

# Festival Confusion & Gods Plan Of Salvation

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[0:00] I turn back now to the Gospel of John and chapter number 6, and we're going to read three! verses which are going to be our focus this evening. First of all, at verse number 37, where we read these words, all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. And then at verse number 44, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they will all be taught by God, everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me, and so on.

I guess if we want to understand and to learn what it is like to become a Christian as well as being a Christian, we need to hear what Jesus himself has to say. And through the Gospels, we have an account of that in many different ways. We hear in the letters what people like Paul and Peter have to tell to us about what it means to become a Christian. But in the Gospel of John, especially we have Jesus engaging with the crowd. And when we read through the Gospel, we can notice that Jesus himself is a festival goer. He goes to the Feast of Tabernacles in chapter 7. He goes to the Feast of the Passover here in this chapter. He goes to the festivals where the crowds of people are gathering.

And they are gathering there because of their historical interest in being the people of God and the things that God has done and said in the Old Testament. And whatever they are doing between the festivals, they want to be in the place where the festival is taking place, because it is a time of celebration. And in these festivals and in these times of celebration, they are probably the places where those who belong to the people of God are most confused, and we see their confusion most. And that's clearly what we see in this chapter. And Jesus is working with them and talking with them and asking them to consider the biggest questions of life. And we know from our everyday lives that there are big questions around us. There are our own personal life challenges. There is the challenge of the culture around us. How do we live as Christians in a secular world, in a world that is constantly moving away from God? How do we live in that kind of world? Big questions. How do we understand and how can the problems that the world faces in different parts, how can we understand these problems? How can these problems be addressed? And how can we find answers to these problems? Big questions, big challenges. Who can provide the answer? And without in any way belittling the massive challenges that we face personally, locally, nationally, and internationally, the biggest question for all of us, the priority is for all of us to know, to find out how we become the children of God, and then to become the children of God.

[3:42] And we want to think about that as we look at these verses, the verses that I refer to in particular, to look at these verses this evening, because at this Passover, there's a conversation going on.

And Jesus is talking to them, and they are talking to Jesus. And the more the conversation develops, the more it becomes clear that they are in fact poles apart. The people do not understand why Jesus is here. They simply cannot see his significance. And we want to think of Jesus at this festival. We'll notice the historical connections because this is a festival that is held annually by the people of God. To make the connections with that festival and to see the connections that Jesus makes with the people. And to think especially of festival confusion and God's plan of salvation. I want us to think first of all, of the engagement and the commitment. And Jesus begins his engagement with the people here in verse number 35 by making one of these great statements that he makes in the Gospel of John, where he says, I am the bread of life.

And as soon as we hear Jesus proclaiming himself to be the I am, who is the bread of life, who is the resurrection and the resurrection and the life. When Jesus mentions I am, he is talking to our people who know their theology, their doctrine, who know their Bibles. And when they hear I am, they think of Exodus chapter 3 and the burning bush. They think of Exodus chapter 19 and 24 and

God making a covenant with his people. Who does Jesus think he is? Who does Jesus say he is? He is identifying himself with the very God who spoke to Moses at the bush and told him to take his sandals off his feet because he was on holy ground.

Jesus wants them to know that for them to understand salvation, to understand who he is and to understand his work, they have to understand who he actually is. Yes, he's the son of Joseph. Yes, he's the son of Mary.

[6:17] But that's not the most important thing. The I am is the son of God that we have at the very beginning of this Gospel, the Word who was with God and the Word who is God. And as Jesus is proclaiming himself to be the bread of life, God says to the children of Israel in the Old Testament and Jesus quotes these verses in his temptation, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.

And when Jesus says that he is the bread of life, having performed the feeding of the 5,000 at the beginning of this chapter, he is making a connection with the history of the people of God and the descent of the manna in the wilderness to the children of God. They were hungry, they had no food. And God sent to them manna from heaven so that they were able to eat it and not to starve to death. And connecting with the Passover which they are attending, connecting with the history as the people who are in the wilderness, connecting with all of that, he is saying, I am the bread of life. And we read through these verses and we understand that he is the one who was sent from heaven by God. And thus the manna came down from heaven to feed the children of Israel. So, God sent his son into the world to be the bread of life.

To be that which sustains humankind in a particular way. And when I read bread of life, I read that he is the source of the life that they have need of and that we have need of. And in making that connection with them, he wants to establish the way in which that connection through which he is the bread of life is actually concluded and sealed and displayed powerfully as Jesus comes to the cross.

The bread, he says in verse number 53, the bread I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. His body was broken.

God's wrath was poured down upon him. Greater love has no one on this and a man lay down his life for his friends.

[8:52] John saw him at the beginning of the gospel and we read that he said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They have just fed themselves on the Passover lamb. And Jesus is pointing their attention, their focus in this engagement with them to his commitment to save them. To the commitment that takes him from heaven to earth.

