

INTRODUCTION

1. We are looking again this morning at John chapter 6, so I would like to invite you to turn in God's Word to John chapter 6 as we study verses 52-58.
2. Jesus has just completed His rebuke and reiteration to the Jews stating He was equal with God and was the bread of life.
3. Now in verse 52 they react again and in verses 53-58 Jesus gives them an even stronger message.
4. Their response is to what He said in verse 51, so let's begin reading there through verse 58.
5. Read John 6:51-58.
6. The Bible records many sayings of Jesus.
7. But of this one, these might be the most "difficult" of all according to some of His followers (cf. v.60).
8. But not everyone is able to receive His words.
9. That is certainly true regarding the audience He has been addressing since verse 26.

10. They were following Him “because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick” (v.2) and because they “ate of the loaves and were filled” (v.26).
11. They were not following Him because they saw Him as the Son of God.
12. Jesus even said to them in verse 36, “But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.”
13. Their sight was purely on a physical level.
14. They only saw Him for what He could provide for them.
15. After they were fed from the five barley loaves and two fish, Jesus perceived “that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king” (v.15).
16. Their motives were selfish.
17. They wanted Him to “always give [them] this bread” (v.34), and they wanted Him to remove the Roman oppression.
18. But Jesus was not interested in fulfilling their selfish desires, “He came down from heaven, not to do [His] own will, but the will of Him who sent [Him]” (v.38).

19. In the pursuing dialogue that He has with them, He offers Himself as the true bread that came down from heaven.
20. But they were not interested in that kind of food.
21. Instead they took offense at Him.
22. He said He was “the bread that came down out of heaven” (v.41), and they grumbled “about Him.”
23. And now He says, “if anyone *eats* of this bread, he will live forever” (v.51), and they “argue with one another” (v.52).
24. I want to remind you of the three statements that Jesus makes in this chapter regarding their ability to receive the truth.
25. He said in verse 37, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.”
26. He said in verse 44, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”
27. He also said in verse 65, “And He was saying, ‘For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.’”

28. Their ability to receive what Jesus was saying was not depending on them but on the Holy Spirit.
29. Jesus said in verse 63, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”
30. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:14, “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”
31. In Matthew 13 verse 2 says that “large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. And He spoke many things to them in parables.”
32. In verses 10-11, “the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do you speak to them in parables?’” Jesus answered them, ‘To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.’”
33. Here Jesus clearly affirms that the ability to comprehend spiritual truth is a gracious gift of God, sovereignly bestowed on the elect (v. 11). The reprobate ones, on the other hand, are passed over. They reap the natural consequence of their own unbelief and rebellion.¹

¹John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997). Mt 13:11.

34. In verses 13-15 Jesus explains further why He spoke to them in parables. He said, “Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ ‘In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, ‘you will keep on hearing, but will not understand; You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; ¹⁵ For the heart of this people has become dull, With their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes, Otherwise they would see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them.’”
35. John MacArthur says, “Many thousands of people heard Jesus teach and saw Him perform miraculous signs as evidence of His divine messiahship; but most of them did not recognize Him as Lord or receive Him as Savior. They were exposed to God incarnate, and yet they rejected Him—either by direct opposition or by indifferent neglect. They said no to the King, and because they refused to receive the divine light that shined on them, they drifted deeper and deeper into spiritual darkness.

To this day, no people on earth are more religiously disoriented than Jews. They were called to be God’s people, given His promises, His covenants, His laws, and His immeasurable blessings, They were even sent His only Son as one of their own people—to teach, heal, comfort, redeem, and deliver them—but they would not have Him rule over them (Luke 19:14). Because they rejected God’s perfect Light, even the light they had went out, and everything in their religion lost its true meaning. The

Temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, and with it the priesthood and the sacrifices. The ceremonial and sacrificial requirements of their covenant with God could no longer be met; but since that time Jews have continued to follow various aspects of their ancient religion-without prophets, priests, kings, Temple, or sacrifices. Even those who call themselves orthodox believe and practice only a small part of what their own Scripture teaches and commands. The conservative and reformed branches of Judaism believe and practice even less. Most Jews do not even try to make sense out of most of the Old Testament. For most, all that is left is a nonreligious tradition.”²

- 36. No doubt this is what we’re seeing here in John chapter 6.
- 37. The only problem is they heard it plainly.
- 38. He did not speak to them in parables like He did with others.
- 39. He plainly stated that He was the bread of life and all they could do is get offended.
- 40. This is a good place to note that even when you’re clear in your presentation of the gospel, people still don’t get it.
- 41. Why?

A.D. *Anno Domini* (Lat.), Year of the Lord

²John MacArthur, *Matthew* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989). 352.

42. “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me...No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father” (vv.37, 44, 65).
43. Notice in verse 52 *the Jews begin to argue with one another.*

I. The Jews Begin to Argue with One Another (v.52)

After Jesus said in verse 51, “I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh. Then the Jews *began* to argue with one another, saying, ‘How can this man give us *His* flesh to eat?’”

Notice at this point their argument is not with Him but with one another concerning what He said: “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?”

The NIV says “the Jews began to *argue sharply* among themselves.”

The word used for argue (μάχομαι, *machomai*) sometimes meant to have a literal fight on the level of combat (Acts 7:26), but in the verbal sense means to have a heated contentious quarrel (cf. 2 Tim 2:24).³ It is very strong.

Marvin Vincent says, “The *murmuring* (ver. 41) now breaks out into open contention among the Jews themselves.”⁴

³Beauford H. Bryant and Mark S. Krause, *John*, The College Press NIV commentary (Joplin, Mo.: College Press Pub. Co., 1998). Jn 6:52.

⁴Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2002). 2:152.

John Calvin said this “is a sign of obstinacy and contempt; and those who dispute so keenly do, indeed, block up against themselves the road to the knowledge of the truth.”⁵

H.D.M. Spence-Jones said, “They were not unanimous in their judgment. Some said one thing, and others said another. The “Jews” had not yet come to a unanimous opinion that this wonderful Being was talking sheer heresy or incomprehensible mystery. They knew His habit of metaphoric speech, and that underneath common imagery He was in the habit of conveying doctrines the full purport of which was not at once apparent. Some denounced Him as uttering an intolerable riddle. Some saw, in a measure, through it, and hated the doctrine that was thereby conveyed.”⁶

The identification of bread with Jesus’ flesh was too much for “the Jews” (the opposition) to swallow⁷ because the Mosaic Law prohibited the drinking of blood or the eating

⁵John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: John*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998). Jn 6:52.

⁶*The Pulpit Commentary: St. John Vol. I*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2004). 267.

⁷Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1996). 271.

of meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10–14; Deut. 12:16; Acts 15:29).⁸

Any dullard could see that Jesus was not speaking literally: no-one would suppose Jesus was seriously advocating cannibalism and offering himself as the first meal.⁹

It should be noted that the Roman Catholic Church appeals to this passage as a proof of the doctrine of transubstantiation—the false teaching that the body and blood of Christ are literally present in the bread and wine of the Mass.

Catholic theologian Ludwig Ott writes, “The body and the blood of Christ together with His soul and His divinity and therefore the whole Christ are truly present in the Eucharist” (*Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* [St. Louis: B. Herder, 1954], 382).¹⁰

Now in verses 53-58...

II. Jesus Gives the Conditions for Salvation (vv.53-58)

⁸John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997). Jn 6:52.

⁹D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991). 295.

¹⁰John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary : John 1-11* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006). 259.

I read earlier what Jesus said in verse 63, “the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”

Because they are as such, they cannot be comprehended merely by the flesh.

Ultimately speaking, they were unable to comprehend what Jesus said because they were not gifts from the Father to the Son and therefore had not been drawn to Jesus by the Father.

