

**JESUS' FLESH AND JESUS' BLOOD**

John 6:47-59

**Intro:** This is a passage which has caused a great deal of discussion throughout the history of the church. Some has taken this to mean that the Lord was speaking directly about the Lord's Supper. And this is where they have come up with the idea that there is saving value in the observance of the Lord's Supper. Our Lord Himself said, as we read in verse 53, "Verily, verily I say unto you except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." When we observe the Lord's Supper we are to believe, as the Lord Himself said, that the bread is the body of the Lord, and the fruit of the vine which is in the cup is the blood of Christ.

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The Catholic position is that as the bread and the wine are blessed, they become the actual body and blood of Christ. This is the doctrine of transubstantiation. But the bread still tastes like bread, and the wine still tastes like wine.

Now if this is what the Lord was teaching here in John 6, this would mean that there is saving merit in the observance of the Lord's Supper. The Lord said that except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). And then he followed up in verse 54 with the statement, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." So the Lord's words mean that if you don't eat His flesh and drink His blood, you don't have life, but if you do eat and drink, then you do have life. So obviously the Lord wanted His point to be clear. But we have to admit then, that there is saving merit in the Lord's Supper.

But if that is the case, then the Lord is saying, and the Bible is saying something that He did not say, nor did the writers of Scripture say, in all other places. In fact, if this is the correct interpretation, then the Lord had contradicted Himself in verse 47 where we read that He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth in Me hath everlasting life." This we know is the truth. All through Scripture salvation is by faith alone, and by grace alone. So we obviously are not to believe that this is the correct meaning of the passage.

There are others in the past who say that what the Lord was saying here

has nothing to do with the Lord's Supper, and that the flesh and the blood are symbolic of the Lord's work on Calvary's Cross. He died in His flesh, in His body, and shed His blood for our sins. Calvin believed this. So did Luther, and many others past and present who have spoken or written on these words of our Lord.

Personally I agree with the interpretation that these evangelicals put on our Lord's words, but I have difficulty in thinking that the Lord was not thinking at all about the Supper He Himself instituted on the eve of His death for sinners.

Still others do not think that the Lord was thinking of any literal eating and drinking, but that He did have in mind the Lord's Supper when He spoke of His flesh and blood.

So it appears that the Lord was speaking symbolically, but that there was special and very important significance to what the Lord said. J. C. Ryle, who taught at Oxford University, and has written many wonderful books dealing with Biblical subjects, has this to say about this passage:

We come now to one of the most solemn and important sayings that ever fell from our Lord's lips. Having brought the Jews step by step up to this point, He now declares to them the highest and most startling doctrine of the Gospel (I, 400).

While the Lord spoke of the children of Israel eating manna in the wilderness, this was only a illustration of what He was talking about. But all of them died. He was speaking of flesh and blood which, when taken, produced eternal life. Obviously it seems that the eating and drinking are synonymous with *believing*.

But what are we to understand about eating His flesh, and drinking His blood. Eating His flesh would be represented in the Lord's Supper by the bread.

Well, we know that the word "flesh" in Scripture is often used to speak of our human nature. We know that the Lord came to earth as a Man without surrendering in the least, His Deity. The false teachers we learned about this morning hated the doctrine, the teaching, of the Deity of Christ. But we know that if the Lord were not the Son of God, that Joseph was His father like Mary was His mother, then the Lord could not have been Deity, but He would have needed a Savior Himself. So person-

ally I believe that eating the flesh of the Son of God means that we fully accept the Deity of our Lord. The emphasis, in other words, is upon the Person of Christ, the God-Man who came to be our Savior. We need to know Him. Nobody can really have eternal life without believing in His absolute Deity, and also in His perfect, but very real, humanity. A person does not necessarily understand to begin with the wonders of the incarnate Christ, but he or she needs to know why Jesus Christ can save us, why we can't save ourselves, and why there is no other who can save us. These are truth about the Lord Jesus Christ that no person on his own is going to believe. This is a big part of what the Lord had in mind when He said, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Salvation is more than faith in words; it is faith in a person. It is a living relationship with a Person Whose Name is the Lord Jesus Christ. What is important about Calvary is not just that there was a person who died there, but Who it was that died.

The Jews in the OT was prohibited from drinking blood. And the Lord was not talking about drinking His blood. He was talking about *why* He died. The wages of sin is death, but He had no sin of His own. So as He came into the world, He could not die UNTIL your sins and my sins were charged against Him. Then He died taking our penalty upon Himself, and paid our debt in full. Can anybody be truly saved if he, or she, does not face the fact that he or she is under divine judgment, facing eternal separation from God? Does simply believing that if I trust in Christ I am going to have a better life, lead to salvation? Does trusting in Christ mean that I am going to be more prosperous in my business? Does eating His blood mean that by faith my troubles will all be resolved? This is the bait (so to speak) that is thrown out by a lot of preachers. They don't like to talk about sin because that offends people and they will quit coming to church.

Eating the Lord's flesh, and drinking His blood, mean that I understand Who He is, and why He did what He did at Calvary's Cross. His death was substitutionary, He died for all whom the Lord sent Him to redeem.

But before we observe the Lord's Supper tonight because I believe there is a connection between what the Lord said on this occasion in John 6, and what we will be doing in just a few minutes, let me ask you some questions. I am not asking you to respond. I just want you to think about what these verbs mean. And you don't have to know Greek to answer these questions.

What tense is the verb “believeth” in verse 47? Is it present, or past, or future. It is what we call a continuous present. It means that I have believed in Christ *and that right now I am continuing to believe in Him*. What about “eateth” and “drinketh” in verse 54 and 56. They are present tense participles. It speaks about what is going on continually, or what should be going on continuously in our lives.

How do we eat and drink Christ’s flesh and blood? It is by meditation. This is how we learn to live by Christ. This is how we dwell in Him and He in us.

Do you remember what Paul told the elders in Ephesus to do for those in the Ephesian church? You will find his words in Acts 20:28:

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Peter also had the same word for the elders of the churches to whom he wrote His two epistles. Listen to what he wrote in 1 Peter 5:1-4:

1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Why are we observing the Lord’s Supper here tonight? I trust that for me and for you, taking the bread and the cup of the Lord’s Supper, we have come to spiritually and in our hearts to eat of His flesh and to drink of His blood as we meditate on Who our Lord Jesus Christ is, and what He has done for us.

**Concl:** But what we are doing here tonight, as we read the Word and mediate on what we are reading, we ought to be feeding on our Lord Jesus Christ daily, learning more and more about Him, and learning more and more about what He did for us at Calvary. May this be the desire of our hearts.