"do"* (poieo). The word means to make, bring forth, execute, and fulfill. <sup>THAYER</sup> It depicts Jesus carrying out what God had purposed. There is a sense in which that included obedience, but it is a much larger thought. Entering into the work involves much more than obedience. Jesus was sent to accomplish something, not merely to obey a commandment.

Commenting on His work, Jesus said, *"But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in him"* (John 10:38). And again, *"the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake"* (John 14:10-11). And again, *"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you"* (John 14:20).

Christ's personal involvement in the will of the Lord – doing His will – was nourishing, invigorating, and rejuvenating. It involved His entire Person – spirit, soul, and body. There was joy, as well as satisfaction, and invigorating fellowship that diminished the cries of the body for nourishment.

**AND TO FINISH HIS WORK.** Other versions read, *"to accomplish His work,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"complete His work,"* <sup>NRSV</sup> *"make his work complete,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"bring his work to completion,"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"perfect His work,"* <sup>ABP</sup> *"finish the work,"* <sup>GW</sup> and *"accomplish and completely finish His work."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Jesus referred to *"the works which the Father hath given Me to finish"* (John 5:36). At the conclusion of His ministry He said to the Father, *"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do"* (John 17:4). The last words He said before He died were, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). Those works began with His announcement of what He had come to do (Lk 4:18-19). The summary of the commission given to Him was this: to lay down His life, then take it up again. He said, *"This commandment have I received of My Father"* (John 10:17-18). He commenced laying down His life when He humbled Himself, taking the form of a Servant (Phil 2:7).

The Father's commandment, or will, was not grievous to Jesus. Nor, indeed, was it mere activity. It was Jesus' meat, or food. It is what sustained Him, moving Him through all manner of experiences from temptation to teaching and feeding multitudes. He was the most pleased when He was doing the Father's will. It brought Him the greatest satisfaction and joy.

In this case, doing the Father's will was speaking to a Samaritan woman – telling her about the water He came to give, and wanted her to have. It was clarifying what pleased the Lord, and proclaiming a time when the worship of God would be done in spirit and in truth. He had no pangs of hunger as He taught that woman. For that matter, it appears as though she was not hungry either. Further, she did not appear to be thirsty

either. The text does not tell us whether or not she gave Jesus a drink, but whether she did or not, Jesus was realizing superior satisfaction.

We have here an index to the Divine nature. Jesus still takes delight in doing the Father's will. He doubtless is pleased and satisfied when He intercedes for us (Heb 7:25), gives us an understanding (1 John 5:20), shepherds us (Heb 13:20), and is bringing us to glory (Heb 2:10). When He keeps us from falling (Jude 1:24), or makes us stand (Rom 14:4), He takes great delight in doing so. In His Sovereign rule, He is doing the will of God, and bringing the eternal purpose of God to completion. When He provides a way of escape in every temptation, He is doing the Father's will.

When you comprehend what Jesus has said, you will be given a place at the table, to dine with Jesus and realize joy and satisfaction also. It takes the tediousness out of living, and removes all grievousness that can be associated with keeping the commandments of God (1 John 5:3). Fellowship with Jesus includes fellowship in His satisfaction.