From the manger to the cross and ultimately to the grave. That's his commitment. He is here to show to them, to tell them why he is here and what he is going to do in order for them to have life. And whenever we hear the gospel preach, that's the engagement. That's where the gospel takes us. That Jesus is the Son of God. That he has come to give us life in his fullness. And that he gives that life to us by giving himself on the cross at Calvary. He is connecting with them and their history. And tonight the gospel is connecting with us and the work of the Lord Jesus so that we ourselves will recognize that whatever else may be true, there is life in no one else but in Jesus alone.

When he says he is the resurrection and the life in John 11, then that means that he is the exclusive path to resurrection and life.

[10:18] He himself is these very things. And in that proclamation, he speaks about his commitment, commitment not just on the cross at Calvary, but his commitment to them. And he turns around and he says to them, in verse number 35 that we read, whoever comes to me, the promise, the commitment of Jesus is to those who come to him and to those who believe in him.

And that sense of coming is coming to him because we are hungry for the bread of life and we come to him. We move from where we were in life without God and without hope and we take this journey in our hearts, in our minds, in our lives.

We make this conscious decision and we come to the Lord Jesus. And the promise to such is that they will never hunger.

The people of God hungered in the wilderness and they grumbled just as Jesus referring to them in this passage here. But Jesus saying to them in his commitment to them if they come to him that they will never be hungry.

there may be life-threatening situations but there will never be a time when the word of God will not come into their minds and into their hearts and enrich them with the words that come out of the

mouth of God.

[12 : 05] And whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. That coming to be persuaded which is what faith is coming to believe.

It's the simplicity of what you are doing and what I am doing in my mind and in my heart that I come to be persuaded. That all of my questions about the Lord Jesus all my questions about salvation that they simply begin to drop off one after the other because the more we explore the more we become persuaded.

when we were in America a couple of years back we were talking to this Roman Catholic chap who was from Ireland and he was living outside of New York and he was an unbeliever and in his workplace there was a Christian there who was witnessing to him and the more that he argued against this Christian believer the more that he found that the arguments that he was using that they were meaningless and that in fact the Christian had all of the answers.

He was persuaded to drop all of the defenses and to drop all of the resistance and simply to accept. And that's the simplicity of our coming to faith in Jesus would drop everything because at last we're persuaded that he must be our Savior.

But his commitment to them is not matched by their commitment to him. And that's where they move away from him and are shown to be on the opposite side to him.

[14 : 04] And verse number 36. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. They had seen his miracles.

They had seen the marvel of the feeding of the 5,000. They had jumped in the boat and they came across seeking Jesus. Because Jesus telling them you have not believed.

moved. You don't understand. You haven't become persuaded. And despite your desire to jump in this boat and to come to where I am, that desire is not a reflection of your commitment to me. It shows that you're moved by signs and by performance. I said at the beginning that Jesus was a festival goer.

It's been the wake of the Hebkelt festival and people going because there's a performance and going to particular performances because that's what their interest is.

[15 : 18] Or that person is the person that they are interested in. The performance draws a crowd. And that's what's happening in the story. There's the performance of the miracle of the 5,000.

And the performance captures attention. And the crowds are gathered. As we would come to church to hear the gospel, the crowds are gathered around Jesus because of the performance. But Jesus saying you do not believe despite the fact that you have seen. And they're saying what do you want us to do? What should be our performance?

So that we may work the works of God. And the simple answer is to believe in Him. But that's the very thing that they are not doing.

The engagement and the commitment. Tonight there is no question about the commitment of Jesus to our salvation.

[16 : 23] salvation. The big question is our commitment to Him as our Savior. Coming to church may be a performance.

Coming to church may be a weekly performance. It may be a twice-weekly performance. But the real question is what brings us to hear the gospel?

Is it because we are persuaded? Or is it the fact that tonight we may be in the very place that these people are in, that Jesus saw their hearts, and despite their stated desire to see Jesus, the action that they took in order to show that despite that, they simply are not committed to Him.

Jesus puts His finger on the reality of their unbelief. you have not believed. And as we move on tonight, that is the big question for all of us here.

As the Word of God engages with us, and as Jesus engages with us through these words, what does the engagement show in our hearts and in our lives?

[17 : 42] Are we committed to Him? Are we persuaded by Him? Have we put our trust in Him? Or does our desire even to be here this evening not go deeper than simply being here?

It's a personal question. It's a question that only we can answer personally because you know what is in your heart and you know what is in my heart.

The engagement commitment and the commitment. Secondly, I want us to think of the education and the choice.

We make choices. We have chosen to be here this evening. Life is filled with choices. Every day of our lives we're choosing to do A, B, and C.

