

John 6:52-58 "Dine On Me, And With Me"

JOH 6:51-58 "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." 52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" 53 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever."

When we consider the magnitude of the Son of God leaving His throne in glory and coming into this world it is hard for our finite minds to comprehend how the Creator of all things can, Himself, become part of His creation, to the extent that He takes on a second nature; that of man.

This is what we mean when we say that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. This does not mean that the two natures have melded into one thus blurring the distinctions. And yet, despite the two distinct natures of Jesus Christ He is still only one person.

His disciples, for example, didn't address Jesus as God when He was doing miracles, and then as man when He sat down for dinner with them. The person of Christ is eternal and infinite, and yet the nature of Christ as man took place at conception by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary.

And just as it may confuse us in trying to reconcile how the eternal Son of God can now have two distinct natures, that of deity and humanity, it certainly confounded the Jews of His day who saw a man standing in front of them making claims of deity.

And so, this section of Scripture is one where Jesus is making it clear that His humanity does not disqualify Him as the One who came from heaven, being very God.

Now, when Jesus uses the kind of language He does here He is doing it for a reason. And part of the reason is to challenge the

spirituality, or lack thereof, of these people who can't seem to get past His flesh, His humanity, as He makes claims of having been with the Father in heaven, thus making Himself equal with God.

And this is where we left off last week with our Lord making a very interesting statement about His role as a human being as well as His role as God.

JOH 6:51 "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

A couple of things should be noted here. The first thing is that our Lord is continuing to use the analogy of bread to His flesh. Remember, the conversation has included everything from manna being given by God to the ancestors of these Jews, to the fish and loaves Jesus miraculously produced near the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus has been driving home the point of how these Jews were more concerned with ways to fill their bellies than they were with feeding their spirits with the spiritual life which Christ is claiming to be able to give them.

He is now saying, in no uncertain terms, that He is the true bread from God; not the kind of bread which just sustains physical life, but bread, which if spiritually eaten, gives and sustains eternal life.

But then Jesus essentially lays it all on the line in such a way where the Jews finally arrive at the conclusion that this man of Galilee is making no sense as He states, "This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

JOH 6:52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

What these Jews understood Jesus to say was that for them to have eternal life they must eat His flesh. But they also knew Jesus was not a mad man. He had taught in their Synagogues. He had healed their sick. He had spoken quite intelligently and had demonstrated a demeanor which was quite civil and sane.

And so, what we see is that they were not questioning what He said, but rather what did He mean?

When I was teaching the class on the inductive approach to studying the Scriptures you'll remember that there were three aspects to this approach.

- 1) Observation
- 2) Interpretation
- 3) Application

Observation is the basis for accurate interpretation and correct application. Observation answers the question: What does the passage say? (International Inductive Study Bible)

Interpretation answers the question: What does the passage mean?

Application answers the question: What does it mean to me personally? What truths can I put into practice?

These Jews listening to Jesus had considered the words Jesus was using. They heard what He said. But they couldn't figure out what He meant by such a strange statement which quite honestly was offensive language to them.

And since they couldn't figure out what He meant there was no way for them to have any personal application for their lives in what He was saying.

But instead of Jesus explaining to these Jews what He meant He continues to use this same bizarre language which caused this argument, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

JOH 6:53-56 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him."

Now, as I mentioned earlier, these Jews didn't seriously think that Jesus was promoting cannibalism, any more than Nicodemus seriously thought that one must go back into his mother's womb to be born again. They were certainly people without faith, but they weren't idiots.

But instead of giving the meaning of these strange words Jesus wades deeper into this slurry of swirling metaphor. And our Lord knew that this language would cause them to take offense. Keep in mind that He is speaking to Jews who knew the law.

Eating the flesh is one thing, but to drink the blood was over the top.

LEV 7:25-27 Anyone who eats the fat of an animal from which an offering by fire may be made to the LORD must be cut off from his people. 26 And wherever you live, you must not eat the blood of any bird or animal. 27 If anyone eats blood, that person must be cut off from his people.

With this law in mind these Jews were not only confused as to this language Jesus was using, but were certainly upset with the kind of language which commanded them to do something outside of God's written word. And yet, Jesus insists.

"I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."

