

John 6:52-59

Then the people began arguing with each other about what he meant. “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” they asked.

⁵³ So Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you. ⁵⁴ But anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that person at the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ I live because of the living Father who sent me; in the same way, anyone who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ I am the true bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will not die as your ancestors did (even though they ate the manna) but will live forever.”

⁵⁹ He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Background

Jesus delivered the “Bread of Life Discourse” to many of the same people who had witnessed the miracle of the Feeding of the 5,000, including Jewish leaders who were hostile toward Him. These leaders debated Jesus’ statement about eating His flesh (John 6:51), fearing it implied cannibalism, something strictly forbidden under the law.

So what did Jesus do? He took it a step further, saying “*Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you*” (v53). Notice He began the phrase with “*I tell you the truth.*” This emphasized the vital spiritual truth behind His words. This teaching, given in a heated context, remains essential for understanding salvation.

Teaching Points

1. To partake of Christ’s body and blood is the key to salvation.

Verses 53-54 teach what it means to truly believe in Jesus and personally accept Him. But why did Jesus use this offensive imagery of “eat His flesh” and “drink His blood”? Why didn’t He just say “believe”? Well, He did say “believe” in verse 47 and elsewhere, but He used this imagery to show the depth of true belief. When you eat or drink something, it becomes part of you. In addition, you must eat or drink for yourself. No one else can eat or drink for you. This passage isn’t about communion or the Lord’s Supper, which are for believers to remember Jesus’ death. Instead, it speaks to salvation itself.

2. To partake of Christ's body and blood is the key to sanctification.

Sanctification means being set apart for God's use. It's growing spiritually and becoming more Christ-like. The key to sanctification is continually partaking of Christ, as described in verses 55-57.

To show two aspects of partaking in Christ, different original Greek words and tenses are used. In verse 53, "eat" is in the aorist tense, pointing to a one-time act of receiving Christ for salvation. From verse 54 on, a different word meaning "to chew" is used in the present tense, emphasizing the ongoing need to feed on Christ for spiritual growth and sanctification. We do this primarily by meditating deeply on Scripture.

Application

1. Expect to be misunderstood by unbelievers.

Unbelievers today often misunderstand the message of salvation like the people in this chapter. This is expected because, as 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, their minds are blinded to the Good News. Misunderstanding from unbelievers is normal. We should expect it. Don't let it discourage you. Keep sharing the Good News of Jesus, and in time they may come to understand.

2. You can live forever!

The Spanish explorer, Ponce de León, searched for the Fountain of Youth, but never found it. However, had he read the Bread of Life Discourse, he would have found the secret for living forever! The true "secret" is partaking of the Bread of Life—Jesus. Trust Him as your Savior, and you can live forever.