

**Appropriating the Bread of Life**

Scripture: John 6:51-59

Code: 1514A

Turn in your Bibles to John chapter 6, this morning, verses 51 to 59. This morning we are coming to the passage in John 6 which is the climax to the great sermon in which Jesus claims to be the bread of life. He has claimed that men need food for their souls, true soul food. He has claimed that God had sent such food. And He has claimed that He is that food, that bread. And all of this came out of the feeding of these people on a hillside where He fed them physically and then moved from a physical feeding to a sermon on spiritual food and claimed that He is that spiritual food.

Now as we come to verses 51 to 59, we are again confronted with the theme of John. John recurring...John's recurring theme in this gospel is always that Jesus is God. And the question of the ages is no different. The question of the ages is this, who is Jesus Christ? That is the key question. There is no question that takes over superiority from that question, that is it, who is Jesus Christ? Pilate called Him the man without fault. Diderot said He was the unsurpassed. Napoleon called Him the emperor of love. Strauss said He was the highest model of religion. John Steward Mills said He was the guide of humanity. Leakey said He was the highest pattern of virtue. Beauchant[??] said He was the holy One before God. Martineau called Him the divine flower of humanity. Renan said He was the greatest among the sons of men. Theodore Parker said He was the youth with God in His heart. Francis Cobb called Him the regenerator of humanity. And Robert Owen said He was the irreproachable one.

All of those are fine, but none of them are sufficient. He is no mere man. He is not the best of men, He is God in a body, God incarnate in human flesh. He is none other than the divine Creator and the divine Sustainer and the divine end of all creation. He is either God in a body, or He is the sickest mind or the most diabolical fraud that ever lived. Jesus, says John, over and over again is God in a human body. And week by week as we have studied John's gospel, we have heard that same message over and over again. He states his purpose, for example, at the end of his gospel in chapter 20 verse 31 when he says in reflecting on the whole gospel of John, he says this, "These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And that believing you might have life in His name, or through His name."

In other words, the theme is the deity of Jesus Christ that He is God a very God, the essence of perfect deity. And John has for now six chapters in our study brought forth witnesses to declare that this is so. First of all, he used the testimony of men. John the Baptist, for example, said, "Behold the

Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Then Andrew said, "We have found the Messiah." Then Philip said, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, even Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Then Nathanael chimed in and said, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel." Then we heard from the mouth of Nicodemus, "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God."

Then the woman at the well said, "Come see a man who told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?" And then the Samaritans themselves having seen said, "We have heard Him for ourselves and know that this is the Christ, the Savior of the world." And of the Canaan nobleman it was said, "He himself believed and his whole household."

And so, John has called the testimony of men to corroborate the fact that Jesus is indeed God. And he didn't even stop there. He called on the testimony of the miracles of Christ. Nicodemus said, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God because no man can do the things Thou doest except God be with Him." We saw Him make wine at Cana. We saw Him make bread and fish at Galilee. We saw Him raise a nobleman's son. We saw Him beside a man 36 years impotent and He gave that man new life and he stood and walked and carried his bed. We saw the miracles that He did in Jerusalem. We saw the miracles that He did that day on the shore of the Galilee Sea. And miracle after miracle has been echoing the statement of John, Jesus is God, Jesus is God.

And added to that is the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself. For He claimed to be God. Back in John 3 verse 14 He claims to be the definitive character of history. He says in verse 14 of John 3, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Why? "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." In other words, Christ is the determining factor between life and death. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Then He says, "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. And he that believeth on Him is not condemned but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed." In other words, Jesus says I am the deciding character of history.

Then to add to that statement you look at chapter 4 and verse 25, "The woman said unto Him, 'I know that Messiah comes who's called Christ, when He is come He will tell us all things.' Jesus said unto her, 'I that speak unto thee am He.'" What a claim. Then you go to chapter 5 and He's doing the same thing again. In verse 17, "Jesus answered them, 'My Father works hither to and I work.'" In other words, they criticized Him for working on the Sabbath. He said, "That's all right, God works on the Sabbath and I can to," implying that He was God. In verse 18, "The Jews sought the more to kill Him because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father making

Himself equal with God." What a claim. Over in verse 39 of the same chapter He says, "Search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life and they are they which testify of Me." And over in verse 46, "For had you believed Moses you would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me."

