

## Bread from Heaven John 6:51–58

### Introduction

In the Gospel of John Chapter 6, the Apostle John writes about a conflict between Jesus and the Jews about bread. Jesus talks about the bread that came down from heaven, a phrase He uses several times in the chapter. It's a fascinating dialogue, and I'd like us to examine it today and see if we can understand what Jesus is saying.

Let's begin with verse 48, where Jesus says, "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." The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us *His* flesh to eat?" 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 6:48-58 NKJV)

Jesus' words shocked the Jews. This must be an allegory, right? Jesus isn't really talking about literally eating his flesh and drinking his blood, is he? The Bible doesn't sanction cannibalism.

John gives us some clarity in 1 John when he writes, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." (1 John 1:1-4 NKJV)

When Jesus came down from heaven, He came to be seen, held, and handled. Jesus spent his time building relationships with people. He didn't come to create a corporation or an institution. Jesus never intended the church to become a business that relies on ritual and religious observance. Jesus came to reveal God to us. He came to open the door for relationship and understanding.

In Israel, God has become obscure and hidden. But now, through Christ, we can experience God's love and grace and worship Him with joy and without fear. The conflict between Jesus and the Jews begins in verse 51, when Jesus says, "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven." Of course, Jesus is saying that He is God come down in human flesh, not that He is a loaf of Bread.

But in this allegory, He says He came to earth to be Bread to the soul and food for the spiritually hungry. And He says, "If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever." Jesus is talking about himself. He is the living Bread; when eaten, He gives eternal life. That's the gospel message.

Eating is necessary for survival! Food supplies the nourishment for life your body needs. But just looking at Bread won't provide you with nourishment, no matter how long you look at it or examine it. You can look at the Bread, admire the Bread, smell the Bread, and even complement the Bread, but there's no nourishment if you don't eat the Bread.

That is what Jesus is saying about Himself! Jesus can do miracles and demonstrate amazing love and forgiveness, and you may even be in awe of it! But only if you partake and internalize Jesus as the Messiah will you receive any spiritual nourishment from Him.

However, if you're not hungry, no matter how good the Bread looks or smells, it may not have much of an attraction for you. If your life is full of other things you've been eating, you may not want any bread at all. But if you're hungry, and your stomach needs food, you just can't wait to cut into a slice of Bread, put some butter on it and maybe some jam, and get ready to savor every bite!

When sinners love their sins and are full of the world and sinful habits, the Bread of Life doesn't interest them. Sinners can sometimes be indifferent or even repulsed by Jesus. That was the response of the religious leaders Jesus was talking to.

Once a person is spiritually hungry, they realize the world's food only satisfies for a moment, leaving them starved and unsatisfied. When you

realize you are a sinner with no eternal purpose, you begin to sense the void and emptiness in your life and start to hunger for something real and lasting.

When you encounter the Bread of Life, your whole appetite begins to change. Jesus satisfies the hunger for reality and peace and joy and forgiveness and love and meaning and hope and security! But you must partake of the heavenly Bread of Life, Jesus Christ, to receive this spiritual nourishment.

Dietitians love to say, "You are what you eat!" It's true. The food that you eat becomes part of you. This is the message Jesus is conveying to the Jewish skeptics. Jesus says, "If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever." He's talking about himself.

Many people will say they respect Jesus as a wonderful person. They may admire His perfect life and even be touched by His unselfish love. You can be amazed at His tenderness and cry tears of sympathy as you think of His dying love on the Cross. But it's only when you partake of the Bread of Heaven and invite Jesus into your life that He comes to dwell in you. When Jesus becomes a part of you, your life begins to change.

It's true, whatever you eat becomes a part of you? And the more you eat, the more of you there is! That analogy holds true spiritually as well. When you let Jesus become a part of your life, His life mingles with yours. He becomes a part of you, and you become a part of Him.

No one else can eat the Bread of Heaven for you. The spiritual nourishment you need is only supplied when you eat the Bread personally. You can't eat the Bread of Heaven by proxy. Eating is an individual thing. No one else can do it for you. If you want spiritual nourishment, you must eat the food that gives you spiritual life. Jesus says, "If you desire eternal life, you must eat my life!

Jesus said, "I am the Bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the Bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living Bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this Bread will live forever. This Bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (John 6:48-51 NIV)

How can you refuse an offer of eternal life? But people turn away every day. Some are just not spiritually hungry, or they are satisfied with the food that perishes. Others are happy and self-satisfied in their sins and full of their own iniquity. Christ is offensive to a lot of people in our world. He was so

repulsive to these Jews that they would ultimately crucify Him, hoping to silence a message they did not want to hear.

Jesus elaborates on this view in verse 51 when He says, "And the Bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh." Jesus says the living Bread includes eating His flesh. What does that mean?

## **I. Accepting Christ's Death on the Cross**

Jesus is doing some forward thinking to His death on the Cross, where He will give His human flesh as a sacrifice for sin. If Jesus only came into the world as God incarnate, lived a perfect life, and then returned to Heaven, the people of Earth would remain sinners. You don't become Christlike through observation.

