

# Turned or Taught

## John 6

It was a set up, really. Jesus had a message, a critical lesson to convey and He prepped the class, if you would, with a couple of miracles.

John penned it to the early (mostly Jewish) church to encourage their belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. In order to understand, we need to step back from our story in John chapter six about 1280 years.

In Exodus, the Hebrew people were terrified by the thunderous voice, the fire and smoke coming from the mountain – the ground quaked, knees knocked and teeth rattled. Basically, they told Moses, “Y-y-you go and speak with God. W-w-we’ll wait right here.” Probably, more from overwhelming fear than anything else, the people who gathered at the base of Mt. Horeb recognized that they needed an intercessor and an intermediary with God, and they were right. As a group, they said, *“Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God nor let me see this great fire anymore lest I die.”*

Moses later spoke of this in Deut 18. He recorded God’s response, *“What they have spoken is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and I will put my words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.”* (Deut 18:18,19)

Now, over the centuries that followed, many prophets came and spoke God’s words to the people. Many confirmed their messages with signs and wonders. But none were

like Moses. You see, God answered Moses’ prayers and did, among other things, two miraculous signs for the people – He ‘split the sea’ and he ‘brought the bread’. Apart from recording the law, these were the two signs most closely associated with Moses in the minds of the Jews.

Thus, in John six, when the host of thousands surrounded Jesus in the wilderness, He *“knew what He would do.”* First, he miraculously fed them – five loaves and two small fish sated some 10,000 – 15,000 people and resulted in 12 baskets full of leftovers. Second, He walked on water, crossing the sea of Galilee.

In the minds of the hungry hoards, the first sign was enough to generate the notion that Jesus was indeed “that Prophet like unto Moses.” But the message wasn’t going to be received by the masses. Jesus knew they were less interested in what He had to say than in what free food He might offer.

His mastery over the sea was witnessed only by those in the boat – His disciples. These were the men He was intent upon instructing. These were the ones who would hear God’s words.

In fact, when the people He’d fed caught up with Jesus, He said, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”* (John 6:26,27)

As you might expect, the conversation quickly turned to Moses and manna. You see, the whole point of the miracles was to demonstrate that Jesus was indeed

“that Prophet like Moses.” However, He didn’t just rain manna down like dew on the grass then make the people gather and cook it; He had them sit down on the grass and served them a banquet of barley loaves and fish. He didn’t just split the sea with a mighty wind; He walked over it in spite of the wind. (In fact, He didn’t just record the law; He fulfilled it.) He was like Moses yet He outdid Moses. For what purpose? To generate o-o-o’s and ah’s? To fan the flames of popularity? To sell books on church growth? No way!

What did Moses relay? ‘The Prophet like me will come,’ he said, ‘and He will speak God’s words to you, so listen to Him!’ (my paraphrase). As dull as the disciples seemed to be at times, the 12 (or rather 11 of the 12) seemed to get this. For when Jesus followed up with His ‘eat My flesh and drink My blood’ sermon, the would be king-makers from the earlier feast lost their appetite and split the scene. Jesus then turned to His disciples, knowing that even some of them were murmuring and said, *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life.”* (Jn 6:63) Not ‘hearing’ and not submitting, many of them exited as well and walked no more with Him.

Turning to the 12, He said, *“Do you also want to go away?”* to which Peter gave the response, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

As Moses foretold, Christ’s ministry leading up to the cross wasn’t about miracles, not fundamentally. It was about the message – God’s words.

The miracles He performed set the stage for, or were in themselves a portrayal of “the words of eternal life.” As marvelous as the miracles were (and are), they are servants to the message.

And these words are sometimes quite difficult. If you don’t hear them spiritually, if you are set to accept only what is ‘acceptable’ or logical or popular, it’s quite possible you’ll turn away.

We are living in the age spoken of by the apostle – *“For a time will be when they will not endure sound doctrine, but they will heap up teachers to themselves* (other than the Lord) *according to their own lusts, tickling the ear. And they will turn away their ears from the truth and will be turned to myths.”* (2Tim 4:3,4)

John’s goal in relating this series of events to us was to clarify to those who would follow Jesus that like at Mt. Horeb, there is sometimes a terrifying power in the voice of God’s word – the truth generally first makes us painfully uncomfortable. There are times when the Lord would indeed flunk our ‘seeker sensitive’ protocols. Some of His message is a “hard saying” because it is fundamentally unappealing to the carnal nature. In fact, it’s down right repulsive to the fleshly mind. Yet, we must hear Him.

As Peter proclaimed, no one else has the words of eternal life – no swami, no guru, no mullah, no politician, no media mogul or movie star, no well-meaning shrink, no best selling author, not even Coulter or O’Reilly. Only Christ is faithful to say, “all that [God] commands.” He is the everlasting intermediary between God and man – faithful to

speak the truth to us even when it's hard. And yet He's also faithful to intercede on our behalf to the Father for He knows our frail frame and has paid the full price for our failures.

Will you turn or will you be taught? Will you truly accept what He has to say about you, about this world, about love and grace, about righteousness and judgment, about heaven and hell? Everything the world so to speak throws at us is intended to cause us to turn, to turn away from the truth. Generally, it is not a rebellious turning but rather a deceptive, seductive, gradual turn. Either way, the consequences are so serious:

*As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways,*

*The LORD shall lead them away  
With the workers of iniquity.*

Psa 125:5

*See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,...*

Heb 12:25

*And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.*

Deut 18:19

And so, Solomon, guided by the Holy Spirit wrote,

*He also taught me, and said to me:*

*"Let your heart retain my words;  
Keep my commands, and live.  
Get wisdom! Get understanding!  
Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth."* Pro 4:4,5

And Isaiah the prophet recorded,  
*The Lord GOD has given Me  
The tongue of the learned,  
That I should know how to speak  
A word in season to him who is*

*weary.*

*He awakens Me morning by morning,*

*He awakens My ear  
To hear as the learned.*

*The Lord GOD has opened My ear;*

*And I was not rebellious,  
Nor did I turn away. Isa 50:4,5*

Now, I don't believe or suggest that as a sincerely born again believer, if you have a hard time with a hard truth that you endanger your salvation. However, if you will follow Jesus, be prepared to listen in the Spirit, to accept and submit to some 'hard sayings' from time to time – it's for your benefit, for your health, eternal welfare and freedom. Read His Word and hear His voice. He wants to teach you His ways:

*O God, You have taught me from my youth; And to this day I declare Your wondrous works. Psalm 71:17*

*I have not departed from Your judgments, For You Yourself have taught me. Psalm 119:102*

*He also taught me, and said to me:  
"Let your heart retain my words;  
Keep my commands, and live.*

Proverbs 4:4

*It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God."*

*Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. John 6:45*

*But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, Eph 4:20-22*

He knows you perfectly. He loves you intensely. Let Him teach you and train you in His wonderful way. Don't ever be offended or turn away.