Christ makes monumental claims. And then moving in to chapter 6 He claims again, verse 32, "Verily, verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven. But My Father gives you the true bread from heaven for the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven." And in verse 34...35 He says, "I am that bread."

And that brings us to where we are today. Christ has said to those Jews who were fed the day before, "You don't need to worry about physical food," they had followed Him to Capernaum because their stomachs were growling and it was morning and time for breakfast. And He says, "Don't work for that kind of food, you need to call to attention the fact that your souls are hungry and you need that food that satisfies the soul." Then He says, "God sent that food and I am that food." So in this sermon He's really got three good points...your souls are hungry, God sent you food, I am that food. That's the message of this sermon on the bread of life. Tremendous claim to being from heaven, claim to be deity. He says, "I am the only soul food, the only nourishing, lasting food."

Now we've studied a great part of this sermon already. We're going to come to the climax this morning. And it's very strange because as I read over this so many times, I began to think, "Boy, Christ really belabors the point. He says I am the bread of life. He waits a few verses, I am the bread of life. A few more verses, I am the bread of life." He repeats Himself almost as if He's laboring with the point. And then I began to think about who He was talking to and you know it's very obvious why He belabored the point because their minds were so thick with ignorant unbelief that He couldn't get through. Christ has already spent from verses 30 to 50 saying one thing, your souls are hungry, God sent food, I'm that food. And He said that two or three times. They still don't have the message. You say, when God gives a message that many times and a man refuses that message, I'd hate to be in that man's shoes cause great revelation implies great responsibility. To whom much is given...what?...much is required. So Jesus says, "I am that bread."

Now the Jews have reacted in their normal way, verse 42, they said, "What do You mean You're from heaven, we know You, You're the son of Joseph from Nazareth." Again showing their ignorance in the situation. But instead of explaining all the little things that they had in their mind, Jesus never condescends to unbelief. He'll condescend to ignorance, He'll condescend to misunderstanding, but when its caused by unbelief, He avoids it. He never caters to unbelief. And they were unbelieving. But as we come to our verses today, Jesus moves ahead and explains this doctrine in more detail, and this is thrilling. This is the climax. You're going to see some things this morning that are going to thrill your heart, I promise you that. This is exciting.

Now John, in true homiletical fashion, has three basic areas in these verses 51 to 59. We see the pronouncement, the perplexity and the promises...the pronouncement Christ makes, the perplexity of the Jews in response and then the promises that Christ gives. Notice the pronouncement, that's verse 51 and He begins by making a pronouncement that is exactly a reiteration of verse 33, 35, 47 and 48. The fifth time He says this in verse 51, notice it, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven." Now you have two things there. You have the nature of Christ, living bread. You have the source of Christ, heaven. Very important statement.

Jesus Christ said I came to this earth as living bread for souls that are hungry. I am that bread to nourish your hungry, gnawing, unrelieved soul. And, you know, we live in a hungry world. We live in a world where people's souls are hungry and vapid and void and empty. And Jesus Christ says I'm the only one that can fill that void. You know, it's amazing how self-centered and how man has kind of coated himself with an artificial sense of belonging and meaning when man is really frustrated. I tell you, every time you turn around you see frustrated people. Our world is jammed with them. Man faces monstrous problems and is incapacitated to do anything about them. We just think about the pollution problem, man can't do anything about that. It's hopeless. Man tries to find peace and while the leaders are in the room talking about peace, the people are outside fighting each other. Man can't solve his...you turn on the television and everybody you see is frustrated...everybody is frustrated. You all use the wrong deodorant, the wrong mouthwash, the wrong toothpaste, the wrong hair spray, you drive the wrong car, you wear the wrong clothes, everybody has the wrong detergent, uses the wrong cleansers, everything is wrong. Man is frustrated and he'll solve his problems as soon as he takes an Excedrin. And Mrs. Mallay said one time, "Life must go on, I forget just why."

