

John 6:47-69 ⁴⁷ "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸ "I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰ "This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ "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." ⁵² The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this *Man* give us *His* flesh to eat?" ⁵³ 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.** ⁵⁴ "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵ "**For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.** ⁵⁶ "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. ⁵⁸ "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." ⁵⁹ These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. ⁶⁰ Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this*, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" ⁶¹ When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? ⁶² "*What* then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? ⁶³ "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. **The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.** ⁶⁴ "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. ⁶⁵ And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." ⁶⁶ From that *time* many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. ⁶⁷ Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" ⁶⁸ But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ "Also we have come to believe and know that **You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**"

What does it mean to eat (believe)?

- Chew
- Swallow
- Digest

What does it mean to eat? If you chew on something and savor it and then spit it out like Chef Giada, have you eaten it? What about if you swallow something with absolutely no nutritional value, like rocks or clay, has your body eaten? We could debate all

day about what it means to eat because it all depends on how you define eat. But we can't debate, or at least shouldn't, what it means to believe. Jesus lays out what it means to believe, to truly believe, in our text. And He does so by comparing it to eating bread.

You might not have realized it, but the crowd that Jesus is addressing here is the same crowd of thousands that He had miraculously fed with five loaves of bread and two fish. It is the same crowd that then came to Him wanting more bread for which they didn't have to work or labor. And Jesus tells them that there is a different type of bread that they needed, a more important bread, a bread that would give them eternal life and when they ask for that bread, Jesus gives it to them. What Jesus does here is far more important than what He had done by giving them bread and fish.

Jesus says it plainly at the beginning of this meal for their souls when He says "He who believes in Me has everlasting life". Then He repeats that same truth in metaphors in verses 51, 54, and 58. The Jews' problem wasn't that they didn't understand, they knew He was talking in metaphors. Their problem was that they refused to believe. The biggest stumbling block was Jesus Himself.

Notice the derisive “This” in verse 52 “how can this man”. It is the same objection they raised ten verses earlier . **John 6:42** *And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?"*

They refused to believe in Jesus. Refused to believe that the ordinary looking person standing among them was, as Peter later confessed, the Son of God and the Christ. Unbelief always takes offense at the truth. They didn't take offense at free food but they took offense at Jesus trying to save their souls. They took offense at Jesus pointing out their sins. They took offense at being told the things they were doing and wanted to do were sinful. They took offense at God sending a Savior for the whole world, not just for the Jews. They took offense at being told that living one's life for earthly food and money profits nothing. Unbelief always finds an objection to Jesus and it is only the truth about Jesus that can turn unbelief into belief. And Jesus lays out a four course dinner of the truth about Himself that they might believe.

What does it mean to believe? It means to chew, swallow

and digest. Jesus compares Himself to bread? Why? Because what do you do with bread? You eat it and it keeps you alive. Bread was the main staple of these poor people. It is what kept them alive. They had other food but if they didn't have bread they would quickly die. Jesus was the bread of life for their souls. To eat Him, meant to believe in Him, believe what these people were refusing to believe that Jesus had come from God, that He was “the son of man”. This phrase “Son of Man” was a messianic title used in Daniel to describe how God would become flesh, become man, to save man. Jesus describes in our text how He and He alone is the bread of life - by giving His flesh, His life for the life the world. He gave his life for the sin of the world. Thus Jesus is not just the bread of life. He is your bread of life. The Holy Spirit uses the article here to show us that He is “the bread of life” there is no other. No other person or thing that can give you life. To have Jesus is to have life. To not have Jesus is to not have life.

When Jesus later changes His word picture from eating bread to eating of His flesh and blood, He isn't talking about cannibalism. He isn't talking about the Lord's Supper which He

hadn't instituted yet. He is describing how we eat the bread of life, He is describing what faith is. "The essence of faith is exactly this that we receive from Jesus ... His blood -bought merits, His flesh and His blood sacrificed for us." (Lenski). Faith is our soul embracing Jesus and His sacrificial death in faith and trust." This is daily bread for our soul. This is the bread of life that we take into ourselves and chew on and savor with delight as we might take in fresh buttered bread, take a big bite and savor. We chew on and savor, as Peter points out, that Christ suffered once for sins, the just for us, the unjust, that He might bring us to God by His death in the flesh. We chew on and savor that we have been redeemed but not by silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ as lamb without blemish or spot. Our souls have daily bread and this is it.

This was the bread Jesus was trying to feed the crowd with. And they would not swallow it. Notice that many people who called themselves Jesus' disciples ended up leaving Him. They had never really been Jesus' disciples. To be Jesus' disciples means more than to savor the sweet, it also means to swallow the bitter. These supposed disciples would gladly follow when He gave away

free bread, when it meant no persecution, when Jesus talked about the evils of others, when He preached with power and passion, when He did miracles, but when it became clear that believing in Him meant believing in their own complete sinfulness, that they weren't better than the Gentiles they despised, then they rejected Jesus as their Savior sent by God. In fact, they never believed in Him as their Savior.

There are many out there, just like there were in our text, who want a Savior who doesn't talk about sin. They don't like to hear about sin. They don't want to have their sin pointed out as sin and so they talk about God's love but never about His wrath. They do not have the real the Jesus. They do not have true life in 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.**"*

Eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking His blood is a metaphor for having the Holy Spirit plug your nose, tip back your head and force down your unwilling throat the knowledge that your sin was so great, you are so unclean spiritually, that the Son of God

had to die to atone for it, for you. The first part of that is a terribly bitter pill to swallow. One that we would not swallow ever unless the Holy Spirit had worked it in us through the Word of God. But once the first part is down and the truth of our sinful state is known the second part is unbelievably sweet that as we heard last week we will not be punished for our sins as we deserve for Jesus willingly was punished instead of us. It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing. The words of Jesus, the words of Scripture, they are spirit and they are life.

Do you see now why Jesus calls Himself the bread of life?

When we eat bread, assuming we don't spit it out, we digest it and it sustains our bodies. The Words of Jesus, the Words of Scripture, they have nutritional value for our souls and nothing else does.

When we believe in Jesus, He gives us life, real life because as Jesus says in our text, His flesh is food indeed and His blood is drink indeed. What happened to those who eat earthly breads?

They die. Food for the body is not the bread of life. It is not food indeed. It does not give real life. It merely sustains life for awhile.

That is not living, that is slowly dying. Jesus is the bread of life, the

only one. When He is received in faith He does not just put off death, He prevents it all together. The death that He prevents all together, is death of the soul. The life the He gives is eternal life for body and soul. He who partakes of this bread of life, that is believes in Christ, His body and blood given to death for the world, that person has eternal life, has it now, their soul is alive and ever shall be and their body, on the last day Jesus will raise up, that body and soul may live and not die. Take and eat and life. *"This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. Jesus "the Son of man" is the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that He gives is His flesh, which He gave for the life of the world."* Amen

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