Jesus begins verse 53 with the familiar “truly, truly” or Amen Amen and then uses the word “unless” as a necessary condition that must take place in order to have eternal life.

What is Jesus’ condition for salvation?

Let’s answer that question by first understanding...

A. What It Does Not Mean

1. First He was not literally speaking of eating His flesh or drinking His blood.
2. He is using metaphorical language to speak of the necessity of accepting His sacrificial death.

The New Testament frequently uses the term *blood* as a graphic metonym to speak of Christ’s death on the cross as the final sacrifice for sin.

- a) Acts 20:28 says, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy

Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which **He purchased with His own blood.**

- b) Romans 5:9 says, “Much more then, **having now been justified by His blood,** we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him.”
 - c) Ephesians 1:7 says, “In Him we have **redemption through His blood,** the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”
 - d) Ephesians 2:13 says, “But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near **by the blood of Christ.**”
 - e) Revelation 1:5 says, “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins **by His blood.**”
3. To drink blood or eat meat with blood still in it was strictly prohibited by the Old Testament law.

Leviticus 17:10-14 says, “And any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. ¹¹ ‘For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes

atonement.’¹² ‘Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, ‘No person among you may eat blood, nor may any alien who sojourns among you eat blood.’¹³ ‘So when any man from the sons of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, in hunting catches a beast or a bird which may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth.’¹⁴ ‘For *as for the* life of all flesh, its blood is *identified* with its life. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, ‘You are not to eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.’”

B. What It Does Mean

1. It means to appropriate His life and the saving merit of His death.

It should be noted that the verbs translated *eat* and *drink* are aorists, not present tense verbs.

That suggests a one-time appropriation of Christ at salvation, not the continual eating and drinking of His body and blood portrayed by the Roman Catholic Mass.¹¹

Again, He is not referring to literally eating His flesh or drinking His blood.

¹¹John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary : John 1-11* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006). 262.

Luke 9:23-24 says, "And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ²⁴"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."

This is a clear presentation of what it means to appropriate the life and death of Christ to your life.

This is what it means to "follow" Christ.

a) It begins with denying yourself

"A person who is not willing to deny himself cannot claim to be a disciple of Jesus Christ" (MacArthur).

"Deny" is from *aparneomai*, which means "to completely disown, to utterly separate oneself from someone."

It is the word Jesus used to describe Peter's denial of Him while He was being questioned by the high priest (Mat.26:34).

Each time he was confronted about his relationship to Jesus, Peter more vehemently denied knowing Him (vv.70, 72, 74). He disowned his master before the world.

That is exactly the kind of denial a believer is to make in regard to himself.

He is to utterly disown himself, to refuse to acknowledge the self of the old man. Jesus' words here could be paraphrased, 'Let him refuse any association or companionship with himself.'

Self-denial not only characterizes a person when he comes in saving faith to Christ but also as he lives as a faithful disciple of Christ.

The self of which Jesus is speaking is the natural, sinful, rebellious, unredeemed self that is at the center of every fallen person and that can even reclaim temporary control over a Christian.

It is the flesh body, the "old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit" (Eph.4:22).

b) As you deny yourself, you take up your cross

Taking up one's cross is not some mystical level of selfless 'deeper spiritual life' that only the religious elite can hope to achieve.

Nor is it the common trials and hardships that all persons experience sometime in life.

A cross is not having an unsaved husband, nagging wife, or domineering mother-in-law.

Nor is it having a physical handicap or suffering from an incurable disease.

To take up one's cross is simply to be willing to pay any price for Christ's sake.

It is the willingness to endure shame, embarrassment, reproach, rejection, persecution, and even martyrdom for His sake.

To the people of Jesus' day the cross was a very concrete and vivid reality.

It was the instrument of execution reserved for Rome's worst enemies.

It was a symbol of the torture and death that awaited those who dared raise a hand against Roman authority" (John MacArthur, Matthew 16-23, p.49).

"Not many years before Jesus and the disciples came to Caesarea Philippi, 100 men had been crucified in the area.

