

I Am the Bread of Life

by Albert N. Martin

Edited transcript of [message](#) from radio broadcast

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Will you follow, please, in the Scriptures as I read a portion of the 6th chapter of the Gospel of John. The opening section of this chapter records our Lord's feeding of the 5000 on one side of the Lake or Sea of Galilee and then the record of our Lord visiting His disciples in that night watch as He crossed from one place to another. And then in verse 22, John picks up the narrative.

"On the morrow the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, save one, and that Jesus entered not with His disciples into the boat, but that his disciples went away alone (howbeit there came boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks): when the multitude therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they themselves got into the boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when camest Thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled. Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him the Father, even God, hath sealed. They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent. They said therefore unto Him, What then doest Thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe Thee? what workest Thou? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, He gave them bread out of heaven to eat. Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world. They said therefore unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, that ye have seen Me, and yet believe not. All that which the Father giveth Me shall come unto Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I am come down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that of all that which he hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews therefore murmured concerning Him, because He said, I am the bread which came down out of heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how doth He now say, I am come down out of heaven? Jesus answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me, except the Father that sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto Me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save He that is from God,

He hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove one with another, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Jesus therefore 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 not life in yourselves. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth Me, he also shall live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven: not as the fathers ate, and died; he that eateth this bread shall live for ever. These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum."

All that the Lord Jesus ever spoke was truth, undiluted, unmixed, pure, unsullied truth. This had to be so because He Himself was conscious that He spoke only that which His Father gave Him to speak. He asserts this many times, particularly in the Gospel of John. And one of the clearest statements of this is found in chapter 12, verses 49 and 50: "For I spake not from Myself; but the Father that sent Me, He hath given Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto Me, so I speak."

There is a negative word; there is a positive word, and then an explanative word. What is the negative? Jesus said "except you eat", and the form of the verb points to a once for all eating. "Except you once for all eat of My flesh, and except you once for all drink of the blood of the Son of man, you have no life in yourselves." Now imagine how this staggering statement must have fallen upon their ears. They are very much alive. They have crossed over one part of the lake to another in order to be where Jesus is. Their physical life had been sustained by His miracle the day before. He said, "You ate of the loaves and you've come again because you want your bellies filled. You haven't seen the significance of what happened." They were very much alive--eating, breathing, looking, talking. But Jesus says, "Except you eat once for all the flesh of the Son of man and drink once for all of His blood, you are utterly devoid of life." That's what the text says. That's the essential substance of the first part of this word to those to whom He spoke.

But then there is the positive. Look at verse 54. Jesus goes on then to say, "He that eats [present tense]", and He uses a different word. There is a standard word for "eat" in the New Testament. It's used literally dozens and dozens of times. But here our Lord uses a word that is found four times in this context here in John chapter 6. It's found in verse 56, 57, and 58. So with its presence here in 54 (four uses), the only other uses in the New Testament are Matthew 24 and again in John 13. And it's a word that means literally to munch. It means to nibble. It means to crunch. It is a word you would use to describe ravenous animals who continually tear and tear and tear and consume the flesh off the animal which the predatory animals have downed and killed. And Jesus here is saying, "He who is continually feeding upon My flesh [and again, a present tense]; he who is continually drinking My blood has eternal life. Those who continually crunch and munch and nibble and feed upon My flesh and continually drink My blood, two things are true of them. They have right now eternal

life." Eternal life is their present possession, their inviolable possession. They now possess and will continually possess into the endless ions of eternity that quality of life that is called in Scripture eternal life. And secondly, Jesus says, "All who continually feed upon My flesh, continually drink My blood, I will raise him up at the last day."

Then He gives an explanative word in verse 55: "For [with that little particle of logical connection, why is all this true?] My flesh is [real food], and My blood is [real drink]." He is saying, "Whatever you may have known of any kind of food that has satisfied your physical hunger, whatever your fathers may have known of that supernatural food sent down from heaven in the wilderness called manna, whatever you may have experienced of the food that came from my hands yesterday (the multiplying of the loaves and fishes), all of that food in terms of the issues that really counts is non-substantial. At best it meets an immediate need and points to greater needs and to greater fulfillment of need. "But all that I've said to You", Jesus said, "is true, for My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink." Now that's the substance of what Jesus said.

But you say, "But Pastor Martin, you haven't explained it." No, I haven't explained it, but I've tried to just open up briefly what those words would have conveyed if you were sitting there when Jesus spoke them. Now before we move on in the third place to consider the basic meaning of these words, I trust something has happened in your own mind or heart. If it hasn't, either I failed to open up the seriousness of the issue, or you failed to receive the right impression of the issue. If Jesus is truth incarnate, speaks only the words of His Father, speaks only truth, do you see the implication for you sitting here today? If you do not eat His flesh and drink His blood, you have no life according to Jesus. "Yes, but...." No, no, stop, back off. It's not a matter of what it means. Do you feel the weight of His words? You are spiritually dead, and you will remain dead through life and in death and know the pangs of the second death. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of God and drink His blood, you have no life in you.

What is the heart, what is the very soul, what are the central issues to a right understanding of these words? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves." Don't you want to understand what those words mean? I'm looking out on some people who are dead, utterly dead. You have no life in you. Why? Because you've never once for all eaten of His flesh nor drunk of His blood. And there are others who profess that once for all you've eaten of His flesh and drunk of His blood, but you're not continually masticating His flesh. You do not feed upon His flesh. In the ongoing, living dynamics of persevering faith, you are not drinking of His blood. And according to Jesus, any hope you have of everlasting life and a blessed resurrection is ill-founded. Dear people, may God help us to come with a heart that says, "O God, teach me what those vital words mean. It is a matter of life and death to my soul." My friend, you have no life unless you eat of His flesh and drink of His blood. And that means you come to embrace from the heart it is Christ crucified who is the life and the nourishment of the soul, not Christ merely sent down out of heaven, Christ as sealed by the father (verse 27), Christ as manifesting grace and power in the feeding of the multitudes, but Christ in His flesh given for the life of the world.

