

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Bread of Life John 6:52-59 Part 5

Two weeks ago I shared with you a thumbnail sketch of how a man named Donald McGavran was instrumental in launching what is commonly referred to as the "church growth movement."

McGavran believed in using the social and behavioral sciences to identify the factors that facilitate or impede church growth and then design your ministry accordingly. Unfortunately, though I am sure that there is much good in what Donald McGavran was trying to espouse, many churches I believe, as I have shared with you, have lost their way. What do I mean by this?

Churches in seeking to make their worship services more palatable for the un-churched and for the unsaved are abandoning messages that are heavenly doctrinal. I am not questioning their motivation for doing this. I would like to think that they are doing this in order to reach as many people as they can with the Gospel of Christ. My problem is that making a service as palatable as possible for the un-churched and the unsaved seems to be inconsistent with the example of Christ.

This brings us back to our study of **John 6**. This chapter began with two very familiar miracles. The first miracle was the "Feeding of the 5,000" in **John 6:1-15**. The second miracle was "Christ walking on water" in **John 6:16-21**.

The Apostle John used the "Feeding of the 5,000" and "Christ walking on water" as a transition into the "Bread of Life" discourse in John 6:22-71.

Because of the length of this discourse, we have broken it into several different parts. The first part of the "Bread of Life" discourse began with a *challenge* in John 6:22-27. What was that challenge? Christ challenged the Jewish multitude to not work for the food that perishes but rather to work for the food that endures to eternal life. Of course, those who respond to this challenge will find their lives dramatically impacted.

Their thinking about matters of this life will change. Their feelings about matters of this life will change. Their actions will change. Everything about their lives will change, but will all these changes prove worthwhile? This leads us to the second part of the discourse.

The second part of the "Bread of Life" discourse consists of a *promise* in John 6:28-40. What was that promise? Christ promised this Jewish multitude that if they responded to His challenge and worked for the food that endures to eternal life; or in other words, if they would in faith come to Him and purpose themselves to feast at His banqueting table, they would never again hunger or thirst. The deepest longing of their soul would be satisfied.

Why was He able to say this? He was able to say this because He was and is the Bread of Life who came down out of heaven.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Having extended a challenge in John 6:22-27 and a promise in John 6:28-40, the Apostle John then introduced the final part of the "Bread of Life" discourse. The third and final part of the "Bread of Life" discourse consists of various responses in John 6:41-71. We considered the first of those responses last week.

The first response could be entitled, "We know *where* you come from" in John 6:41-51. What led to this response?

Jesus had told the Jewish multitude that He was the Bread of Life that had come down from heaven. They found this very difficult to believe. They found it very difficult to believe because they knew Christ's mother and father. Let me read for you **John 6:42. "And they were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, "I have come down out of heaven."'"**

Even though the Jewish multitude responded in this way, based on the information they had, this was not the way Christ's disciples responded even though they had the same information. What is the difference between these two groups? Why was one group able to believe that Christ was the bread of life that had come down from heaven and the other group could not?

The answer is quite simple. The disciples had been given or had been drawn by the Father to Christ and the Jewish multitude here in **John 6** had not been given or had been drawn by the Father to Christ. This truth was emphasized in **John 6:37** initially and reemphasized in **John 6:44.**

In light of this truth, we need to realize that Christ was not only sharing things with the Jewish multitude that they really didn't want to hear, Christ was sharing things with the Jewish multitude that they could not hear.

In light of this fact, should Christ have stopped sharing those things that He had been sharing? Should He have said to Himself, "I need to make the teaching more palatable so that this Jewish multitude might be more comfortable?" And the answer, it seems, is rather obvious.

This was not the way of Christ. In fact, not only does He continue to hammer away on this truth concerning His heavenly origin which they did not want to hear, but He even expanded on it in **John 6:51.** Let me read this verse for you. **"I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh."** Christ's assertion that the bread He was going to give for the life of the world was His flesh leads us to a second response, which we will consider this weekend.

