

John 6:22–31

Sermon: **Jesus is a Stand-Up Comedian**

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BEFORE THE INTRODUCTION

1. While studying **John 6**, I came to the conclusion that in some ideas I presented in *Sermon No. 55* I was wrong. Which ideas do I mean exactly? From (§ 2.4–§ 2.6.1) in that sermon, I stated that there were two reasons why Jesus decided to withdraw to Bethsaida:

A) Because of the death of His relative — He wanted to be alone, to get away from everyone so He could grieve for John and rest. He also wanted to ask His Father to strengthen Him in continuing to proclaim His Kingdom.

B) I also said that Jesus feared for His own life and for the lives of His disciples — and I now believe I was wrong about that.

1.1. Why did I change my mind? In **John 6:16** it says: **When evening came, His disciples went down to the lake, got into a boat, and set off across the lake for Capernaum...** In the following verses, we see that Jesus also returned to Capernaum. Therefore, the assumption that Jesus was afraid of Herod, and afraid for His disciples, must be excluded as a possible scenario here. But for some reason, Jesus DID decide to go to Bethsaida that day — now I know that He simply wanted to be alone for a while so He could process everything that was happening, and so He could give His disciples a chance to rest.

1.2. Let's also look at *Sermon No. 56*. I believe I was a little brief with you when explaining in (§ 3.4–§ 3.5) who the God of the Bible is. Although everything I said there still STANDS, I have since found several verses from two different books that can deepen our understanding of who the God of the Bible really is — and they will also help us understand Jesus' words in **John 6:37** when He said: **"All those the Father gives me will come to me."**

In other words, in **John 6**, Jesus strongly affirms that God the Father is the Author of this reality — who, through His plan (script), has predestined everything that has happened, is happening, and will happen within His reality.

1.3. With these verses, I want to show that the idea — *God is the Author of this reality* — which Jesus presents in **John 6**, comes from the Old Testament, which I believe He studied diligently throughout His upbringing.

1.4. Let's first go to **Proverbs¹ 8:22–31**:

The Lord brought me forth as the first of His works, before His deeds of old; I was formed long ages ago, at the very beginning, when the world came to be. When there were no watery depths, I was given birth, when there were no springs overflowing with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before He made the world or its fields or any of the dust of the earth. I was there when He set the heavens in place, when He marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when He established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when He gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep His command, and when He marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was constantly at His side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in His presence, rejoicing in His whole world and delighting in mankind.

1.5. **Isaiah 46:9–10** says: I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

1.6. **Isaiah 45:11–12** says: This is what the Lord says — the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: “Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands? It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.”

1.7. Please remember these verses, let them be engraved in your mind, and as we go through **John 6** I will try to convey to you why it is GOOD for us to understand who the God of the Bible is.

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

2. The author of the Gospel is John, brother of James the Greater — they were the sons of Zebedee². I have already spoken about the Synoptic Gospels, but I would like to add something I learned recently. Namely, the Synoptic Gospels are mostly focused on Jesus' ministry in Galilee, while the *Gospel of John* is more focused on His ministry in Judea — a personally very interesting fact that helps me in interpreting Scripture.

It is generally believed among biblical scholars that the *Gospel of John* was written at the end of the first century. In those same circles, it is believed that John's intention was to complement the other Gospels. In a way, that's true, but the only event all four Gospels record together is the one where Jesus feeds the multitude in the wilderness. Also, unlike the other Gospels, John writes in more detail about what happened after Jesus fed the multitude.

¹ The Book of Proverbs is written in figurative language and poetic form.

² (Matthew 10:2)

INTRODUCTION

2.1. Let's slowly get into the text: after Jesus fed thousands of people, they began to believe among themselves that He was their future King³. Jesus recognized their reaction, and therefore decided to withdraw into solitude in order to prevent a potential catastrophe that could have befallen the people in the frenzy of their belief. In other words, Jesus wanted to protect His people from certain death at the hands of the Roman army during an uprising that would have been triggered immediately after they crowned Him king.

2.2. Before leaving to be alone, He told His disciples to sail back to Capernaum. When He noticed that the disciples were struggling to row because of large waves⁴, He decided to perform another miracle — privately — just for His disciples to see. He walked on the surface of the Sea of Galilee during the high waves and strong wind. They were shocked when they saw this. Confused by the situation, they wanted to help Him into the boat, but then realized they were already at the shore of their city, Capernaum.