Do you see now why He says, "Unless you have eaten once for all My flesh and drunk My blood, you have no life in you"? For all life is in a crucified Savior. Outside

of Him, there is nothing but death, present death, continued death, and the horrible specter of eternal death in the lake of fire. You want to put forth endeavor to do what God requires of you and that which will please Him? Believe on the One He sent. You don't need to know a word of Greek; you hardly need to know much of the English language. Believe on Him whom He has sent. That's what God requires of you.

The Lord doesn't stop there. Verse 35: "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." How is soul hunger and soul thirst met? By believing upon this One who stands before them. Verse 40: "For this is the will of My Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on Him, [now note carefully] should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." What is promised to all who believe on Him? Two things: they possess eternal life and they will be raised at the last day.

Now turn over to verse 53, and I think the picture will begin to come into sharp focus. "Jesus therefore 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 not life in yourselves." He that is continually munching, feeding upon Jesus' flesh and continually drinking His blood, what two things are to be true of him? He has eternal life and Jesus will raise him up at the last day.

You see the strict parallel between verse 54 and verse 40. Who has eternal life according to verse 40? The one who believes on Him. Who will be raised up at the last day? The one who believes on Him. What is it to believe on Him? Unless you come up with Jesus teaching two ways of salvation--some people get saved by eating Jesus' flesh and drinking His blood, whatever it means, and other people just get saved by trusting in Him. Take your pick. If you want to plunge into some mystical heights and depths and get involved in great convoluted mysteries, you go the former way. No, Jesus is not teaching two ways of salvation, only one. And when He promises precisely the same two things to two different activities, obviously the activities are one.

What is it to eat His flesh? What is it to drink His blood? It is simply to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to do what the ancient Israelites did with the manna. There they were in their destitute state with no means to set up an agricultural economy as wanderers in a wilderness. And in their unbelief, they want to go back to Egypt, kill Moses, and change the thing, but God mercifully provides manna. They are destitute; they are unable to meet their own need. What did God do? In His love and pity, He sends bread out of heaven. Now what did they have to do? Did God say, "You've got to go out every morning, and you've got to go through fifty different mantras. Then I'll send down a little bit of manna. Do thirty more and I'll send down a second piece of manna. Do fifty hail Marys and seventy-five our fathers, and I'll give you a dozen manna"? What did they have to do to get the manna? Nothing. God sent the bread out of heaven. You remember how many times it's emphasized in the passage this is the bread. Yes, it came out of heaven, but it's pointing to a greater reality. What did they have to do? Just go out and gather it. They couldn't stand around in circles and jump for joy and say, "O boy, manna this morning. Doesn't it make your mouth water? Doesn't it look good?" They'd starve and perish. They had to reach out the hand, take it, put it into the mouth, chew it, let the saliva mix with it, swallow it, let the gastric juices work upon it. And what did it do? It sustained life through the wilderness.

Now Jesus said, "If you want to know what it is to believe on Me, you do with Me, My person as the God-man crucified for sinners, what they did with the manna. Behold Me as God's gift out of heaven to destitute humanity." Jesus said, "Eat this bread and you'll live forever. Eat of Me; you'll live now and you'll never cease to live. And I will raise you at the last day." Again, verse 47: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life." Dear people, can God make it any simpler or plainer? It is Christ received--and listen carefully--and fed upon by faith who is the life and nourishment of the soul. "Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood, you have no life in yourself."

I trust God has helped some perhaps for the first time to see how simple the Gospel is. Do you see? It is Christ Himself who is food and nourishment. Four times: "I am the bread, I am the bread, I am the bread, I am the bread sent down from heaven." It is Christ in the uniqueness of His person: "I am come out of heaven, out of heaven, out of heaven." Don't think of Him just as another mortal. Yes, He is one of us in the reality of incarnation, but He was wholly other than us from eternity, the eternal Word made flesh. And do you see that it is Christ crucified who is the true food and nourishment of the soul? And are you one who having eaten and drunk is yet eating and drinking of Christ?

If you have never known what it is eat and drink of Him, He stands before you this morning. And the only way He will stand before you until the second coming, He stands before you in the Word and by the Spirit and offers Himself to you as the bread of life. Do you feel the solemnity of that? I do as I preach. I will not see Christ in any other way until the second coming other than the way I see Him in the Word by the Spirit. You will never know Christ in the graciousness of His invitation of life in any other way than you know Him this morning. Don't wait for some overwhelming feeling and goose bumps up and down your spine or anything else.

Christ says, "I am the bread of life. He that comes to Me and eats of Me shall have life. Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life." Will you go on trying to find life in the junk food of this world? Will you go on trying to find life in the sand and marbles and gravel of the lust of the flesh, in the pursuits of that which dishonors God when the One who came out from God stands before you and says, "I am the bread of life, and I am bread to be eaten. And My blood is that drink which gives nourishment to the soul"? May God grant that these precious words of the Lord Jesus will not cause us to murmur nor cause us to stumble, let alone never cause us to turn back. But may we say Lord Jesus, "I do eat of Your flesh; I do drink of Your blood."

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