A century earlier, Alexander Jannaeus had crucified 800 Jewish rebels at Jerusalem, and after the revolt that followed the death of Herod the Great, 2,000 Jews were crucified by the Roman proconsul Varus.

Crucifixions on a smaller scale were a common sight, and it has been estimated that perhaps some 30,000 occurred under Roman authority during the lifetime of Christ” (MacArthur, p.49).

To take up your cross is to be willing to start on a death march.

It is to be willing, in His service, to suffer the indignities, the pain, and even the death of a condemned criminal.

In Matthew 10:24-25 Jesus said, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. ²⁵ "It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more *will they malign* the members of his household!”

In verse 34-36 He continued by saying, “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ "For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law ; ³⁶ and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.”

- c) Having denied yourself and taken up your cross, you then follow Christ

This is loyal obedience. After a person denies himself and takes up his cross, Jesus said, he is prepared to “follow Me.”

True discipleship is submission to the lordship of Christ that becomes a pattern of life.

1 John 2:6 says, “The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”

- 2. It means to believe in a saving way
 - a) It’s clear from verse 29 that this is another way of calling them to believe.
 - b) What does God require? “That you **believe** in Him whom He has sent.”
 - c) He stated it again in verse 35: “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; he who **comes to Me** will not hunger, and he who **believes in Me** will never thirst.’”

It is also worth noting that...

3. Eating His flesh and drinking His blood issues in the same results as believing which gives evidence that He is speaking metaphorically and not literally
- a) In John 5:24 Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”
 - b) In John 6:53-54 Jesus said, “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.”
 - c) Jesus also stated earlier that those whom the Father “has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day” (v.39).
 - d) He mentions also in verse 44 about those whom the Father draws He “will raise him up on the last day.”
 - e) Verse 54 speaks also of being raised up as a result of eating His flesh and drinking His blood.
 - f) If you refuse to believe (i.e., eat His flesh and drink His blood), “you have no life in yourselves” (v.53).

- g) If you believe (i.e., eat His flesh and drink His blood) you are given “eternal life” and the promise of Christ raising you “up on the last day” (v.54).
- h) If you believe (i.e., eat His flesh and drink His blood) you then are giving evidence that you abide in Christ and He in you (v.56).

So the promises are the same for eating His flesh and drinking His blood as they are for believing. Therefore, I conclude He is speaking about the same thing.

Jesus’ point in verses 53-58 was an analogy that has spiritual, rather than literal, significance: just as eating and drinking are necessary for physical life, so also is belief in His sacrificial death on the cross necessary for eternal life.¹²

If there was anything the Jews stumbled over was a crucified Messiah.

In response to the Lord’s declaration, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself” (John 12:32), “the crowd then answered Him, ‘We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and

¹²John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997). Jn 6:53.

how can You say, “The Son of Man must be lifted up?”” (v. 34).

On the road to Emmaus, the resurrected Christ rebuked two of His disciples for their hesitancy to accept the necessity of His death: “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:25–26).

“We preach Christ crucified,” the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “to Jews a stumbling block” (1 Cor. 1:23), and in Galatians 5:11 he referred to the “the stumbling block of the cross.”¹³

4. Jesus says in verse 55 that His “flesh is true food, and [His] blood is true drink.”

The reason why they are “true” is because it produces eternal life which is something physical food cannot do.

Since they wanted Jesus to “always give [them] this bread” (v.34), then they would have to eat His flesh and drink His blood.

¹³John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary : John 1-11* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006). 261.

“This is the true bread which came down out of heaven; not as the father’s ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever” (v.58).

CONCLUSION

1. Have you received the bread of life?
2. Or are you like the crowd who was only interested in signs?
3. The only way one can live forever is to appropriate the life and saving merit of His death to your life.
4. In other words, you need to repent of you sin and surrender fully your life to Jesus.
5. In response He gives you eternal life.
6. Let’s pray.