

G R A C E

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ♦ Deo ♦ Gloria

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

The Bread of Life (Part III)

John 6:52-58

June 5, 2005

Verses 50 – 51

- “This” bread, Jesus states, unlike the bread *your* fathers ate, will give **eternal** life
- Jesus then states that “this” bread is He – *ego eimi*, “I AM the living bread [that came down out of heaven]”
- Jesus concludes: “the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”
- Many see this as a direct reference to the Lord’s Supper.
- This is possibly the case, but it is, likely, not the primary reference.
 - First of all, Jesus speaks of the bread also “which I will give [for the life of the world]”
 - This is a clear reference to Jesus giving up His life voluntarily [and vicariously] so that we might live
 - This also echoes the words of John the Baptist when he stated, in John 1:29, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!”
 - “world” here CANNOT mean every individual without exception [else the entire world (without exception) would be saved]
 - Jesus is speaking to Galilean Jews, and the word “world” must mean the entire world, without exception of race (i.e. Jews and Gentiles)
- Jesus uses the word “flesh” [*sarx*, **SARX**] as opposed to “body” [*soma*, **SOMA**]

- This reminds the astute reader of John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us...”
 - As the incarnate, Logos, the perfect God-man, Jesus has the ability to give life to the world [because He was fully GOD and fully MAN]
- Jesus can give life to the world because He has **life in Himself** (John 5:26)

Verse 52

- The Jews began arguing with one another, just as they had argued with Moses and God at the time of the Exodus
 - Exodus 17:2
 - Numbers 20:3
- Some of the Jews, it seems, have taken Jesus’ words *literally*, that is, they believe that He is suggesting, in Verses 50-51, cannibalism
- Clearly, this is absurd, yet it reveals where the focus of the Jews is...the **physical** NOT the spiritual
- John 4:24 states that God is spirit, yet the Jews only see with physical eyes

Verses 53 – 55

- Jesus, “knowing the hearts of men”, said to the Jews, **“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 yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink.”**

- Most Christians, when reading Verses 53-56, immediately think of the institution of the Lord’s Supper
- However, this is not the **direct** reference that Jesus is making.
- Although John 6:53-56 is not a direct reference to the Lord’s Supper, “it does expose the true meaning of the Lord’s Supper as clearly as any passage in Scripture.”
- Therefore, as we study these passages, we should have a much better understanding as to the deeper meaning of the Lord’s Supper.

- Two points prevent this passage from directly pointing to the Lord’s Supper:
 1. The word “flesh” [*sarx*, **SARX**] is never used to refer to the Lord’s Supper in the New Testament...it is the word “body” [*soma*, **SOMA**]... “This is My Body.”
 2. It would make participation in the Lord’s Supper **necessary** for salvation. In other words, it would be as though Jesus was stating, “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink of His blood [i.e. partake in the Lord’s Supper], you have no life in yourselves.”
 - This is, to some degree, what the Roman Catholic view of the Lord’s Supper is...that it is a **sacrament** that conveys grace, and implies the necessity of the sacrament for salvation.

In the *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, Ludwig Ott states the following:

Christ becomes present in the Sacrament of the Altar by the transformation of the whole substance of the bread into His Body and of the whole substance of the wine into His Blood...This transformation is called Transubstantiation. (p. 379) The power of consecration resides in a validly consecrated priest only. (p. 397) The Worship of Adoration (Latria) must be given to Christ present in the Eucharist...It follows from the wholeness and permanence of the Real Presence that the absolute worship (Cultus Latriae) is due to Christ present in the Eucharist. (p. 387)

- ❖ There are several points that Jesus’ words bring out:
 - **First, the object of Jesus’ words [i.e. the One whose flesh we are to eat] is the Son of Man**
 - Turn to John 1:51 [also Genesis 28:12]; John 3:13; John 5:27
 - Jesus is not just any *man*, He is the *Son of Man*
 - Jesus is the apocalyptic *Son of Man* (of Daniel 7:13-14) who has received from the Ancient of Days complete authority and dominion.
 - The term “the Son of Man” is Jesus’ favorite self-designation.
 - The term is used in this way over 80 times in the Gospels.
 - J.P. Hickinbotham states, “the Son of Man is a title of divinity rather than humanity.”