We're choosing not to do D, E, and F. There are choices in every area of life, in our personal lives, in our home lives, in our choosing our holidays and our vacations.

[18:48] We make choices. And in a real way we also make a choice to believe or not to believe. But the education goes beyond their choice.

The education is focused on God's choice. And that's where the heart of the gospel takes us tonight. That before there is your choice, there must be God's choice.

And the your choice is because God has chosen prior to that. And they're thinking that because they are Jews and because they have the history of the people of God, they are thinking that they are the people of God.

but Jesus wants to make it quite clear. And that's what I read in verse number 37. All that the Father gives me will come to me.

There is a gift on the part of God to His Son. And the gift was with regard to certain people that God Himself has chosen and He has donated to His Son so that His Son will go and He will give His life to be their Savior.

[20:15] Jesus Himself says that in John 17. They were yours and you gave them to me. And for their sakes, I sanctify myself for their sakes, I am going to the cross to be their Savior.

God gives us the right to be the children of God. In chapter 1, once more we read of the way in which God gives us the right to be the children of God.

And that right to be the children of God is that God has chosen before the world was. And we can read the detail of the Bible.

In the book of Genesis and God's choice. In the letters of Paul and God's choice. chosen in him before the foundation of the world. Peter writing to those who are exiled from the kingdom of heaven scattered across the nations and he speaks to them as those who are elect exiles according to the foreknowledge of God the Father chosen by God.

love predestined to the adoption of sons. Our salvation tonight must be seen not in the light of our own personal choice but in the light of the glorious grace and mercy of God that before the world ever was and before humankind ever appeared in this creation that God had a purpose and a plan for his creation.

[22:02] God had a purpose and a plan for his church, for his people. He chose elect in him before the foundation of the world. God.

And tonight if you're a child of God, surely that's one of the greatest marvels. That God chose you before the world ever was.

Not because you're better than the next person, not because you did good works that the next person didn't do, but the free love of God, the sovereign love of God, choosing you and leaving someone else.

The free gift of God, the choice of God, the Father gift. How do we find them?

How do we see them? The invisible becomes visible in the lives of those who are chosen by God because they are the ones, says Jesus, who shall come to me.

[23:18] In the moment of God's choosing, the God who has chosen is the God who calls. And in the moment of that calling, there is a coming to the Lord Jesus.

God and for the child of God tonight, for the person who has put their trust in the Lord Jesus, that's the great comfort. So that I don't struggle tonight with my coming to believe in Jesus.

And perhaps I didn't do this or I didn't do the next thing. And when I compare my conversion story with the next person that don't marry together, they are so different. that's not the issue.

The issue is that the God who elects is the God who calls. And because of that calling, we come to Him.

The education about God's choice, that in that invisible way, before the world was, the saved people of God were chosen by God.

[24:34] And that tonight, they are visible here. They are visible across the face of the earth because God tells us that from every nation and kindred and tongue, they will be gathered around His throne according to His promise, a number of people that cannot be numbered because of His purposes.

the security of the child of God and the undermining that security brings to anyone who puts their trust in what they are doing themselves and their own works.

What is deeply reassuring for the child of God is designed also to take away, to destroy the foundation of our own good works as the basis for salvation and to ensure that we are left with nothing in that area and seeing that only by the grace of God are we saved.

God is and that choice of God and that work of God comes with its own promise.

Secure not just because we are elect but because as Jesus goes on to say in that verse, whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

[26 : 05] there are many who are the children of God and who at times in life thought their salvation was lost.

There is a teaching abroad as it has always been abroad that we can be saved and lose that salvation. And Jesus wants to tell them as he wants to tell us that that simply will not happen. It's impossible because once we are saved, we are saved forever, we are saved for all of eternity. Never cast out.

And perhaps the image goes deeper than that because it's the picture of coming home or going somewhere and finding that there is an unwelcome guest.

That person is not welcome here. That person is not going to stay here. It's evicting that person. It's removing him from the house, from the family household so that they are no longer there with the rest of the guests.

[27 : 20] God drove the man out of the garden of Eden. But Jesus saying that he will never cast out those who come to him because of the electing love of the father.

And re-enforcing that we can read in the following verse. For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raise it up on the last day.

That's ultimate security. it's not just that I'm saved today and tonight and will be saved tomorrow but that because of the father's choice it's his purpose that all those whom he has chosen will be raised up with the Lord Jesus will enter into the glorious paradise of the new heavens and the new earth and will be there in the paradise of God forever more.

It is the father's will that none of these will be cast out but that they will be raised in glory.

Nothing says Paul can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. So let's be assured tonight from this education that we have from the words of the Lord Jesus.