This last week when we were in Oregon with the college conference for the state of Oregon, the first night I preached on the person of Jesus Christ from John 1 in all of His glorious deity. And there was a psychology Ph.D. from the University of Oregon who came to this thing and he came to psychoanalyze Christianity. He came because he wanted to fit it into a chapter in his abnormal psych book, some kind of a Freudian sex complex. And so, anyway, he was coming with this rather academic view of Christianity. Well the first night God just...bless the Spirit of God...came down on that place and things began to happen. And I'm telling you, this guy was just, you know...whew...trying to write this phenomena down and figure out what was going on. The next night we started a prayer meeting and testimony time at nine o'clock and finished at two in the morning and all that time kids would stand up and tell how much they love Jesus Christ and what a joy it was to live with Him and how they loved His Word and loved each other. And the Lord just turned that thing loose through the Word. And then kids would sit down and they begin to pray, and they pray for about an hour. Then somebody would get up and sing a song and everybody would sing. There was about a hundred and seventy or eighty kids in this little meeting. This guy was just floored and it just didn't fit into abnormal psych anyplace.

Well the third day, needless to say, this guy was walking around with his mouth hanging open and couldn't even speak. He was just like this...such phenomena. Finally he came in utter frustration and he said, "I don't know what's going on but...he says...I want to have Jesus Christ." So we got together and prayed with the guy and he opened his heart to Jesus Christ. You see, here's a guy who could psychoanalyze everybody's problem. He knew everything that was wrong but didn't have any resources to fill anybody's problems till he met Jesus Christ. There's only one person, there's only one soul food, there's only one bread in this universe to satisfy the gnawing hunger of a man's heart, that's Jesus Christ.

He says, "I am that living bread, there is no other." Only Jesus can give meaning to life. Then He says in verse 51 in the second phrase, "If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever." Fantastic promise, eat of this bread. Now you'll notice that He's not talking here about divine elective decree that God made in the past, He's not talking about that, He talked about that earlier when He said, "No man comes unto Me except the Father draw him." Here He's balancing it off by talking about human responsibility. He's saying, "If you want to live forever, brother, you have to come and eat of Me. You've got to receive Me. A man must eat." And this is a beautiful parallel, Christ is using a human illustration of eating bread to teach a spiritual truth. We do this all the time. It's called analogy. But the figure of eating has tremendous meaning. Listen, just a few thoughts it gives me.

First of all, eating is necessary if I'm going to get any benefit out of the food, right? I mean, I could have a nice feast in front of me and I could look at it and I could admire it, "Ah, it's lovely." And I could smell it and then I could analyze it. And then I could philosophize about it. Then I could eulogize its quality. Then I could handle it a little bit. Then I could be assured of its excellence. Then I could trust the guy who made it, cooked it up. But if I don't eat it, it doesn't do anything for me. So it is with spiritual food. So many people sitting around analyzing, eulogizing Jesus Christ, so many people going over all the qualities and all the virtues and they never eat. Knowing the truth, speculating about the truth, talking about the truth, believing in its goodness is going to do me no good, I must take it and eat, I must take Jesus Christ into my life.

Another thing about eating, eating is responding to a felt need and that need is called hunger and it's immediately detectable. Some of you get it about two minutes after twelve on Sunday morning. You don't need anybody to remind you that you're hungry, you know when you're hungry, something happens inside of you. And when you're hungry you eagerly eat. You can remember this. If you've ever been stuffed full, not if, I know you have, stuffed full and then you see some food and yik...it's repulsive. You know why? You have no need, you have no need and the very thought of it is nauseating. So it is spiritually. You see, when a sinner loves his sin, when he's stuffed full of the world and the flesh and he thinks he's got all the answers and he's self-satisfied, then the thought of

the bread of life is nauseating, it's ridiculous, it's repulsive and he mocks and disdains it. And in his self-satisfied spiritual bloatedness, he pushes Christ away because he has no need. But then when a man is broken, when a man is awakened to his lost condition, when a man faces the content of his purposelessness, when he senses the void and the gnawing hunger in his heart and the desire for reality, for peace, for real love, for meaning, for hope, for security, that man is ready to eat the bread of life. That's what Jesus said, "I can't do anything for you people that aren't sick."