The next day, the rest of the crowd went home, but they again sought out Jesus. When they found Him, they asked Him a question — and this is when Jesus gave an answer that, unfortunately, motivated many to leave Him.

THE CROWD WANTS MORE SIGNS

3. Alright, let's slowly move into the text. In **John 6:22–25** it says:

The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with His disciples, but that they had gone away alone. Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. When they found Him on the other side of the lake, they asked Him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

3.1. The next day, the crowd again decided they wanted to see Jesus. From the text, we see they knew well what the disciples' boat looked like. After realizing Jesus was no longer there, they concluded He must have returned to His town, Capernaum. The text also tells us that others from Tiberias arrived that same day.

On the map, we can see that Tiberias is located south of Capernaum, meaning it is on the same side of the shore. This also tells us that the impact of Jesus' ministry on the eastern shore was enormous. Likewise, the immediate fame that Jesus had among His people explains why He decided to leave Capernaum suddenly for Bethsaida, rather than, for example, somewhere further south along the shore.



³ (John 6:15)

⁴ (Mark 6:46-49)

3.2. Since they could not find Jesus, the people decided to return to Capernaum to look for Him, and when they found Him, they addressed Him with the title: *Rabbi* (Teacher). What's interesting here is that Jesus doesn't answer their question at all. Instead, He responds in a way that confronts them about their wrong motives for seeking Him.

3.3. Let's remember something: the evening before the crowd asked Him how He got back to Capernaum, Jesus had been alone in prayer⁵. My assumption is this: during prayer, Jesus was reflecting on everything that had happened that day — for example, how the crowd reacted to His teaching, what they concluded after He had miraculously fed them with bread and fish. All of this, I believe, Jesus considered in His mind during prayer.

3.4. From His answer, we can assume that during prayer Jesus decided to sober their minds with a brutally powerful and revolutionary truth.

THE CROWD WANTS PROOF JESUS IS GREATER THAN MOSES

4. In John 6:26–33 it says:

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on Him God the Father has placed His seal of approval." Then they asked Him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent." So they asked Him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat⁶.'" Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

4.1. *You are looking for me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled.* Wait a minute — aren't bread and fish also SIGNS? Yes, they are! So what is the difference between this sign and the others Jesus performed?

Jesus is playing a game here — He's drawing them in to expose them. How? By taking them back into the past, to the time of their ancestors who wandered in the wilderness for forty years. In other words, His answer was a trigger that caused them to respond: *"Our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness..."*

And when He had caught them in this trap — let's call it that — He began giving them the information that was important for them to hear.

4.2. Before I explain what Jesus meant when He spoke these words, I want to share a few things with you that will help us better understand the event before us.

4.3. First: these people were not ignorant. They knew exactly what Jesus was talking about here. To us, His words might at first sound like He was trying to confuse them — but He

⁵ (Matthew 14:23)

⁶ (Book of Exodus 16:4)

wasn't. Their knowledge of the Old Testament was solid. They knew the historical truths of their people. They knew what Jesus meant when He called Himself the Son of Man. They knew why God fed their ancestors for forty years in the wilderness with manna from heaven every day except on the Sabbath⁷. We see this from their response. So everything Jesus said to them in **John 6** was immediately understandable to them. That's why they were able to say later in **John 6:60**: *"This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"* In other words, everything Jesus said here — for example: *"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them"* — was perfectly clear to His audience.

4.4. We all know this: no one gives a direct reply to something if they didn't understand it, right? That's why I conclude that the listeners knew very well what Jesus was talking about — and in the end, they decided to reject His teaching.

4.5. Second: Jesus most often presents Himself in the Bible with the title *Son of Man*. I've spoken before about who the Son of Man is: He is the King, the Messiah, the Christ. All of these are titles describing the One who will rule God's Kingdom forever. But Jesus wasn't the only one with this title — all kings from David up to Jesus bore the title *Son of Man*.