- “The term ‘the Son of Man’...points us to Jesus’ conception of himself as of heavenly origin and as the possessor of heavenly glory.”
Leon Morris

- Jesus spends a great deal of time emphasizing the **specific object** of the true believer’s faith

○ **Secondly, we are to eat of His flesh and drink His blood**

- To the physical Jew, who saw and heard with physical eyes and ears, this statement was greatly offensive
 - According to the Mosaic Law [i.e. the Law of Moses] one could not drink blood or eat meat with the blood still in it.
 - Read Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:10-14; Deuteronomy 12:16
 - Taken literally, Jesus’ words were a violation of the very Law that He came to fulfill!
- “To eat the flesh, and drink the blood of Christ, is to believe that Christ is come in the flesh, and is truly and really man; that his flesh is given for the life of His people, and His blood is shed for their sins, and this with some view and application to themselves...”
John Gill
- To understand what is meant, then [since literality is obviously not intended], one should turn to a parallel Verse: John 6:40, “For this is the will of My Father, that **everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.**”
- Viewed in light of Verse 40, Verses 53-55 clearly indicate that to “eat and drink” the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ is to “behold Him and believe in Him”

○ **Thirdly, the symbolic uses of “blood” throughout Scripture are references, not to life, “but to violent death, i.e. to life violently and often sacrificially ended.”**

- Read John 6:51 again. One of the references in this Verse, as in 53, is to the vicarious, sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man.
- Further, the phrase “flesh and blood” is a Hebrew idiom which means the entire, whole individual (Matthew 16:17; 1 Corinthians 15:50; Galatians 1:16; Ephesians 6:12; Hebrews 2:14). Therefore, it is a reference to Jesus Christ’s death, whereby he voluntarily lays all of himself upon the Cross to die the necessary sacrificial death.

- Augustine stated, regarding this passage, “[it is] a figure, enjoining that we should have a share in the sufferings of our Lord, and that we should retain a sweet and profitable memory of the fact that His flesh was wounded and crucified for us.”
- Thomas Cranmer wrote in 1550, “figuratively He [Christ] is in the bread and wine, and spiritually He is in them that worthily eat and drink the bread and wine; but really, carnally, and corporally He is only in heaven, from whence He shall come to judge the quick [that is, the living] and the dead.”

Verse 56

- This Verse reveals the great benefit we have when we eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink of His blood: “mutual indwelling.”
 - John 15 will deal with this further
- The word here for “abides” [*meno*, MENW] is used in John’s Gospel to refer to the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit [see John 1:32-33; 14:10; 15:10].
 - This word is also used here to refer to the Believer and Christ
- “That the believer remains in Jesus means he or she continues to be identified with Jesus, continues as a Christian, continues in saving faith and consequent transformation of life. That Jesus remains in the believer means that Jesus identifies himself with the believer, but not in reciprocal trust and transformation (that would be absurd) but in help, blessing, life, and personal presence by the Spirit.” D.A. Carson
- Read **Ephesians 1:4**
 - “God has separated us, has chosen us out of the world of mankind to be the inheritors of great blessings; and it is all in and through the Lord Jesus Christ...Christian people including you and me – belonged to God before they became the Son’s people. Our position does not depend upon anything we do, primarily; nor primarily even upon the action of the Son. The primary action is that of God the Father who chose unto Himself a people out of the whole of mankind before the foundation of the world, and then presented, gave these people whom He had chosen to the Son, in order that the Son might redeem them and do everything that was necessary for their reconciliation with Himself. That is the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He came into the world, and accomplished His work, for these people who have been given to Him by the Father.” Martyn Lloyd-Jones
- This “mutual indwelling”; however, is not reciprocal...in other words, Christ does not dwell in the believer in the same manner the believer remains in Christ.
- It is important to note that it is because of the Son, Jesus Christ, that we remain in Him...He preserves and protects us until the “last day.”

Verse 57

- The Father is the *living* Father, as He has life-in-Himself [see John 5:26]
- Jesus says that He lives because of the Father. This is another way of stating that Father [from John 5:21, 24-27] has granted that the Son have life-in-Himself. In other words, the sustainment of the life of the Son comes from HIMSELF, not from any other external source.
- However, the sustainment of the [eternal] life of all Believers comes from the Son, Jesus Christ [not from themselves]

CONCLUSION

- The significance of the Lord's Supper [from an understanding of John 6:52-58]:
 1. It identifies us with Christ in His Death
 - "...unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and **drink His blood...**" (John 6:53)
 - We are often called to share in Christ's sufferings and suffer for His name's sake.
 2. It was a form of **Proclamation**: It points back to the death of Christ. Through His sacrificial death, we participate in the Benefits of His Death [and subsequent resurrection]: that is, **eternal life** (redemption, regeneration, reconciliation, justification, sanctification, glorification, etc.).
 - "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life..." (John 6:54)
 3. Spiritual Nourishment / Dependence: We have life because of The Son, we are **sustained** because of the Son – therefore, **we do it often**
 - "...so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me." (John 6:57)

There are other reasons for the Lord's Supper:

- It creates Unity among Believers
- Affirmation of our Faith in Christ
- Christ Affirms His Love for Us: He invites us to the Lord's Table.