As we consider this passage, as we consider this second response, I would hope that we might see once again the importance of strong doctrinal teaching which not only provides the opportunity for the church to grow spiritually, it also protects the church. Strong doctrinal preaching protects the church by keeping so-called would be disciples from attaching themselves superficially to Christ and to His church. We saw this dynamic last week in the first response and we will see this same dynamic again here in the second response. What is the second response?

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The second response could be entitled, "How can He give us His *flesh* to eat?" in John 6:52-59. Let me read for you these verses. **"The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?' (53) Jesus therefore said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. (54) He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. (55) For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. (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 eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. (58) This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever.' (59) These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum."**

Let us begin by looking at **John 6:52**. It begins with these words, **"The Jews therefore began to argue."** The verb "to argue" (EMACHONTO) is very strong which would lead us to believe that these Jews were arguing very passionately. Were they arguing with Christ? No! Let us continue to read the verse. **"The Jews therefore began to argue with one another."** What were they arguing about? Let us finish reading the verse. **"The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?' "**

Had Jesus actually said that He intended to give them His flesh to eat? The answer is yes. Let us go back and read **John 6:51**. **"I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh."**

Had Jesus actually said that He intended to give them His flesh to eat? Yes! This is not really debatable, but what is debatable is what He meant by what He said.

What Jesus said obviously was a shocking statement and these Jews could not agree amongst themselves as to what Christ meant by these words. This is why we see them arguing with one another.

The Jews were arguing with one another most likely because some Jews understood Christ's comment about eating His flesh *literally* while others understood it metaphorically.

How did Jesus respond to this rancor about what He had said? Did He begin to backpedal? Did He use different words hoping to calm His audience? Did He seek to make what He said more palatable? No!

Let us read **John 6:53**. **"Jesus therefore said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.'" Jesus does not retract one iota of His statement. In fact, He adds to His statement the words "and drink His blood" in verse 53 and will repeat this same thought in verse 54.**

How will the Jews respond to this additional thought? Will this somehow decrease the level of upset that they were feeling in light of Christ's earlier statement? Absolutely not! In fact, quite the opposite would have been true.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Mosaic Law forbade the drinking of *blood*, therefore Christ's statement would have only made them more upset (Leviticus 17:10-13). Jesus certainly was not trying to make it easy for these Jews to listen to Him. The truth Jesus was sharing with them was difficult for them to hear. The doctrine that Jesus was sharing with them was difficult for them to receive, especially in light of the confusion that existed amongst them about the exact meaning of His words. His words should not have been all that confusing if they would have considered what Jesus said to them in the next verse more carefully.

Let me read for you **John 6:54. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."** You might say this verse does not seem to clear up anything, but it does. John 6:54, when compared to what Christ said earlier in John 6:40, is a key to understanding exactly what He meant by the words "eating His flesh" and "drinking His blood".

Let us go back and read **John 6:40. "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."** **John 6:40** and **John 6:54** are parallel verses. They contain the same truth, but that same truth is just stated differently.

When Christ spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He was speaking metaphorically of appropriating through a sincere *faith* the benefits Christ's atoning death (John 6:51).

When Christ told the Jewish multitude in **John 6:51** that those who would eat the bread that He would provide; or in other words, would eat His flesh, it produced an argument. Hopefully, there would be no such problem here this weekend. Hopefully, we are all very clear on exactly what He meant by what He said in **John 6:51-54**.

First of all, Christ's atoning death is clearly in view in **John 6:51** when He talks about giving His flesh for the life of the world. Secondly, appropriating, through a sincere faith, the benefits of Christ's atoning death is clearly in view when He talks about eating His flesh and drinking His blood when we compare **John 6:40** with **John 6:54**.

Do you want to receive the gift of eternal life? Do you want to be raised up on the last day? Then, what do you need to do? You need to eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood; or in other words, you need to sincerely believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, who through His atoning death is now able to offer the gift of life to those who want to be set free from their sins.

Do you believe this? If you do, you are spiritually alive and the deepest longing of your soul has been met. If you do not believe this, you are spiritually dead and the deepest longing of your soul has not been met.