[28 : 50] Let's be assured as the children of God that are coming to believe in the Lord Jesus is because of God's prior work of choosing us. And tonight if we have not come to faith let's be reminded that we need to abandon every other strategy to enter into the kingdom of God and that we must drop our own works and simply hear the words of Jesus the grace of God the choice of God that is the basis and that will be and can be the basis of your personal choice of believing in the Lord Jesus.

So there is the engagement and the commitment there is the education and the choice and finally there is the experience and the conversion.

how does this work? And we know that our conversion is not something mechanical. It's not like my computer program which works things out and produces something.

It's not like that. Of course it's not. Our conversion God's work in our lives is deeply personal. And Jesus highlights that in the other verse that we read in verse number 44.

Again no one can come to me. There is that impossibility. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

[30 : 30] There is a work on the part of God based on his choice before the world was where he engages with our hearts.

And the sense of drawing is not not enticing somebody to walk into a place or a relationship with their eyes closed.

It's being drawn with love and with the grace of God himself drawing us in our hearts. We can see the picture of drawing something and we can try and draw perhaps sheep or cattle or animals. and they dig their heels in and sometimes it's impossible to pull them on your own once they dig their heels in. You draw and you're trying to bring them to move them from the place they find themselves in by a pulling motion to relocate them.

But in this drawing of God the Father and those who are sinners like you and like me there is no resistance.

[31:46] The drawing is powerful. The gospel becomes irresistible. Jesus becomes irresistible. There's a constraining, there is a persuading, there is the sense of my heart being moved with love for this God who loved me before the world was and with love for this Jesus who loved me and gave himself for me.

The drawing of God the Father. And in our conversion there's that sense of what Jesus says in John 10 my sheep know my voice.

They know me, they hear my voice and they come to me because they know my voice. That there is that engaging of Jesus by the power of the Spirit in our lives.

Our attention is captured. Whatever our attention was before, it's now captured by the gospel, by the word of God, and by what God is doing.

It's captured because not only is what God is saying important, it's urgent that I respond to it, and the more my attention is drawn to it, the more my heart is drawn to it as well.

[33:10] The gradual drawing of sinners to put their trust in the Lord Jesus. It's a picture, not of a great Damascus road experience where in the darkness the light shines, as Paul saw.

I'm not going to be waiting for that kind of conversion experience before I put my trust in the Lord Jesus or believe that I'm a Christian. That is not going to happen generally.

Perhaps Paul's experience is close to being an exception because most people come to faith in the Lord Jesus by the sense of being drawn and by the sense of being attractive, or Jesus being attractive and Jesus being the most important thing.

When I was converted, I used to come to Carlyway very often for communion and there was of course the revival in Carlyway and so many people were converted in different ways in that revival and one of the elders who of course are no longer here, one of the elders, and he was telling his own story and because he did not have the great experiences that he thought others who were converted had, he thought for years that he was not himself converted.

Until he realised the work of God in his heart, the drawing of the love of God, that sense of attraction that he was in the same place as they were, God had taken him on this gentle road with himself into God's salvation.

[35:09] And I love to hear Duncan telling that because when I heard his story, the first time I said to myself, that's me.

And if this godly man from Carlyway is saved, as I surely was because I knew his Newman fellowship and I knew a lot of his life through the communion circle, if this person is saved, then I should not be looking for anything else because I must be saved as well.

It was a stepping stone in me reaching the kind of assurance that enabled me to put my trust in the Lord Jesus. And I'm telling that story simply because so often in our churches, in our congregations, there are those who are saved.

And they're listening to the gospel, and they're seekers in their own eyes, and they don't understand that they are actually believers. They are looking for something else, and that something else simply is not going to come.

And it's coming to understand the natural, general way in which God, by the power of His grace, draws us to ourselves.

[36:30] And Jesus goes on in the next version, verse 45, to show us how that works. It is written in the Proverbs that they will all be taught by God.

Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me, and that anyone has seen the Father, no one has seen the Father except he who is from God. But it's hearing and learning.

And that's what it is. It's that openness of the ear to the gospel. The sudden change so that the uninteresting became captivating.

And so the very thing that had no preciousness at all became the invaluable thing. And so the gospel of Jesus Christ and the salvation that he offered is a must have.

It's not an option. It's a must have. And because it becomes a must have, it becomes the desire of our hearts. And as we close this evening, and as we leave here, what a blessing it would be for us if our hearts tonight together were marked by the same desire because we heard the voice of the Lord Jesus.

[ 37 : 52 ] Because he has educated us in our understanding of what it means to be a believer, to be a Christian. And we understand tonight, all of us, that through Jesus alone can we be saved.

That we leave this room, laying aside everything else and every other prop, and simply looking unto Jesus. All the ends of the earth, says God and I say, that you may be saved because I am God and there is no one else.

May God rid our minds of any confusion and may help us to see the gospel clearly and help us to understand the importance of Jesus as our Savior.

May God bless his word to us. Let us pray.