

EATING JESUS' FLESH, DRINKING HIS BLOOD
John 6:53-66

Intro: Quite obviously this is the real feast of which the Lord's Supper is a picture.

What this discourse meant to the Jews, and even to the disciples, it is not possible for us to know. One thing we do know: it offended the Jews as well as many who professed to be disciples of our Lord. Consequently John tells us that

From that time many of his disciples went back,
and walked no more with him.

The word time is in italics, indicating that it is not in the original. The Greek actually means, out of this, and points, it would seem, to what the Lord had been saying instead of the time.

But there is no question that this is what the Lord's Supper was meant to portray. This is what it takes to be saved--eating Christ's flesh, and drinking His blood. And we picture what it takes to be saved every time we observe the Lord's Supper. And it certainly indicates that no one should participate in the Lord's Supper who has not first in his heart so partaken of Christ.

The background of this discourse was the feeding of the 5,000.

This in turn had led to the Lord's claim that He was "the bread of life."

And from that the Lord went on to develop the presentation of the truth into eating His flesh, and drinking His blood.

What lessons are we to learn from these words of our Lord? I am thinking now of verses 53 through 58.

I. EATING AND DRINKING SUGGESTS MEETING A NEED.

The Lord has chosen words here that are familiar to people of all times, and of nations. Every person knows that if he does not eat and drink, he will not live!

People treat the Gospel as though it were something optional, something we can take, or leave. But our Lord's words indicate that what food is to our body, He is to the soul. It is not optional if you want to have eternal life. It is an absolute necessity.

This leads me to a second point.

II. EATING AND DRINKING OF CHRIST IS UNIQUE.

There is no other meal like this. We learn much about Abraham in the Scriptures, but we do not eat and drink of

him. We read a lot about Moses, but we do not eat and drink of him. We profit much from the Psalms of David, but we do not eat and drink of him. The same can be said of John, or Peter, or Paul, in the NT. And we can expand this to speak of Mohammed, or Buddha, or Mary Baker Eddy, or Ellen White, or Moon, the leader of the Mooneyites. It is only true of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, if you eat and drink of Him, you will have everlasting life, you will live forever. Abraham, Moses, David, John, Peter, and Paul are, of course, in a different category from the others whom I have mentioned, because they trusted in Christ, but they are just as incapable of giving life (except as they point us to Christ) as are the others I have mentioned.

But let me make another point.

III. EATING AND DRINKING EXPRESSES SATISFACTION.

It means that Christ does for us what He claimed He could and would do.

Through Him we do have life. Through eating and drinking we are brought into an eternal, living union with Christ. Through Him we shall never perish. Through Him our sins are forgiven. Christ alone is all we need. Nothing else needs to be added to Him and what He does for those who eat and drink of Him.

IV. EATING AND DRINKING EXPRESSES FAITH, CONFIDENCE.

You would not knowingly eat and drink that which would be harmful for you. An intelligent person is not going to eat and drink that which would do him no good.

Here we must consider what is really meant by eating His flesh, and drinking His blood. Obviously it is not something that we are to take as actually eating His body and actually drinking His blood. If that were the case, then no one would have eternal life because no one ever did that.

No, the Lord must have been speaking of the spiritual realities which are set forth in His flesh and His blood.

A. What was His flesh?

His flesh was His body. As He gave His disciples the bread in the Upper Room, He said, "This is my body."

What did His body represent?

It represented His incarnation. It meant that He, the eternal Son of God, became a man. But it also meant that,

although He was a man, He was a perfect man, and that, at the same time He had not ceased to be Deity in any way.

In other words, to eat the flesh of the Son of man means that your faith is in the most unique Person Who ever lived--One Who is fully God and yet perfect man.

If these two things were not true of our Lord, He could not give us eternal life.

Thus, it is important, absolutely essential that we believe the truth about the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. What about His blood?

His blood speaks of His death.