Isn't there some other way for people to become spiritually alive and to become spiritually complete? No! Let us go on to **John 6:55. "For my flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink."**

Have you ever heard the expression "you are what you eat?" There was a time that I did not concern myself at all with what I ate.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

I thought somehow that it was of no or little consequence, but quite a number of years ago, after a routine blood test, I found out that I had a cholesterol level in the high 200s and a triglyceride level over 700. I was turning into a pillar of fat.

This was on the physical level. There is more to us than a physical body. We also possess a soul, and just like our body, it must be fed and what we feed our soul will determine what we are. If we eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood then we will be spiritually alive, but if we do not we will be spiritually dead. Why would this be true? It would be true because He is the true food and He is the true drink and there is no other food or drink that will satisfy the need of our soul. Everything else that we might choose to feed on, in respect to the things of this world, will not satisfy our soul but eating the flesh of Christ and drinking His blood will.

Christ will now go on and explain to these Jews and to us why this is true. He will explain to them why those who choose to eat His flesh and drink His blood will experience life and life eternal. Let me read for you **John 6:56. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."**

When we choose to eat His flesh and drink His blood, we enter into the benefits of Christ's atoning death by being joined to Him and to His life by a mutual *indwelling* (John 6:56).

We have no life in ourselves. Jesus made this very clear in **John 6:53**; therefore, if we are going to enjoy life, we will need to be joined to another who possesses life. Of course, the one who possesses life is Christ.

When we come to Christ, we should not think of it as a quick visit. This is not going to happen. If we have exercised a sincere faith in the person and work of Christ, in a metaphorical sense eating His flesh and drinking His blood, we have taken up permanent residence at His banqueting table. There is no way we are going to get away from Him, because we are not only in Him but He is also in us making sure that the work that He has begun will be completed. Therefore, Christ's banqueting table is forever laid out before us. Oh there may be times when this might not be all that clear to us, but it does not change the fact that the table is always filled with wonderful goodies if we would simply keep our focus right. Hopefully, this morning you are not only at this table but you are choosing to feast from that table.

Let us now go on and read **John 6:57-58 "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. (58) This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever."** What does this mean?

We learned earlier in **John 5:26** that our heavenly Father has life in Himself, and what did we say that meant? When Jesus said that the Father had life in Himself, He meant that His Father had always been and always will be the source of all that is alive both physically and spiritually, and apparently Christ was willing to even include Himself within that definition based on **John 6:57** when He said, **"and I live because of My Father."**

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

We need to be careful not to infer from this statement that there was a time when Christ wasn't alive. He has always been alive. In fact, the Father had given His Son the same quality that He enjoyed. What was that quality? The Father gave His Son the quality of having "life in Himself" based on **John 5:26**.

When had He given it to His Son? God the Father had given His Son "life in Himself" in the beginning. Let me read for you **John 1:1-4**. "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (4) In Him was LIFE, and the life was the light of men.**" We may not have life in ourselves, but obviously Christ has always had life in Himself.

Because Jesus has *life in Himself*, He not only possesses life but also gives life to those who are joined to Him by eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:57 compare John 5:26).

The Jews had wanted Jesus to perform another miracle in order to confirm that He was indeed sent by God as we saw in **John 6:30**, even implying that the type of miracle that they wanted to see was something of Moses when he, according to their way of thinking, provided manna for the Jewish people in their wilderness wanderings. Obviously such a performance on the part of Christ should be considered a second rate miracle compared to what Christ was offering, and He makes this point quite well in **John 6:58-59**. "**'This [my flesh and blood] is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever.'** (59) **These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum.**"

CONCLUSION

There was a large multitude of people who had chosen to follow Christ for the wrong reasons, but Christ was not in the business of humoring them just in order to keep them around. He kept hammering them with doctrine even though they were unsaved and the very ones He came into the world to save. Jesus, in seeking and saving that which was lost, did not seek to make people *comfortable* by what He taught.