In John 12:24, Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." (John 12:24 NIV)

If Christ had come as the Living Bread but didn't die on the Cross and then rise again, we could not partake of His life. But because Jesus was God and did come down and partake of human flesh, when He died and rose again, it became possible for us to partake of His eternal life. As a result of His death, He brought about much fruit. Jesus is the grain of wheat that makes the Heavenly Bread. His earthly life had to be cut off the stalk, die, and be crushed to make Living Bread that we could eat.

To be the Living Bread, Jesus had to give His life for the world. And that phrase, "I shall give," is Christ's promise of His death. Jesus had to die as a substitute for us. 1 Peter 2:24 says, "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24 NIV)

In Galatians 1:4, it says, "He gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." (Galatians 1:4 NIV)

Galatians 2:20 says, "He loved us and gave Himself for us." Ephesians 5:25, "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." 1 Timothy 2:6, "who gave himself as a ransom for all people." Titus 2:14 says, "who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity."

The saving work of Jesus on the Cross is available to everyone. Christ's death provided a salvation that was sufficient and adequate for the world.

## **II. Accepting Jesus As God's Messiah**

In verse 53, Jesus says, "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. (John 6:53 NKJV)

What's He talking about? He's talking about spiritual life. He is talking about trading our mortal lives for eternal lives. He's talking about the abundant life that He came to bring to those who accept Him. He's talking about living this earthly life empowered by the Holy Spirit that's real, purposeful, and effective.

Jesus lived and ministered as a perfect servant, the perfect sacrifice, and the perfect Messiah. He demonstrated that you can live a truly godly life in human flesh. He says, "The one who eats My flesh by accepting that I am God incarnate, who drinks My blood by accepting that I died a substitutionary death on the Cross for the world; who believes and receives me as Savior, will have life here and now.

Those who know Jesus are alive in Christ here and now. Jesus says it's an abundant life filled with love, joy, peace, and all the blessings God grants to us now. Sadly, you don't have a continuing life if you don't believe Jesus is God. The best you can hope for is a long earthly life with no future guarantees.

## **III. Receiving Christ's Eternal Life**

Christ's Eternal Life is a present-tense gift. In verse 54, Jesus said, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life." Not only do you get to live a blessed life here and now, but it will last forever." It is an eternal life. It goes on forever and ever, full of the very life that God Himself possesses.

This promise of everlasting life comes with a guarantee of physical resurrection. Even if your physical body should perish, Jesus says in verse 54, "I'll raise you up on the last day." That's a promise of bodily resurrection. You're going to get a new glorified body at the Resurrection. Every believer receives a new body when Jesus comes again.

We learned last week in Daniel 12, "Many who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake to everlasting life." An awakening is coming, and you'll be a part of the resurrection to everlasting life.

When you follow Jesus, He promises you a blessed life here and now. But He also promises you a life that will last forever, even if that requires a physical resurrection. In verse 55, He says, "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." (John 6:55-56 NKJV)

Jesus is saying, "I am the real food that results in abundant life; that results in eternal life; and the resurrection of the body. The power isn't in the preparation or the eating; the power is in the food.

#### **IV. Abiding In Christ**

In verse 56: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." You will not only have a blessed life, an eternal life, and a bodily resurrection, but you'll be one with Christ.

Remember the analogy we discussed earlier: whatever you eat becomes you. That's what Paul was saying when he wrote in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."

He can't separate himself from Christ. Paul believes that Christ in you is the hope of glory. He says in 1 Corinthians, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*." (1 Corinthians 6:17 NKJV)

Jesus told the disciples in John 14, "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I *am* in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." (John 14:19-20 NKJV)

1 John 4:13 says, "By this, we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as* Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:13-16 NKJV)

#### **Conclusion**

In Verse 57, Jesus says, "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me." (John 6:57)

NKJV)

The life of God is passed down through Christ to us. We live because Christ lives in us. He gives us His life. God the Father gave Him His life. To eat the Bread from heaven and to drink His blood is to be one with Christ. Jesus is the Living Bread that gives us forever life.

The Jews really couldn't handle that. How could the Messiah possibly be a blood-scourged, despised, hated, and humble servant nailed to a Roman cross, raised up naked before a gazing world possible God's Savior? They were looking for a military, political, and economic leader who would come and conquer all their enemies, making Israel the world's supreme nation to which other nations would bow. A dead Messiah could never accomplish that. That's why Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:23 says that the death of Christ on a cross was to the Jews "a stumbling block."

The New Testament truth is Jesus is still a stumbling block to all those who reject Him as God's Messiah. But the gospel message is to believe that Jesus is God in the flesh and that He died as a substitute for your sins. Those who believe in Him inherit eternal life. Those who don't will die in their sins.

The question is, Will you choose Jesus and partake of His life, or will you reject Jesus and live only for yourself in this life?