You see, it was not the living Christ Who could save, but Christ crucified. His teachings are the most wonderful that anyone ever gave, but His teachings are only effective through His death.

It is absolutely essential to believe that Jesus Christ died.

But we cannot stop there.

We must believe the right reason for His death--that He died, not as a martyr, not as a criminal, but as a substitute before God for the sinners whose sins He took with Him to the Cross!

Do you remember what He said about His blood in the Upper Room? I am sure you do. He said, "This is my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20).

C. What about the eating and drinking?

These express faith in a twofold sense:

1. That we really believe that He was God come to the earth as a perfect Man.
2. That we are trusting Him as the only One Who can give us eternal life.

But let me mention one more point about this, and then I will conclude.

V. EATING AND DRINKING SUGGESTS ENJOYMENT.

This, too, is common to all cultures. We all know that this

suggests pleasure. Let me illustrate.

Cf. Matt. 11:18, 19. The enemies of our Lord sought to drive a wedge between our Lord and John the Baptist. They said that John did not come eating and drinking, but that the Lord did! What did they mean? They obviously did not mean that John never ate food. The Bible tells us that he ate locusts and wild honey. See Matt. 3:4. No, they did not mean that he refused to eat. They meant that the Lord mixed and mingled in an enjoyable way with publicans and sinners, but that John the Baptist never did anything like that.

Eating and drinking of Christ is the greatest of all joys. Nothing is so delightful. Spurgeon once said that, if you delight in hearing of Christ, then your soul is in good condition.

When we first ate of His flesh and drank of His blood, a vital union was established between Jesus Christ and us. And that union has never been broken! He dwells in us, and we dwell in Him. We are inseparable! Nothing can possibly bring greater joy.

Concl: So, eating and drinking suggests:

- 1) A need is met--the greatest of all needs.
- 2) A unique meal.
- 3) Satisfaction.
- 4) Faith.
- 5) Enjoyment.

But let me point out one other lesson from the text itself.

There is both a change of tenses in the verbs that our Lord used when you go from v. 53 to v. 54, and there is also a change in the words that are used for eating.

The verbs in v. 53 are in the aorist tense; the verbs in v. 54 are in the present tense. V. 53 speaks of that initial feasting on Christ when we are saved; v. 54 speaks of that continual feasting which goes on afterwards.

And note what v. 54 says. Lit. it means, Whoso continues to eat my flesh, and continues to drink my blood, has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Now this, too, is pictured in our observance of the Lord's Supper. Remember that the frequency of the Lord's Supper is never dictated by Scripture. We are to observe it as often as we desire. But, when we do, it is to mean that we come to the Lord's table from having habitually been feeding on the Lord day by day.

But what about the change in the word for eating?

The two words are ἐσθίω and τρώγω. The last suggests more of a leisurely act, a slow process, an habitual act.

You see, when we first come to Christ, we have never fed upon Him before. But after that we never stop. We live our lives feeding upon Christ, and, according to our Lord's words in v. 54, when you feed on Christ in this latter way, it is evidence that you have eternal life.

(Comment on v. 35 in this connection.)

Our thoughts as we come to the Lord's table could not be better expressed than in the following words written by J. C. Lavater, and put to music by R. Farrant. (See The Keswick Hymn Book, #269.)

O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me,
And all things else recede:
My heart be daily nearer Thee,
From sin be daily freed.

Each day let Thy supporting might
My weakness still embrace;
My darkness vanish in Thy light,
Thy life my death efface.

In Thy bright beams which on me fall,
Fade every evil thought;
That I am nothing, Thou art all,
I would be daily taught.

More of Thy glory let me see,
Thou Holy, Wise, and True;
I would Thy living image be,
In joy and sorrow too.

Fill me with gladness from above,
Hold me by strength divine;
Lord, let the glow of Thy great love
Through my whole being shine.

Make this poor self grow less and less,
Be Thou my life and aim;
Oh, make me daily through Thy grace
More meet to bear Thy name.