

Feeding on Jesus

John 6:51-59

Thought for the Day: We feed on Jesus by believing in Him, trusting in His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection to be the sufficient payment for the penalty of our sins.

Beginning at John 6:32, Jesus repeatedly identifies Himself to the Jews as the bread of life that came down from heaven, sent by God to give eternal life to all who believe in Him. Among other things, the Jews understood that Jesus was claiming that He came to earth from heaven and that God was His Father. He was claiming to be the Son of God!

But starting at verse 50, Jesus began talking about the necessity of eating His body and drinking His blood in order to receive His gift of eternal life and live forever. This was absolutely shocking to the Jews! It is one thing to describe yourself as bread; it is another thing altogether to insist that people must eat your flesh and drink your blood!

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

- His identity: Living bread from heaven. (Cp. vss. 32,33,35,48,50)
- What we must do to receive His gift of eternal life: Eat this bread. (Cp. vss. 35,40)
 - To “eat this bread” means to accept Jesus Christ into our lives and become spiritually united with Him by faith.
 - We do this by trusting in His death and resurrection as the sufficient payment for our sins, and then making Him a vital part of our everyday life. (1 John 5:11-12)
- A further definition of what this living bread is: “The bread...is my flesh.”
 - Jesus was going to give His life on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.
 - It is by His sacrifice on the cross that He is able to give eternal life to those who trust in Him for salvation. (Matthew 20:28; Galatians 1:3-4; 1 Timothy 2:5-6)

52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

- Jesus was not talking about cannibalism! As we have often seen in John’s Gospel, He was using physical things with which we are familiar to illustrate and teach spiritual truths.
- Once again, the Jewish religious leaders completely missed the significance of His statement. (Cp. John 6:42; 3:4,9; 4:11-12; 9:16; 12:34)
- “It should be noted that the Roman Catholic Church appeals to this passage as a proof of the doctrine of transubstantiation—the false teaching that the body and blood of Christ are literally present in the bread and wine of the Mass... It is a false foundation for a false doctrine to suggest that Jesus was referring to the Eucharist (Communion or the Lord’s Table) here, since He used the word *sarx* (“flesh”). A different word, *saema* (“body”), appears in the passages referring to Communion (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:24,27).” (*MacArthur New Testament Commentary*)

53 So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”

- Instead of softening His tone, Jesus made His teaching even more difficult for them!

- To drink blood or eat meat with the blood still in it was strictly prohibited by O.T. law. (Lev. 17:10-14; cf. 7:26-27; Gen. 9:4; Deut. 12:16,23-24; 15:23; Acts 15:29)
- "This could not refer to the bread and the wine used at the Lord's Supper. When the Lord instituted His Supper, on the night in which He was betrayed, his body had not yet been broken and His blood had not yet been shed. The disciples partook of the bread and the wine, but they did not literally eat His flesh and drink His blood. The Lord Jesus was simply stating that unless we appropriate to ourselves by faith the value of His death for us on Calvary, we can never be saved. We must believe on Him, receive Him, trust Him, and make Him our very own." (*MacDonald, p. 1465*)

54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

- When you compare this verse with verse 47, it becomes clear that Jesus is saying that to eat His flesh and drink His blood is to believe on Him.
- Again, when you compare this verse with verses 39,40,44, He will raise up on the last day those who believe on Him—His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection—for salvation.
- The verbs "feed" and "drink" are in the aorist tense, not the present tense. "This suggests a one-time appropriation of Christ at salvation, not the continual eating and drinking of His body and blood portrayed by the Roman Catholic Mass." (*MacArthur New Testament Commentary*)

55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

- Those who eat only physical food will perish; but those who partake of Christ by faith will receive the life that lasts forever.

56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

- In contrast to verse 54, "feeds" and "drinks" are present active participles, speaking of continuous, on-going action.
- When you couple verse 56 with verse 54, this means that we trust in Jesus Christ once-and-for-all to be our Savior, but then day-by-day we continue to rest in Him, trust in Him, abide in Him as our Lord and Savior. Just as a tree branch continually draws life from the trunk of the tree, so we, moment-by-moment, continue to draw our spiritual life from Christ. (Cp. John 15:1-5)
- "Nothing could be closer or more intimate than this. When we eat literal food, we take it into our very being; and it becomes a part of us. When we accept the Lord Jesus as our Redeemer, He comes into our lives to abide, and we, too, abide (continually dwell) in Him." (*MacDonald, p. 1465*)

57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.

- "Here Jesus pointed to his relationship with the Father as a model of the vital union he would share with each believer. As the Son depends upon the living Father for his life and lives because of the Father, so the believer who feeds on Jesus will live because of Jesus." (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)

58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." 59 Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.