

“MY FLESH IS FOOD INDEED AND MY BLOOD IS DRINK INDEED”

Bryan Matthew Dockens

“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. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. 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’” (John 6:53-58).

From time to time, brethren read the text above at the Lord’s Table, implying that this reference to eating Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood is about the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine meant to memorialize His body and blood. While it is true that, in the Lord’s Supper, the unleavened bread represents the body of Jesus and the fruit of the vine represents His blood (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1st Corinthians 11:23-25), problems arise in conflating this passage with any reference to that communion.

John’s inspired account of the “last supper” includes many details Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul omitted, but he left it to them to record the institution of the Lord’s Supper. John simply did not write about it, which is unsurprising as his book has a noticeably different approach than the others do, covering the life and death of the Messiah.

What Jesus said in the text under consideration was spoken a full year before He established the Lord’s Supper. The events leading up to the remarks in question are prefaced with the statement that *“the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near”* (John 6:4). The next time Jesus would celebrate the Passover (John 11:55) was the night Judas betrayed Him and Peter denied Him (John 13:18-38), which was the same Passover when He taught the disciples to break bread and drink the cup in His memory (Mark 14:12-31). Thus, the passage in which Jesus identified Himself as the true manna is not in the same context as the institution of the Lord’s Supper.

The context began with Jesus miraculously feeding a multitude of five thousand men, not counting women and children, with five loaves

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and two fish (John 6:5-14). The next day, the crowd pursued Him and He rebuked them because their only motivation was to again be fed (22-27). They persisted, bringing up the manna by which Israel was fed in the wilderness with the implication Jesus was somehow obligated to feed them bread every day (30-31). It is this point at which the Lord identified Himself as One to be consumed (32-34), saying, *“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst”* (35). Christ emphasized an eating which satisfies spiritual, rather than physical, need, one which results in never hungering or thirsting. This is what He meant when He preached, much earlier, *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled”* (Matthew 5:6). That verse is not about the Lord’s Supper either.

Nothing in the context points the reader to a regular observance whereby Christ or His sacrifice on behalf of mankind is to be remembered. Rather, the lesson is that Christ Himself is One who nourishes like no food can. Thus, the emphasis is on **belief**: *“He who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe”* (35-36), *“Everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life”* (40), and *“He who believes in Me has everlasting life”* (47).

It is because believing in Jesus is the message that the outcome is eternal life. The Lord’s Supper reminds Christians of Christ’s death and allows them to proclaim it, but it does not impart everlasting life. However, the food and drink that Jesus is does convey that heavenly blessing. *“I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. 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”* (49-51).

Throughout the chapter, Jesus illustriously communicated that He sustains life, spiritual life, eternal life. Every soul must feed on Him or die. Feeding is a figurative reference to faith. It is an important message, but it must be reserved to its own context.

“Oh, taste and see that Jehovah is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” (Psalm 34:8).

"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

"THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER"

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard
Belén, New Mexico

**Seekers Welcome.
Members Expected.**

"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN ANY TRESPASS... RESTORE SUCH A ONE"

GALATIANS 6:1

CONFESS TRESPASSES

James 5:16; 1st John 1:9

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 8:22

PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Acts 8:22

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN"

PROVERBS 25:11

"A person who does whatever he feels like doing is not free. He is a slave to his emotions. He does the bidding of his inconsistent, irresponsible, and illogical whims; constantly suffering the consequences for fulfilling his 'master's' demands. Only Jesus has our best interest at heart. Only by submitting to Him in faithful obedience can we experience true freedom."

– Wes McAdams

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

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"KNOW HOW TO ANSWER"

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To the apostles, Jesus said, *"Do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say"* (Luke 12:11-12). They were obligated to not prepare their defense of the gospel aforetime because they received direct inspiration. As conduits of divine revelation, they were forbidden from interfering with what God had to say, so He refused them the right to plan their remarks.

Not so the rest of the church. Whereas apostles were prohibited by Christ from forethought in the proclamation of His word, those same apostles commanded others to do exactly that. Paul wrote, *"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how to answer each one"* (Colossians 4:6). Similarly, Peter said, *"Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you"* (1st Peter 3:15). Christians absolutely must study and prepare their words.

How inspired men got the gospel and how the rest get it are decidedly different, as Paul taught, *"By revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets"* (Ephesians 3:3-5).

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