Some have looked at this passage and have concluded that Jesus is making a reference here to the New Testament institution of the Lord's Supper. But keep in mind that the Lord's Supper is far from being instituted at this point.

Others have taken this passage and one's similar to it and have come up with strange doctrines which suggest that this must be taken literally. In other words, Jesus is making it clear that His flesh must be literally eaten and His blood must be literally drunk if one is to have eternal life.

This is where the concept of transubstantiation came into play in the Roman Catholic church. The doctrine of transubstantiation states that for one to have eternal life they must partake of the physical body and blood of Jesus.

The way this is accomplished in the mass is where the priest is the one given authority by Christ to declare that the bread wafer and the wine is miraculously changed into the body and blood of Christ while the elements stay bread and wine.

And so, in one sense the body and blood of Christ are infused into common elements, thus changing the nature of the elements in a spiritual way, not a physical way, which begs the question, where is the miracle?

And so, essentially this doctrine teaches that Jesus Christ is literally re-crucified and re-sacrificed every time the mass is celebrated.

This flies in the face of what the word of God clearly states in a number of places including Rom.6:9-10.

ROM 6:9-10 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In fact, John writes Jesus' own words in Revelation.

REV 1:18 "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

To suggest that Jesus Christ must be re-crucified and re-sacrificed is to plainly say He is dying all over again in a most literal way. This makes salvation dependent upon one's ability to consume Jesus both by faith and by ingesting the body and blood of Jesus into one's physical body.

By the way, "the Catholic concept of the mass was unheard of in the early church and was not invented until 831 A.D. by a Benedictine monk named Radbertus. It did not become an official doctrine until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A.D. The doctrine of transubstantiation wasn't proclaimed until 1215 by Pope Innocent the III, and did not become an official creed until 1564 A.D." (The Bible and Roman Catholicism, William R. Kimball)

But again, to suggest that the body and blood of Christ must be literally offered in an unbloody sacrifice in the mass is to deny our Lord's own words on the cross. "It is finished."

So, if Jesus' words in our text are not to be taken literally as to their meaning, what does He mean when He says that to have eternal life one must eat His flesh and drink His blood?

He is obviously speaking in terms which are meant to demonstrate the unique closeness one has by becoming partakers of His life, death and resurrection by faith. I mean our Lord would be contradicting Himself if He is suggesting that there is some work a person can do in the way of ingesting a wafer and wine to be a necessary part of his salvation experience.

In this very chapter of John's gospel Jesus clearly answers the Jews who thought they could do some work to attain eternal life.

JOH 6:28-29 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29 Jesus answered, "***The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.***"

It is faith alone in the finished work of Christ that secures our salvation, not some work we add to Christ's atonement, be it living by the 10 commandments or partaking of the elements of the Lord's Supper. That's not how we're saved.

But there is something here which should not go unnoticed as it relates to Christ's body and blood; in other words His true humanity. Jesus Christ came into this world for the reason of redeeming sinful human beings.

It was a man who originally represented all of mankind. His name was Adam. And I don't think we should lose the irony here of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ to attain salvation. It was an act of eating that condemned mankind in the beginning. And yet, we know that the physical act of eating the forbidden fruit was precipitated by a spiritual act of rebellion.

It was that spiritual choice which led to a physical reaching out to partake of that which God commanded men not to eat. And once man did that the spiritual penalty for sin, which is death, was immediately enacted and both Adam and Eve realized they were naked. There was no longer any protection from the wrath of God.

But since the penalty of sin was carried out by God on all mankind after Adam sinned, it only makes sense that for that sin to be lifted, or taken out of the way, a human being must take the penalty for mankind. A human being must be sacrificed for all men.

But since there are no sinless human beings who would qualify for this task God Himself chose to take on flesh and become a sinless man and take our place as He paid our debt in full by dying on the cross.

To suggest that Jesus was not truly human is to deny salvation for mankind, since only a man can pay the price of sin meted out to men by God. And yet only God can forgive sin, which is why Jesus had to be both God and man.

He took our sin though He was sinless. And so when Jesus uses this language here in our text there is a literal side to it as He is commanding these Jews to accept His body and blood on their behalf as they place their faith in His death for their sins.

And so, though they must literally accept His bodily sacrifice on their behalf, they are not being asked to literally eat His flesh and drink His blood. They are being asked to accept by faith His body being broken and His blood being spilled for them.

