

God's Calling: John 6:40-48

5-27-18

John 6 contains one of Jesus' most controversial sermons. In that Sermon He described Himself as the Bread of Life, as Manna was a bread from heaven for the Israelites. In particular, Jesus makes some statements in John 6:40-48 that are sometimes misunderstood. In that section of the sermon He makes a resurrection promise that is tied to seeing and believing in Him. But the controversial part is verse 44; there He tells us that God draws men to Him. This is controversial because many see this as a statement that God uniquely and individually calls *some* people to Him. Some also say that without this individual calling, men are not saved. Finally, some even say that God does not call all men. What does this mean?

When we examine difficult passages, sometimes it is appropriate to first determine what He cannot mean. This is determined from other passages in the Bible. One thing we can rule out is the idea that God only calls a few people. In 1 Timothy 2:3-4 we see that God desires that all men should be saved. Thus it cannot be that God only calls a few, when He states His purpose is to bring salvation to all (see also John 3:16). Secondly, we need to rule out that God calls men supernaturally. This is necessary because God states that He calls men universally and equally (Acts 10:34, Ephesians 6:9, Romans 2:11). Therefore, individual calling is not consistent with this divine attribute.

The answer to these questions begins earlier in John, in John 3:11-15. There Jesus was teaching Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel. He described how the Son of Man would be "lifted up" and how that would save all men. Then He compared this to an event in the Old Testament. In Numbers 21:5-9, the Israelites had been complaining again to God, and fiery serpents were sent. When the people repented, Moses interceded and built an image of a bronze snake for them to look at and be healed. Consider how this is like Jesus in John 3; the Israelites looked upon the image of their sickness to be healed. Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3) for us to be healed.

What does all of this have to do with being drawn by God? The answer is in John 12:32-33. There Jesus brings these two thoughts together: being lifted up IS how God will draw all men to Him. Thus what Jesus told Nicodemus about being lifted up and what Jesus said in John 6 about God drawing all men is accomplished by His death. When Jesus said that God would save those whom He drew, He tells us that this drawing was His death on the cross. Only by His death could men come to Him.