



First Baptist Church Selmer

A JOURNEY THROUGH JOHN • "HARD TRUTH" • JOHN 6:51-59 • 1/30/2022

MAIN POINT

When we take the Lord's Supper we remember and proclaim that we are joined to Christ through the shedding of His blood.

INTRODUCTION

Why do you think food is so often a part of our celebrations in life?

When you think of Scripture, what memorable meals come to mind?

Why do we take the Lord's Supper together at our church?

There are many meaningful and symbolic meals such as the Feast of Booths and the Feast of Tabernacles that were enjoyed by saints in the Bible, however the most meaningful meal found in Scripture is the Lord's Supper. Celebrating communion reminds the church that its existence and thriving is dependent on the death and resurrection of Christ.

UNDERSTANDING

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 6:51-56.

What makes Jesus' words in John 6 seem strange? Why would this be particularly shocking for the Jews?

What does eating Jesus' flesh and drinking His blood mean?

What is the result of eating and drinking Jesus' body and blood?

The first part of this passage seems so strange. It is hard to fathom someone wanting to be eaten by others, let alone promote it as the path to life. Yet Jesus is speaking metaphorically to a

group that should have understood Him, as He had just recently miraculously fed them from a few fish and a few loaves of bread. This group was pursuing Jesus so that He could continue to supply bread for them, but what they needed was Jesus Himself. Eating Jesus' flesh means that we are to fully trust in Him and let Him be the source of sustenance and life in us. Similarly, to drink His blood means to trust in His atoning death, which is represented in the shedding of His blood. This would be a terribly difficult saying for the Jews because they could not see Jesus for who He really was, but only for who they wanted Him to be.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 6:57-59.

What powerful theological idea does Jesus communicate in v. 57? Why is this so significant for us?

What was Jesus' talking about when He said "the bread the fathers ate"? Why does Jesus talk about manna in this moment?

How is Jesus different from manna? How is He better?

In v. 57, Jesus equated our living in Him with His living in the Father. This is a powerful and significant truth about our relationship with Jesus and His relationship to the Father, and it says much about the nature of trust we must have in Him. He cares for us as the Father cares for Him. Therefore, we are to trust Him as the Son trusts the Father. By appealing to the story of the Exodus and God's provision of manna, Jesus shows how He is the better provision for God's people. Their need is not physical, but spiritual. The same is true for us today.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-26

Why does Paul tell the Corinthian church that he is not pleased with them?

What specific ordinance of the church is Paul referencing?

Why is the partaking of the Lord's Supper so important? Is there a right way and a wrong way to partake?

Paul is referring specifically to the partaking and the manner in which the church was partaking in the Lord's Supper. The Bible is clear on certain elements essential to the partaking of this ordinance but has caused quite the debate among various churches for many years.

APPLICATION

How might meditating on Christ's propitiation for our sins make the Lord's Supper a more meaningful experience?

How might it change the way that we live in a day-to-day basis?

When do you tend to approach worship or other "rituals" of our faith, (ie. Communion) too lightly? What are some ways we can help each other guard against those complacencies and habits?

Why is the blood of Christ called "good news"?

PRAYER

God, help us to joyfully partake in the Lord's Supper and know the meaning of what you did for us many years ago on a cross because of the love you first showed to us by sending Your only Son.

COMMENTARY

| JOHN 6:51-59

6:52-55. Still focused on earthly interpretations of spiritual realities (the same problem that troubled Nicodemus in chapter 3), the crowd pondered a very human and earthbound question: How can this man give us His flesh to eat? The word translated "disputed" describes a debate. The indication seems to be that some favored what Jesus was saying, while others opposed him. What follows is a paragraph that must be understood spiritually. It tells us first that spiritual appropriation provides initial life. Without the careful textual approach, we can end up with some kind of theological cannibalism. Jesus was talking about the cross—the spiritual act whereby we accept His death on our behalf in order to gain access to His offer of eternal life. In the spiritual sense, that is the real food and the real drink.

These verses focus on the exclusive character of the atonement. The Jews were divided over the process of receiving the gift of Christ's death on man's behalf. But rather than tone down His language, Jesus added the drinking of His blood—an idea especially abhorrent to the Jews when taken in its literal and physical sense (Gen. 9:4)—to the eating of His flesh.

The Law of Moses had forbidden any drinking of blood on penalty of being cut off from the nation (Lev. 17:10-14). Yet no fewer than three times in the context of this passage our Lord spoke of eating His "flesh" and drinking His "blood." Some interpreters believe the Lord referred to participating in what we call "communion" when He told people to do these things. But there was

no such ordinance before the night before His crucifixion. Furthermore, partaking of the elements in the Lord's Supper does not provide eternal life.

6:56-57. The Lord emphasized that spiritual appropriation provides abiding life. These verses sound like John 15 with their emphasis on remaining in the Lord after initial faith. We eat by trusting the Savior for regeneration; we abide by feeding on Him on a regular basis. Eating becomes a metaphor of faith.

Jesus began talking about the Father in verse 27 and He continued throughout this entire discourse. John would not allow his readers to forget that Jesus had a mission and was, therefore, a "missionary." He was "sent" by the Father to the world. The terminology of verse 57 changes just a bit to speak no longer of flesh and blood, but just of eating Christ—the present tense feel of chapter 15. We might paraphrase Jesus' words as, "The one who keeps on feeding on Me will live because I live within him."

6:58-59. Finally, we learn that spiritual appropriation provides eternal life. The real bread that came down from heaven was not manna, but the life of God's Son given on our behalf. Eating the physical bread of the Old Testament ultimately led to death. But eating the spiritual bread of the New Testament, participating in Christ's death at Calvary, provides eternal life.

The invitation has been open from that day to this. The spiritual appropriation of the life of Christ is available to everyone who trusts Him, who believes that Christ's death on the cross paid the penalty for the sin of humankind.

| 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-26

(Excerpt from the ESV Study Bible)

"The expression "This is my body" has been subject to widely varying interpretations throughout the history of the church. Roman Catholics understand it literally and claim that the bread and wine actually become the body and the blood of Christ (Transubstantiation). Lutherans hold that the literal body and blood of Christ are present "in, with, and under" the bread and wine (Sacramental union). Some Anglicans refer to the "real presence" of Christ in the bread and wine (Consubstantiation). Most other Protestants have argued that the body and blood of Christ are not literally, physically, or "really" present, but that Christ is present "symbolically"; most also add that Christ is present spiritually, with and in the believing recipients of the bread and wine, strengthening their faith and fellowship in Him, and thereby feeding their souls. Christ's spiritual presence is supported from both Matthew 18:20 & 28:20."

"Do this in remembrance of me" is an important component of observing the Lord's Supper and of obedience to Christ's command. Evangelical Protestant Christians have consistently been united on the importance of limiting participation in the Lord's Supper to those who have made a personal commitment to follow Jesus. Jesus' emphasis on remembering the significance of his death when observing the Lord's Supper, and his warnings to those who partake of the bread and the cup in an unworthy manner, both reveal the wisdom of this limitation.