

June 14

Scriptures: Read John 6

Key Verse: "... the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." (John 6:51c)

Overview

Jesus certain was skilled in alienating people. First of all there were His very exclusive claims to deity. Secondly, there was His flagrant disregard for the religious sensibilities of the Pharisees. Then there was His "lonerism"; He would get a big crowd, hanging on His every word, and thought nothing of walking (or boating, as the case may be) away. But the great offense was what is recorded in this chapter.

A day after Jesus had fed the five thousand with five barley loaves and two small fishes; He took the rest of the day off. That night He took a stroll on the lake—much to His disciples' astonishment. The next morning, some of the crowd from the day before caught up with Him in Capernaum. They wanted another free meal, but Jesus wouldn't co-operate. Then they asked for a sign—"How about some heavenly bread, Jesus?" they asked. Can you believe it? The food they had ingested at the previous day's miraculous meal wasn't even digested, and they're asking Jesus to perform "a miraculous sign" so they can believe in Him. Were they blind? Stupid? Or just plain dense?

Jesus ignores their lobotomous density and tells them (to continue the bread imagery) that He is, metaphorically, the "bread of life". Then comes the great offense.

He tells them they're going to have to "eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood" if they want to have "life". While they're gasping at that, He goes on to compare the bread of His flesh to the manna, which their forefathers ate. Little wonder we read, "From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him" (v.66). Jesus had gone too far. They had all heard or read enough of pagan religious systems, which incorporated cannibalistic practices, and wanted nothing to do with this. "His ego has exploded", they must have thought. And Jesus just let them go, without any further explanation.

Little did any of His disciples realize that Jesus was speaking of His death on Calvary, where He became the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." The Passover Seder's broken and blessed bread and the outpoured and blessed wine became the symbols of salvation. And every time we partake, we "remember His death, until He comes."

The great offense has become the great atonement.

Prayer

We pause now, beloved Lord, to remember Your broken body and spilt blood. Thank You for Your commitment to us, even unto death, and may we also exhibit such a total commitment to you.