

Week 16

Heavenly Bread

John 6:47-71

We will begin in book of John, the 6th chapter 47th verse. Last week we left Jesus and His disciples in Capernaum as He was addressing a group of Jewish leaders. He had told them He was the Bread, which came down from heaven, and they were determined to believe He was Mary and Joseph's son and did nothing to determine if they were wrong. In that small country it would have been easy to find out if there was anything special about this Man, His birth, His parents. It is noteworthy that the name of His birthplace, Bethlehem, means "house of bread". That birthplace was a matter of public information.

V47

Now Jesus returns to His main teaching, which was interrupted in the 40th verse. "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life and I Myself will raise him up on the last day". This word "beholds" means to consider, perceives the Son and believes (cleave to, trust) Now He speaks very clearly the truth, which they and we need to know, the gospel, the good news. If you would have your sin pardoned and your soul saved you must go to Jesus for it. Simply trust Him. We must believe, and it is constantly repeated, maybe because we are so unlikely to do it.

V48

Jesus proclaims to the Jews that He Himself is that "bread of life" which He had been referring to earlier. In other words, "I am that bread which I have been describing, the bread that gives life. Our Living Bread, Jesus, came down from heaven and was born in the house of bread.

V49

Jesus tells them the manna could do nothing for the soul and was unable to preserve from death.

Don't miss the statement of Jesus here that the miraculous feeding of Israel in the wilderness is historical fact.

V50-51

Just look at what Jesus tells us about Himself; He is the Living Bread, He came down out of heaven, He gives eternal life, He is giving His life (flesh) for us.

To give His flesh means to give His body to death on the cross so that the world could have life. To eat the Living Bread means to assimilate Christ into our lives, or be united with Him. How exactly do we do this? We believe in His death and resurrection as our sacrifice for our sin. We trust this finished work of Christ for eternal life; we don't try to add our own works. Secondly, we surrender our lives to His Lordship, depend on His Word for guidance, obey His commands and trust in the Holy Spirit for power to live a life pleasing to Him. Just as we desire and assimilate our food and depend on it for strength so we should desire and depend on Christ. Another way of saying this is to "abide" in Him, and He abides in us.

V52-59

Now Jesus tells His unhappy audience, the Jewish leaders, that they must not only eat His flesh but also they must drink His blood. They were really offended by this. However, this is not the literal eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood. These are spiritual truths, not physical. Just think of the thief on the cross who Jesus proclaimed would be in heaven that very day of his death. He could not perform any ritual; He could only believe and trust.

It's the state of the heart that we consider here. The flesh and blood of the Son of Man is talking about His sacrifice of His own body, which He offered for sinners. The atonement made by His death as our Substitute and the redemption secured by His taking the penalty for our sin in His own body.

The eating and drinking which gives us life means that the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for us. It is an inward and spiritual act of the heart; it has nothing to do with the body. When a person, feeling his own guilt and sin, trusts Christ and the atonement made for him by Christ's death, he "eats the flesh of the Son of man, and

drinks His blood". His soul feeds on Christ's sacrifice by faith, just as his body would feed on bread.

Jesus added drinking His blood because He wanted these Jewish leaders to understand He was going to die, He was offering His flesh as a sacrifice. They knew all about the Lamb and the blood, the body of the sin offering was just as important as the blood. The body of the Passover lamb was required to be eaten and the blood sprinkled. "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin." Hebrews 9:22

To sum up the "flesh and blood" in these verses means Christ's atonement and the "eating and drinking" mean faith. Faith in His atoning work for us unites us in the closest way to our Savior. Faith in Christ's atonement is personal, daily. No one can eat bread for us; no one can have faith in Christ for us. We need food every day, we benefit when we have eaten, we are nourished, strengthened and refreshed, and in the same way, if we truly believe we will gain the peace that passes all understanding.

We can ask does this have anything to do with communion? Yes, when you take the bread and the cup in communion, as commanded and described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 we keep in mind the truths of these Scriptures, and ask ourselves if we are indeed, feeding on Christ, that is living by faith in Christ, have we assimilated Him completely into our lives? It isn't the bread and wine which save us, it is faith in the finished work of Christ, His offering of His flesh and blood of which the bread and wine are symbols, that saves us and we should review this often in our hearts.

The verses in the 6th chapter of John are some of the most important in the bible. The truth that Jesus here reveals is critical for you to know and understand in order that you might believe and have eternal life.

Will you dwell/or abide in Jesus by faith?

Does He dwell in your heart by His Spirit by faith?

Just as food and drink become part of you, are incorporated into your system so a person feeding his or her soul on Christ becomes part of

Christ and Christ becomes part of him. There is no more intimate union than this.