The third thing about eating, eating implies an act of appropriation. You know, when I eat I make the food my own, did you know that? That's true. Whatever you eat becomes you. Like the guy said, "The doctor told me to watch my stomach, so I'm getting it out there where I can see it." Whatever you put in, whatever you put in becomes you. It doesn't matter what it is, it just becomes more of you. There's a wonderful little scientific thing operating in you called amino acids, there are 600 octo-decillion amino acids and whenever you eat it all produces you-type flesh. As I've said before, if you ate nothing but chicken you would never sprout feathers because the amino acids in your body take into combination that which reproduces you. Some of you are living examples of the tremendous potency of amino acids.

Now the food that I eat becomes a part of me. The food that I eat becomes what I am. And so it is spiritually. Christ may be presented to me in all His beauty and glory, I might even respect His perfect life, I might admire His wonderful person. I might be touched by His unselfish love. I might even cry real tears over His death on the cross. But it's only when I take Him in that He comes into me and dwells in me and becomes what I am.

There's another thing about eating. Eating is personal. I've thought a lot often sitting in the office and being very busy or doing something that I call my wife and I say, "Honey, I can't come home for lunch, could you eat an extra sandwich for me?" But that doesn't work. There's no such thing as eating by proxy. That's not going to do me any good. Nobody else can eat for me. If I'm going to be nourished, I'm going to eat. So it is spiritually. It doesn't do any good to sit around and watch other people being nourished. I can't be nourished for you. Listen, if I could receive Jesus Christ for you, for everybody, I'd do it. I can't. You've got to eat the bread of life yourself. It's up to you. "But...says Jesus...if you do eat you'll live forever." You'll live forever...what kind of life am I going to live? Full life, beyond your wildest expectations and imaginations. And so, Jesus says, "Here I am, bread, eat and live." It's amazing how people can refuse such an offer but they do.

Then Jesus takes another step in describing Himself as bread, which is going to be the key to our passage. Watch it, at the end of verse 51. "And the bread that I will give is My flesh which I will give for the life of the world." Now He's describing this bread in a little more detail. This is tremendous. Get this thought, fantastic thought. He's saying, "My flesh is the key." What do You mean? Just this,

if all Jesus did was come to this earth, say, "I'm from God, I want you to accept Me, I want you to shape up, I want you to obey God, now get with it," and go back to heaven...we'd be in a hopeless mess. We'd have all the standards but no way to do them. You can't get to God. You can't please God by your works. And so, Jesus didn't just do that. He came to earth, said, "Here's what God wants, here's the requirement, believe in Me." And then in order to make it possible what did He give? His flesh, didn't He? He had to give His flesh to make all of that possible. He didn't just come down and say, "Here's what to do," and then leave again. He gave Himself, He died for the life of the world. But I love that statement, "I will give," because He's talking prophetically about His cross. He's saying, "I'm going to give My flesh." He is soon to be a vicarious sacrifice for sin. He's going to offer His own flesh on the cross, He's talking about His crucifixion.

Now you remember that the Bible says in the book of Hebrews, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sin." From the very beginning in the book of Genesis with Cain and Abel it was a matter of blood sacrifice. God has always chosen that blood sacrifice be the way of expiation, or the taking away of sin, the covering of sin, the sacrifice for sin. Something has to die because the wages of sin is death.

