

Partaking of Jesus

John 6:51-58

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."
52 The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"
53 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, 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 food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down from heaven — not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." NKJV

Before we begin this section we need to ask a few questions.

Does Jesus here indicate that He is referring to physical or spiritual things?

Is Jesus telling us that a physical eating of His flesh and a physical drinking of His blood give us eternal life?

Why has Jesus said that those who believe in Him will have eternal life and now says that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood?

Does this passage refer to the Lord's Supper that Jesus will institute over a year later?

How important is it that we correctly understand this passage?

As we taught last week this is very important for Jesus continues to repeat that unless they partake of Him, they will not have eternal life. So to get this wrong has eternal consequences.

I. Physical Interpretation

- A. Catholics believe that Jesus is here quite literal and refers to His actual body and actual blood, that unless a person eats and drinks they cannot have eternal life.
 - 1. The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion "is given up for us," and the blood we drink "shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins." For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins —Catechism of the Catholic Church
 - 2. Once the elements have been blessed by the priest they believe that the substance, the very essence of the cup and the bread become in reality the body and the blood of Christ.
 - a. You can see that in the ritual they go through, making sure that not even a crumb of the body is lost.

- b. They have also removed from the congregation the cup because there is too much a chance that the blood of Jesus might be spilt.
 - c. Instead the priest drinks it and even rinses the cup with water and drinks that to make sure that nothing is desecrated.
 - d. When they are finished, any of the body of Jesus that is left over is locked up in what they call the tabernacle, but is really like a small safe.
3. As such they worship it.
- a. They believe that since it is the sacrificed Christ that the priest holds in his hands, that it is worthy of worship just as the living Jesus is.
 - b. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind "that all the faithful ought to show to this most holy sacrament the worship which is due to the true God, as has always been the custom of the Catholic Church. Nor is it to be adored any the less because it was instituted by Christ to be eaten." —Second Vatican Council 149
4. They claim that it is the Sacrifice of Christ.
- a. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: "This is my body which is given for you" and "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:19,20). In the Eucharist Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). —Catechism of the Catholic Church[1365]
- B. Baptists on the other hand have always held that it is a memorial observance in which the elements of bread and the cup represent the body of our Lord.
- C. It is clear that the disciples did not consider the cup to be blood.
- 1. It was against the law of Moses to eat or drink blood in any way. Lev 7:26-27 Moreover you shall not eat any blood in any of your dwellings, whether of bird or beast. 27 Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people." NKJV
 - 2. "Furthermore, had the disciples drunk Christ's blood at the Last Supper, Peter could not have claimed months later: "... I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean" (Acts 10:14). Additionally, the council at Jerusalem could not have instructed Gentile Christians to "abstain ... from blood" (Acts 15:29) if Christians routinely drank Christ's blood at the Lord's Supper." McCarthy
 - 3. Jesus Himself referred to the cup not as His blood but the fruit of the vine.

- a. Matt 26:28-29 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." NKJV
 - b. Mark 14:24-25 "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. 25 Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." NKJV
 - c. Luke 22:17-18 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; 18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." NKJV
4. Neither does Paul refer to eating the flesh of Jesus but bread.
- a. 1 Cor 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. NKJV
 - b. There is no where in the New Testament describing the collecting of the crumbs after the supper, which back then was much messier than it is done today. No instructions that this is to be done in any of the epistles.

II. A Spiritual Interpretation

- A. In the whole book of John, he has been using figures of speech to exemplify Jesus Christ.
 - 1. He begins by referring to Jesus as the eternal Word which is descriptive of Jesus and true.
 - 2. In John's gospel Jesus has continually referenced physical things to teach spiritual truths.
 - a. He tells Nicodemus that he must be born again, but He is referring to a spiritual birth, brought about by the Spirit of God.
 - b. He tells the woman at the well that He offers water that can quench every thirst.
 - c. Later in John 7 look at what He says. John 7:37-39 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. 38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. 39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) KJV

d. In John 15 Jesus says that He is the vine, but literally but in a figure of His connection to us.

B. 1 Co 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

III. TRANSUBSTANTIATION. The doctrine of the Eucharist maintained by the Roman Catholic Church and first defined by Radbertus, a Benedictine of Corbie in 831 on the basis of John 6. The influence of Greek views of substance and accident blurred the doctrine in the writings of Ockham* and Scotus,* while Biel* confessed that the miraculous presence of Christ was a mystery to be accepted only because of God's omnipotence. The Council of Trent* closed off other options by stating Christ is "truly, really and substantially contained in the sacrament under the appearance of sensible things. . . . By the consecration of the bread and wine a change is brought about of the whole substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the body of his blood. This change . . . is called transubstantiation." Vatican II* said of the Eucharist in terms of the body of believers, "Truly partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another." And "no Christian community . . . can be built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the ... Eucharist." ROBERT B. IVES; New International Dictionary of the Christian Church; Douglas; Zondervan

IV. Nothing between us and Jesus

A. There is nothing between us and Jesus.

1. We are not dependent upon the works of a priest, or the efforts of any church. For Jesus has done all that needs to be done. All this is required of us is to put our trust in Him alone.
2. Baptism is not required to get to Jesus or to heaven.
3. The Lord's Supper is not required to get us to heaven.
4. Jesus has done it all, He just wants us to come to Him to total faith and submission, casting our broken lives into His hands.
5. The woman at the well had her thirst satisfied without baptism or the Lord's supper.
6. The thief on the cross went to paradise without water, cup or bread.
7. Jesus could not make it much simpler than it is. Come to Him today.

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