4.6. I'd like to take us back into the past, to David's **Psalm 8**. Although at first it may seem that David is speaking generally about every human being that has existed — in the sense that humans rule over all creation: sea, land, sky, animals — I believe David was not speaking generally. He was speaking about the Son of Man, the king who rules over all creation in the name of the Lord. And who better than David to write such a psalm? He knew exactly what it was to rule in the name of the Lord — he had lived it. Through this relationship between himself as the Son of Man and the Lord, David came to realize how great God is, and how small man is compared to Him. This moved David to write Psalm 8 to express his amazement: Why would such a great God ever grant someone other than Himself the right to rule over His creation?

4.7. As I mentioned, this was a process. David was an ordinary shepherd living in a time of polytheism. He and his people were surrounded by nations who also believed their kings represented the god they worshiped. The Lord, in that time, chose to establish a relationship with David, telling him that he would represent Him as king — the Son of God, the Son of Man — in the land of Israel, surrounded by pagan nations with their own kings, their own "sons of god." In other words, given the time David lived in, he understood what God was asking of him. And throughout his reign, David realized that the Lord is the greatest God of all. How did he realize this? Through the supernatural acts the Lord performed in David's life — victories over surrounding nations and their gods — David gradually came to believe that the Lord is the Alpha and Omega of created reality. In other words, David knew that no god could compare to his God. But there's more — when David realized how great his God was and that He was the strongest, in David's eyes, God became even GREATER. How? Because such a God chose to give a small, fragile human being the power and authority to be only slightly lower

⁷ (Book of Exodus 16:22–25)

than Him — in the sense of ruling over His reality. When David understood this, he fell in love with God's character. He began to know Him intimately. And because of that, in David's eyes, God became even GREATER.

4.8. Why am I telling you all this? Because Jesus knew that His people knew King David through the Scriptures. They knew that King David humbled himself before God in order to truly know Him — and now He was calling them, while calling Himself the Son of Man, to humble themselves, to realize that His teaching comes directly from their God. In other words, He was telling them: *If food is more important to you than My teaching, then your heart is not humble before God — and if it's not, you will never know God as I and David know Him.* Of course, no one knows the Father like Jesus Christ, but in the concept of who God is — that He is a God who has no problem exalting a small human being to have authority over all He created — David and Christ stand on the same level.

4.9. Alright, let's go back to the text and see whether the crowd's heart is humble or proud. Unfortunately, from their answer we see they are proud-hearted. They demand more signs and make a corrupt comparison between Moses and Jesus. Why do I say *corrupt comparison*? Because standing before Jesus are His disciples and a crowd who already knew Him well — meaning, they knew what He had long been doing throughout Galilee in the name of their God. The miracles He performed spoke for themselves, proving He was who He claimed to be.

4.9.1. So, in the end, the problem wasn't the signs. The problem was their hearts — hearts that, when confronted with Jesus' teaching, revealed that they didn't actually love God... they loved themselves. And when such a heart is confronted with the truth, it begins to make excuses, coming to conclusions that justify why it shouldn't listen to Jesus.

"Our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness..." — with this statement, I believe they were really saying to Jesus: *"Yes, Jesus, You fed us bread and fish yesterday, and that's incredible — we admit it, and that's why we wanted to make You king. But let us ask You one thing: Moses fed our ancestors manna for forty years, and You've only fed us once. So if You're greater than Moses, why don't You feed us at least as long as Moses fed our ancestors — then we'll believe You!"*

JESUS IS A STAND-UP COMEDIAN

5. The crowd's question proves that their hearts were proud and corrupt. They didn't actually want to believe Jesus' words. Theoretically, even if Jesus had fed them for the next forty years, and after those forty years asked them, *"Do you now believe My teaching?"* — I believe they would have come up with something else to demand from Him, always to fulfill their shallow, earthly desires.

5.1. In the eyes of the crowd, Jesus was like a stand-up comedian who comes on stage and makes the audience laugh — and as long as he succeeds, the audience will clap enthusiastically. But if the comedian fails to make the audience laugh, they will stop clapping and begin to mock him.

CONCLUSION

6. The crowd began to mock Jesus with their statements because He no longer “entertained” them. Let us not be like the crowd and have wrong expectations of Jesus. Let us be humble in heart, listen to His teaching, and then we will fall in love with the very character of God — just as David and Jesus did.

6.1. In the next sermon, we will continue with Jesus’ answer to the crowd after their statement: *“What will you do that we may believe you?”*