Now Christ came along and He became that sacrifice, just like as in the Old Testament, the flesh of a lamb was offered day in and day out for the sins of Israel, so Jesus Christ became the final sacrifice and God said, "I'll accept Christ's death as the final sacrifice." And by virtue of His death paying the penalty of sin, we have access to God. You can't go into God with sin in your life. You can't get into His presence. And so Christ had to die, He had to be the sacrifice for sin. It was only a slain Christ that could allow poor sinners to be reconciled to God. That's what Peter meant when Peter said in 1 Peter 2:24, "Who is own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, on the cross and He did it in order that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness, by whose scars, or stripes, we are healed." And I think that's what Paul meant when he said in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." In other words, God could lay out all the requirements in the person of Christ, but unless He died, unless He gave His flesh, there's nothing to cover our sins that we have no way to get to God. So Jesus says, "The bread that I give is My flesh. I'll give it." Remember what Jesus said in John 12:24, I think it is, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it...what?...brings forth much fruit." He had to die. There was no way that men could go to God unless He died. And so Christ came and not only showed us God, but He made the way to God possible in His death. So He says...the bread that I give is My flesh...isn't that tremendous? And notice that He says, "I give it," two times in verse 51, "I will give is My flesh...I will give for the life of the world," it's voluntary, folks. Jesus said in John 10:18, "No man takes My life from Me. I...what?...lay it down of Myself." And every time men try to take His life, He just passed out of their midst and they couldn't find Him till the time was ready.

Notice this, He says He gave His life for the world. I believe in an unlimited atonement. I believe 1 John 2:2 says He's not only the propitiation for our sins, or the covering, or the Mercy Seat for our sins, but the sins of the whole world. He died for the world, all types, classes, strata, intellects, cultures, the whole world. Listen, this living bread, this one whose flesh was sacrificed on the cross is so full of salvation that all the world may come and eat and live forever. And so Jesus makes the pronouncement, "I am living bread, eat and live forever, and the bread I give is My flesh which I will give for the life of the world." The world can't have life unless He takes our place in death.

Then the perplexity. Naturally with a statement like that in the Jewish frame of mind we see a perplexity in verse 52. "The Jews therefore strove," and this is the idea of a battle going on, a hassle, not a whisper this time, they're talking out loud, "strove among themselves saying, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?'"

Now here we meet the standard Jewish response. Every time Jesus gave them a *mishal*[?] or a veiled saying, or a physical illustration of a spiritual truth, they always got hung up on the physical. They only see the physical. Remember Nicodemus? Jesus says, "You must be born again." He said, "How can I get in my mother's womb and be born again?" The woman at the well, "I'm going to give you this water and you'll live forever." And she says, "Where You going to get it, You don't have a bucket?" See? They never got pass the physical interpretation of everything. And then He said to those Galileans, "I have the bread of life," earlier in the chapter and they said, "Oh, give it to us." And here He says, "You've got to eat My flesh," and they say, "How can He give us His flesh to eat?" They're thinking of cannibalism. In their minds is the idea of their teeth masticating the very flesh of Jesus. They don't understand anything. And they're right on schedule. Some of them are probably thinking, "Wow! This guy is really something else. Not only is this the most maniacal ego we ever met, but He's crazy. He's saying we ought to eat...what are we, cannibals?" They were actually thinking about that. This kind of ignorance is the ignorance of unbelief because it's so obvious what Jesus said, the end of verse 51, He says, "I'm going to give My...give this bread, or My flesh, for the life of...what?...of the world." Now did they really think that the whole world was going to feast on Him? What were they assuming, everyone was going to take small bites? They can't be that stupid. He said, "I'm giving My life for the life of the world." And yet they're still zeroed in on that physical thing. And they have said that the participants...they have said, in their own minds, that the one of them that would do that would be a cannibal. Of course this is their attitude.