But in using this language Jesus is stating that He must become a part of these people's lives in such a way where He is literally in them in a spiritual sense. The two of them must become united. Just as physical food is united to our physical bodies, this spiritual food from heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ, must be assimilated into the lives of people who accept Him by faith.

JOH 6:55-56 "For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.
56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me,
and I in him."

In other words, His sacrifice is the reality of how we can be reconciled to God in a peaceful relationship. It is through Christ Jesus that one can be united to God by faith. In fact, the New Testament is full of examples of the reality of this kind of relationship between believers and Christ.

Later in this same gospel Jesus uses the language of uniting one to another; uniting God and men.

JOH 14:23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

Jesus is saying, 'I want to live with you forever. I want to be your God forever. I want you to be My child forever. I want' you to belong to Me since I have purchased you with My blood.'

Paul points out how our status with God has changed by faith in Christ and how that new life is actually given to us.

ROM 8:9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

It is the Spirit of Christ who lives in every believer, who abides with us. Again, this is the language Jesus is using in our text which these Jews didn't understand. By faith we eat and drink the life which wells up in us like wells of living water as the Spirit of God comes into us and seals us for the day of redemption.

And this is why Paul says there in Rom. 8:9 that we are not controlled by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit. Why? Because the Spirit of God is the one giving us this life, this new nature. And if the God who created the universe indwells us then what power can fight against Him if we are willing to submit to our God?

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians he tried to put into perspective this unique relationship between God and men as people place their faith in Christ; partaking of this spiritual food if you will.

1CO 3:16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

What an awesome picture of the intimate relationship God desires and acquires with men through His Son and His sacrifice on the cross for us. We are God's temple. We are where He lives in one sense.

And if He lives in and with us why would we try and live somewhere else; that is in the flesh or the old sinful nature? We are certainly in the world, but we are no longer of the world. And our final home is not this present cursed world.

That's what Jesus intimated earlier in this text when He said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (JOH 6:54)

Raise him up to what? To live on this present cursed earth forever? No. To be in His presence forever starting today.

PHI 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Paul is saying that our citizenship is in heaven while we wait for Christ's final return to this earth where He will dwell among us on the new earth forever, when our citizenship will still be heavenly but now on earth, where the two are united. This is what Peter addresses to the church in his second epistle.

2 Peter 3:10-13 ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But *according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

It is this new heavens and new earth, which will be established at Christ's second coming that John also addressed in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 21:1-5 ^{NAU} Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

Our Lord wants us to live in Christ in such a way that there can be seen no distinction between His life and ours. In other words, His life is ours and we must live that life out in such a way that people see us conformed into the image of Christ as we love Him and obey Him, doing His will in the power of His Spirit, as we await His return with the hope of Him dwelling with His people forever on the new earth.

The union that we have with Christ is similar to the union Christ has with the Father, in the sense that there is a union which cannot be separated; a union which is eternal; a union based on love and fellowship. We derive this union and our life in Christ who is united to the Father.

JOH 6:57-58 "Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever."

Jesus now comes full circle. These Jews were only concerned with what they could see with their physical eyes, could taste with their physical mouths and enjoy with their physical stomachs.

Jesus is saying that the bread I give is infinitely greater and more satisfying than anything that this life can offer, even if it was offered from the hand of God, such as the manna from the Lord.

As wonderful as that manna was the people still died. 'But if you will feed on Me, who is the living bread, you will live forever.'

To eat, or feed, in our text is to believe, to intimately embrace by faith the very Savior who came to die in our place. We need only substitute the words, and the meaning of what Jesus is saying becomes clear.

JOH 6:57-58 "Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds [*believes*] on me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds [*believes*] on this bread [*Me*] will live forever."

This was not an easy concept for these to Jews to grasp. Imagine a man coming to you and saying that He is not only a man but also God, as He was sent from the Father in heaven.

But Jesus didn't simply make these claims, He proved He was God. He gave His life on the cross and rose bodily from the dead three days later. He is alive today and gives life to all who would dine on Him, that is, believe on Him for eternal life.

And believe me, or should I say believe Christ and His written word, all who dine on Christ will one day dine with Him when He returns.

REV 3:20 "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

What a banquet that will be. Praise God!