The Hard Sayings of Jesus
Scripture: John 6
Code: BQ6111

Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" 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 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. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. (John 6:52–57)

The Lord was obviously not talking about cannibalism when He spoke of eating His flesh. Rather, He was giving a physical illustration of a spiritual truth. Once again, however, **the** antagonistic **Jews** completely missed the significance of Jesus' statement. As a result, they **began to argue with one another. Argue** translates a form of the verb *machomai*, which means "to fight," or "to quarrel" (cf. Acts 7:26; 2 Tim. 2:24; James 4:2), indicating that it was a heated dispute. The discussion centered on the question, **"How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"** Blinded by the ignorance of their own unbelief, they were unable to understand the spiritual significance of which Jesus spoke (cf. v. 42; 3:4, 9; 4:11–12; 9:16; 12:34).

Although confronted with their willful unbelief, Jesus did not tone down, soften, or even clarify His words. Instead, He made His teaching even harder for them to swallow by adding the shocking concept of drinking His **blood.** To drink blood or eat meat with the blood still in it was strictly prohibited by the Old Testament law.

Jesus, of course, was not speaking of literally drinking the fluid in His veins any more than He was of literally eating His flesh. Both metaphors refer to the necessity of accepting Jesus' sacrificial death. The New Testament frequently uses the term **blood** as a graphic metonym speaking of Christ's death on the cross as the final sacrifice for sin (Matt. 26:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:25; 5:9; 1 Cor. 11:25; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:12, 14; 10:19, 29; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2, 19; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11). His sacrifice was the one to which all of the Old Testament sacrifices pointed.

But the concept of a crucified Messiah was a major stumbling block for Israel. In response to the Lord's declaration, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32), "the crowd then answered Him, 'We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, "The Son of Man must be lifted up?"'" (v. 34). On the road to Emmaus, the resurrected Christ rebuked two of His disciples for their hesitancy to accept the necessity of His

death: “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:25–26). “We preach Christ crucified,” the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “to Jews a stumbling block” (1 Cor. 1:23), and in Galatians 5:11 he referred to the “the stumbling block of the cross.” Thus, the major thrust of Paul’s evangelistic message to the Jews at Thessalonica involved “explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ’” (Acts 17:3).

It should be noted that the verbs translated **eat** and **drink** are aorists, not present tense verbs. That 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.

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