Before you condemn them though, you might recall that this is also the basic text for the Catholic, the Roman Catholic Mass in which the Roman Catholics teach that the blood and body of Jesus Christ is literally there and consumed by the one who involves himself in the Mass and the Eucharist. They have said that the person who is involved actually eats the flesh of Jesus literally and drinks His literal



blood. And each Mass is a new sacrifice to Christ in which His body and blood are separated and eaten literally. Ott, Catholic theologian, quote, "The body and the blood of Christ together with His soul and His divinity are therefore...and therefore the whole Christ are truly present in the Eucharist," end quote. Ott says in his book, which is a rehash of St. Thomas Aquinas that when the participant partakes of the Mass, he literally eats the physical body and blood of Jesus. That's exactly what the Jews thought and that ignorance has still remained even today. Jesus is not talking about that. Incidentally, the Catholics face some serious problems. If in the context of the Mass that Eucharist is turned into the very essence of Christ literally, what happens to the part that's not eaten and put back in the box or in the refrigerator? Is that Christ in the box and the refrigerator? Well if you've got that theology, you've got to work with that problem. And Ott spends no less than about five pages on it. What about the uneaten wafers? Is Christ there? The answer is, He has to be there, that's the literal flesh of Christ lying around in the icebox.

And so this cannibalistic physical interpretation is still with us. That's not what Jesus is saying. He's saying, "Take Me, accept My death." Do you see? So the pronouncement and the perplexity followed by the promises, verses 53 to 59, and here Jesus gives some promises and we'll go through these rapidly because they're repetitious of things and yet, oh, I'm going to show you some thrilling things.

Now Christ doesn't clear up their problem and say, "Wait, wait, wait, I want to straighten this out." No, no, no, you know why? Listen to me, He never caters to willful unbelief...never. If a person really wants to know, if you seek Me with all your heart you will surely...what?...find Me. God always responds to a seeking heart. He never responds to unbelief, willful ignorance. And in the case of Israel, that willful ignorance became judicial blindness and they couldn't see and they couldn't hear and they couldn't be converted. So it is that this judicial blindness is creeping over all of Israel in their rejection of Christ because it is willful. So Christ never entertains willful ignorance, never. He doesn't even...doesn't even deal with their problem. He moves on, and in fact, I told you a few weeks ago that He may say things that even confound them more and that's exactly what He does here. He says things now that really...they must have been tearing their hair out at this point.

Verse 53, "Then Jesus said unto them, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.'" Now it was bad enough He just said eat His flesh, but now to add to a group of Jewish people that they had to drink His blood...oh my golly. Well if you know anything about the Old Testament, you know that the most repulsive possible dietary thing could be blood to the Jew and rightly so. And because...well that's exactly what God told them back in chapter 17 of the book of Leviticus and verse 10 it says this, "And whatsoever man there is of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn among you who eateth any manner of blood, I will even set My face against that soul that eateth blood and cut him off from among his people." Verse

12, "Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, no soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourn among you eat blood." Verse 14, "For it is the life of all flesh, the blood of it for the life thereof," and incidently William Harvey didn't corroborate that until 1700 and something. "I said unto the children of Israel, you shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof, whosoever eateth it shall be cut off." They were right. God told them don't eat blood, that was a sanitary thing to keep them healthy. That was a provision of God's sovereignty and God's omniscience to let them know that they needed to be aware of this because it could be poisonous and detrimental to their health and God gave them those rules. And now for Jesus to say to them "you've got to drink My blood" must have been the most nauseating thought imaginable. And so instead of solving their problem, Jesus compounds it and you see the move from willful blindness to judicial blindness. Do you see it? And instead of catering to them, He carries them into deeper mystery.

