

Jesus came from heaven to give eternal life to the world, but many spiritual seekers and self-described Christians will not believe this hard teaching, but will turn away revealing that God has not granted them spiritual ability to believe in Jesus. Don't turn back because only Jesus can give you eternal life.

Introduction – James M. Boice story of people asking him which Bible doctrines they need to believe in order to be a Christian, a faithful follower of Jesus.

I. Why do only some believe (or continue to believe) in Jesus?

A. The apparent answer (vv. 41-42, 60-62)

1. Contrary to appearances, Jesus claimed to be a man from heaven come to give life to the world. Five times Jesus said he “came down from heaven” (John 6:33, 38, 50, 51, 58). This is the matter in dispute, and it was a hard saying to accept. How could Jesus say these things about himself when they knew where he came from? They knew his father Joseph and his mother Mary, which made Jesus’ claims seem outlandish. Familiarity can breed contempt and unbelief.
2. Jesus often confronted people with this kind of irrationalism that poses as reason and pressed them toward belief (John 4:44; Matthew 13:57-58). We also face the choice to believe when confronted with Jesus’ divine origin. That Jesus is the God-man come down from heaven is crucial to his identity and mission as the Son of God (John 1:1-2, 14, 18, 45-46; 3:2, 3, 17, 31; 5:36-38; 6:29, 33, 38). You must answer the question: is Jesus the heavenly God-man, or a mere human being just like you? To mangle Shakespeare’s Hamlet, “To believe, or not to believe. That is the question!”

B. The theological answer (vv. 43-46, 63-65)

1. No one is able to come to Jesus by faith unless the Father draws that person to Jesus. Coming to Christ in faith for eternal salvation is not a human achievement. It is nothing to boast about to people who don’t believe in Jesus.
2. Everyone who hears and learns from the Father comes to Jesus. Every single person who has come to Jesus by faith and thereby obtains eternal life had previously heard from God the Father and learned from God that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. All of those who come to Jesus have the common experience of hearing and learning from God, who draws them to Jesus.

II. Why not another interpretation?

A. No: Cooperative grace (Semipelagian “assisting” grace)

In verse 44, the Greek word translated “can” is *dunamai*. It does not mean having permission to do, but “to be able” or “to have power” to do. No human being has the moral or spiritual ability to come to Christ in faith unless God gives him the desire and inclination to come to Jesus and the ability (power) to believe in Christ for eternal life. The natural fallen hardness of heart in humanity prevents every single person from accepting the free offer of the gospel, unless a special work of God’s grace takes place in an unwilling unbeliever, removing his hard heart of stone and replacing it with a living heart of flesh that is able and willing to believe (Ezekiel 36:26).

B. No: Initiating but resistible grace (Arminian “prevenient” grace)

1. But can a person drawn by God to Jesus resist this drawing? In verse 44 Jesus also speaks of God “drawing” a person. The Greek word is *elkuō*, which means to drag, pull, draw, haul, or

attract. The drawing of a man is not a drawing by force against a person's will, but by attracting with unfailing love a person whose obstinate will has been transformed by God. So a converted sinner is not dragged kicking and screaming to Jesus. Rather God performs spiritual heart surgery on the sinner, implanting a new heart that instead of running from Jesus in unbelief runs to Jesus in love and faith.

2. What does Jesus say about the man who is drawn by God? That he will be raised on the last day. This is a clear an unavoidable reference to the resurrection of believers. In other words, Jesus says that all those who are drawn by God will become followers of Christ, persevere in following Christ their whole lives, and will certainly be raised up to eternal life at the resurrection on the last day.

C. Yes: Biblical grace (Reformed “sovereign” grace)

Christians who believe in cooperative grace, or initiating but resistible grace, can affirm that it is necessary for God to draw sinners to Jesus that they might be saved. But the Bible pushes us further, to affirm that God's drawing of a person is irresistible (contra the unbiblical teaching of initiating but resistible grace). The Bible also pushes us to affirm that no one can even begin to come to Jesus unless he is sovereignly born again by the unmerited grace of the Holy Spirit (contra the unbiblical teaching of cooperative grace), so there is no sense of cooperation between the spiritually all-dead sinner and God in the act of bringing new life and salvation to that person.

III. Why not turn back?

A. Jesus is the only source of eternal life (vv. 47-51)

For the third time (out of 4) in John 6, Jesus solemnly tells his listeners, “Truly, truly, I say to you” (John 6:26, 32, 47, 53). Jesus is strenuously pointing us to eternal life. To obtain life we must believe. There could be an exclamation point at the end of verse 48. All of John 6 is an explanation of this truth: Jesus is the bread of life. He is the bread of life come down from heaven to give life to the world. He has ascended to heaven to return to his Father. His claim is wonderfully true!

B. There is no one else worth following (vv. 66-71)

1. Up to this point, Jesus had been an extremely popular rabbi. Large crowds followed him, and many claimed to be his disciples. But after this account filled with hard teachings, many turned back, revealing their underlying unbelief. The more people heard Jesus teach, the more divisive he became.

2. So Jesus turned to the remaining disciples (the Twelve) and asked if they wanted to leave with the others. This was the big test. What would his chosen disciples do? Would they prove Jesus' teaching of irresistible grace by their response?

3. By faith Peter confesses (for himself and for the group) that Jesus has the words of eternal life. They cannot leave Jesus no matter how hard he makes it to follow him. They cannot and will not turn back from following Jesus because they have been drawn by the Father and have come to believe that Jesus is the Holy One of God. How could a disciple turn back from following him? Inconceivable! Once a person knows Jesus, no one else can satisfy.

Conclusion – “Lord, to whom shall we go?” These are beautiful words that every Christian can adopt as his own when following Jesus becomes overwhelming, but know there is no other way. Make these words your prayer and confession of faith when you're wrestling with God in the midst of trial, uncertainty, confusion, doubt, struggle, pain, temptation, lethargy, sorrow, etc. They are the path of hope in Christ, who is the living hope for all who continue to believe.