John sums up this discourse by telling us where it took place. At some point during this time Jesus moved from the lakeside to the synagogue, a more formal assembly, to address the Jewish leaders.

We have seen many references to “the Jews”, meaning the Jewish leaders, the elite, the educated, the teachers of the law. It seems that Jesus’ teachings to them assumed an educational background that should help them understand difficult teaching. In some instances I believe they did understand they just didn’t like it. I have many Jewish friends who are missing their Messiah because they don’t like the truth about Jesus. We need to pray for these people, they are still God’s chosen; the covenant God made with Abraham is an everlasting covenant.

Now things are getting more difficult for Jesus. Rather than handing out free food, Jesus is teaching things that are hard to understand. He is forcing His followers to examine their real motive for following Him and to make a choice; it always comes down to this with Jesus. Jesus’ words seem harsh but His motive is to test whether people wanted to count the cost of following Him. Those who follow Jesus with the hope of personal gain, good feelings, and prosperity will be disappointed. Only those who find in Jesus the rock-solid truth will be able to weather the difficulties of living in this world with peace. What is your motive for following Jesus? If it isn’t because He is “THE TRUTH”, you will be disappointed.

Here I quote J.C.Ryle; “As long as the heart is naturally proud, worldly, unbelieving and fond of self-indulgence, if not of sin, so long there will be people who will say of Christian precepts “These are hard sayings: who can hear them?” written in 1869, not much has changed.

Now we get the key to this teaching; these words are spirit and life. A fleshly interpretation of this teaching is wrong, worth nothing, one must apply a spiritual interpretation.

From the beginning of His ministry Jesus knew that some of His followers were not true believers. He also knew Judas would betray Him. Jesus evidently included Judas in all His ministry, even though he was unwilling to believe.

V65

Repeating verses 44-45 some believe through seeing and some believe through not seeing but all need God's assistance.

Why did they leave?

They realized He was not the Messiah they wanted

He did not give them more free bread

He emphasized faith over works

His teaching was hard to understand

Would any of these reasons cause you to turn away from Jesus?

V67

He knew they were struggling; it was beginning to dawn on them that this Messiah was not what they expected. The more they heard the more they realized His real message; we can't sit on the fence in our belief in Jesus, its all or nothing. Real seekers want to know more, rejecting disciples don't like what they hear about Jesus.

V68

This is the question we all must ask and answer. There are a multitude of so-called authorities now telling us how to live our lives. Only Jesus has the words for eternal life. People look at everything else for eternal life and they miss the One who has the truth. True disciples will find the one who has the words of eternal life. Wasn't it brave of Peter to make this declaration, after all he was a humble fisherman and the Jewish leaders, Pharisees and Scribes had rejected Him.

Peter's statement is a statement of faith; he wanted what Jesus had to give. Do you really want eternal life or is this an unattractive subject? In our culture, death is so seldom faced or discussed, its almost unreal. Are your relationships, possessions, pleasures too cherished to think about leaving them? People seem to forget or deny that we will be dead infinitely longer than alive.

Or are you looking for another way for eternal life? Your own good works perhaps. Some people deny that eternal life could exist.

Many religions do not have a concept about eternal life. Or in other cases if they do have a concept its requirements are unclear or beyond attainment.

Jesus words are the only source of eternal life “I am the bread of life...if anyone eats this bread, he will live forever”

V69

Peter said, “there is no one like You, You have the truth about eternal life. We have believed you. Peter set a good example for us here in that he understood that knowledge of God unfolds and grows. When we first believe our understanding of God is limited but as time passes, as we study His Word and seek Him in prayer, our awareness of the depth of Jesus saving work ought to grow.

V70-71

Peter may have thought he was speaking for the 12 but he was not speaking for Judas, the one among them who was a devil, a traitor who would betray Jesus. Judas was not literally a devil but he was so completely under the control of the devil, he deserved to be called a devil. This is at least a year before the crucifixion and shows Judas was never a faithful disciple.

Have you ever considered how many times Jesus warned Judas and yet there was no repentance. Here is evidence of a remarkable hardness of heart and a conscience that was so seared that he never heard the warning of His Savior.

If today you understand you are a sinner in need of a Savior, that there is One Who loves you and is eager to receive you, forgive you and give you a new beginning for life eternal, then pray with me: Jesus, I am a sinner; I want to be forgiven, to be free of guilt. I accept by faith your free gift of forgiveness, salvation and eternal life. Thank you for dying and taking the penalty I deserve. I give my life to you, thank you for giving me life eternal.