Now obviously He's not talking of drinking His blood literally. That would be idiotic. But He's talking about His analogy. You say, "Well why does He make it so specific?" Just listen to this, here it comes, are you ready? If you're not willing...and I'll put it in the phraseology, if you're not willing to swallow the shed blood of Jesus Christ for sin, you can't come to Him. You say, "What do you mean by that?" Just this, for a man to come to Jesus Christ he must be willing to accept Christ's atoning shed blood on the cross. That's what He's saying to these Jews. He's saying you not only have to take My person, you've got to be willing to swallow My sacrifice. Now I don't mean swallow literally. You've got to be willing to accept the fact that I have to die and shed My blood. Can a man come to Jesus Christ other than believing in the shed blood of Jesus Christ? No...no. That's exactly what the Jews wouldn't do is believe in His blood. You know the greatest stumbling block to Israel's belief in Messiah, Jesus Christ? What is it? His death...His death, a dead, blood-splattered Messiah just doesn't fit the Jewish concept. Doesn't work. That's why Paul in Acts 17 when he was preaching to the Christians at Thessalonica for three Sabbaths said this, "He reasoned with them why Jesus must need have...what?...suffered and die." They didn't understand that shed blood and Jesus is saying to them, "Not only do you have to accept My person, My flesh, you've got to be ready to accept My bloodshed." When He said "Drink My blood," He wasn't talking about literally drinking His blood, He was saying to them, "You've got to be willing to accept My shed blood for you." Listen, nobody no time receives Jesus Christ without accepting His death and shed blood. You must be willing to see the need of the shed blood. As bread He nourishes, but as blood He cleanses. But a bloody Messiah was a joke to them. Still is to Israel.

But, oh He says...and gives them the first promise, we said these were promises, here's the first promise, verse 53, "Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." Turn it around. If you eat of His flesh and drink of His blood, you have...what?...life. What kind of life? The life that's in you. What kind is that? Jesus said, "I am come that you might have life

and have it...what?...more abundantly, rich, real, thrilling, abundant, exciting, invigorating, purposeful, love life." That's the kind of life. He says if you'll eat My flesh, accept My person, drink My blood, believe the shed blood on the cross to cleanse your sin, if you'll accept that you'll have real abundant life. You that have accepted Jesus Christ, do you have that kind of life? I have, it's real, it's abundant life. And this guy I was talking about earlier, this psychologist, he had it. Right after he received Jesus Christ his whole personality changed. Just turned into a joy and an exuberance in that abundant life that he got through Christ.

Second promise, not only abundant life, but look at verse 54, here's the second promise, eternal life. "He who eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath...what?...eternal life." Tremendous promise. This is not only abundant life, folks, but it lasts forever. You say, "You mean you're never going to die?" Well my body may roll over and die, that's no problem. I'm just going to go to heaven and be with Jesus and some day I'm going to get a brand new one. It will be a lot better looking than this one and it will be eternal. My body might die, but I won't. No, the one who eats Jesus Christ's flesh and accepts His blood atonement has not only abundant life but eternal life.

Some people think this talks about communion service in this passage. Here's a little footnote. I don't think so at all for four reasons. Number one, the Jews don't understand communion. Number two, it's not for an unbeliever, it's for a believer. Number three, it hadn't even been instituted yet. And number four, it says in verse 54, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life," if you make that mean communion it says anybody who took communion automatically has eternal life. This isn't communion, folks, that doesn't come till later. This is the analogy of receiving Christ.

And so He says abundant life and eternal life. Then He gives another promise, terrific, end of verse 54, "And I will raise him up...when?...at the last day." What last day is this? Well it's not the Rapture of the church. Why? Because the church hasn't come up yet. It's got to be the last day of God's dealing with Israel, right? Sure. You say, "Well wasn't the resurrection promised to Israel?" Absolutely was promised to Israel back in Daniel and chapter 12 in the tremendous promise that Daniel gave. He says this, "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Daniel says some day is coming a resurrection. The Jews knew of that and they knew about the last day, the prophets all talked about the last day. And He says to them, "If you eat my flesh and drink My blood there's going to be a bodily resurrection." What a tremendous promise.

Look at the end of verse 39, "But should raise it up on the last day." Look at the end of verse 44, "I will raise him up at the last day." There's a last day...what is it? It's not at the Rapture. When is the last day in God's dealing with Israel? At the end of the Tribulation. The resurrection of Israel comes at the end of the seven-year Tribulation, that's the last day for Israel. And so He says, "For the one

who feasts on Christ there is abundant life, eternal life and bodily resurrection." Incidentally there's also a bodily resurrection for the church. Some day bodies are coming out of the grave in the Rapture. If you want to know what your glorified body looks like, read 1 Corinthians 15, it gives a detailed description.

So we see tremendous promise...abundant life, eternal life, and a bodily resurrection. Then in verse 55 He adds this thought, "For My flesh is food indeed, My blood is drink indeed." Now the word "indeed" means real. It could be read this way, "For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. I'm not talking about artificial stuff, this is the real stuff," He says. It's so good and so real that it gives abundant life, eternal life, bodily resurrection. That's some kind of food. And I'll tell you, that destroys the idea of works because the power is not in the eating, the power is in the food, right? There's nothing glorious about my faith, brother, there's only something glorious about the object of my faith.

So He says you get abundant life, eternal life, and bodily resurrection. Any more promises? Right, 56...I don't mean 56 more, I mean verse 56, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood," here comes a promise, oh do I love this, do I love this, "dwelleth in Me and...what?...I in him." Oh I'm telling you, that's exciting. Do you realize that when you receive Jesus Christ you become one with Him? Oh, what a fabulous thought. "And the life which I now live is not mine," Paul says, "it's Jesus Christ living in me." Oh tremendous!

John 14, I think it is, verse 20, I hope. "At that day you shall know...watch this...that I am in My Father and ye in Me and I in you." What a...what a triangle that is. That's one love triangle I want to be in, all wrapped up with God the Father and Jesus Christ. Oh that's too glorious to even put into words, just to know that I am one with Jesus Christ. That's almost incomprehensible. This is not my life, it's His life. I often ask myself, "Lord, what do You want it for? There's nothing there." The beautiful mystery of union with Jesus Christ. We go through this world, we are living lives of Christ...one with Him. He dwells in me, I dwell in Him. The Bible says, "In Him I live and move and have my being." Tremendous...tremendous! He's there in me, part of me, just like that food turns into me, Jesus Christ and I are mingled in some kind of mysterious, divine relationship. I'll tell you, folks, that's thrilling...that's thrilling. This is not my life, it's His life in me.

Verse 57, where did He get all this life to give us? This is what He said, "Well as the living Father has sent Me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." See. In other words, Jesus says God gave Me temporal life to come here and I'm giving you spiritual life to go back there, see. It's a circle. As the Father gave Me life here, I give you life to go there. That's the whole point. Christ...God sent Christ to bring us back, it's just a circle. God longs for our fellowship and love.

So, Jesus says the Father gave Me life, I came here to give you life. I became what you are that you might become what I am. So Christ is bread from heaven, sent by God. If we eat, we get back to God where we belong. Oh what promises. Abundant life, eternal life, bodily resurrection, union with Christ in an individual oneness. I'll just have to preach on that subject sometime. And that's for all those who eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood.

Then in a great climactic summary in a nature of an invitation He closes out in verse 58 and He says this, "This is the bread," and I can see Him and I believe He's pointing at Himself, that's just MacArthur, that's all. I believe He was pointing at Himself and saying, "This is the bread which came down from heaven," not that stuff that they got back there in the desert, that manna, they ate that and they're dead. "He that eateth of this bread shall...what?...live forever." That's an invitation to those people. A dynamic reminder. Oh what a statement. "And these things, said He in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum."

Did you hear that invitation? He alone has the power to transform lives. He is alone the bread that can fill the hunger of the heart. He can change your life. He took Saul the bigot, Saul the murderer and He turned him into Paul the Apostle, the greatest preacher that ever lived. He took a man, for example, like John Bunyan, the drunk, the foul mouth, touched his heart so that he penned the classic Pilgrim's Progress. And He's done it a multiplied million times. And I'll tell you, it takes somebody more than a man to do that.

What is the question of the ages? Who is Jesus Christ? What is the answer? He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. And if you want abundant life, eternal life, bodily resurrection and union with Him, then you must eat His flesh and drink His blood.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).