

The Gospel of John

Lesson #64

The Journey

Jim Hoffman

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The Gospel of John

• John 6:49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

• Jesus cuts right to the chase – he goes right to the existential reality that union with him is what separates those who live from those who die.

• In the wilderness of Sinai, it was the bread given by God and here in the wilderness of the world it will once again be bread given by God.

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The Gospel of John

• In a sense the OT manna came down from Heaven in that God provided it - Jesus now stands before them and says, "I am the bread that came down from Heaven".

• Jesus reminds them the OT Israelites all ate the manna, but they all died because natural bread does not satisfy and sustain for more than the day it is given.

• The Bread of Life satisfies and sustains forever – he descended from above just like the manna God sent to the Israelites.

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The Gospel of John

- He draws a big contrast between the manna their ancestors ate and the Bread that he is – those who partook of the manna eventually died, but not those who partake of him.
- What we may not fully appreciate here is the strategic planning of God – who but God could plant such a critical teaching link 2,000 years in advance. (manna)
- He knew one day in the future it would be critical to the understanding of the Jew to be able to compare the manna to Jesus.

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- The account of how God provided the manna to keep his people alive in the wilderness becomes key to their understanding the importance of the Bread of Life.
- Without the manna in the wilderness the Jews would have perished and without the Bread of Life coming from heaven in like fashion the Jew, and indeed all people would perish.
- Jesus even points out that consuming him is the thing that prevents death. **“so that one may eat of it and not die”**

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The Gospel of John

- But there is something else that needs to be understood to make sense of Jesus’ statement, **“so that one may eat of it and not die”**.
- The problem is that we do partake of Jesus, and we still die – in a sense at least.
- There is passing away that appears to us as death, and then there is dying – we speak of them as being the same because it’s the best we can do, but they are not the same.

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At our physical death, our souls are separated from our bodies. Torn apart if you will. It is this separation, this tearing of the soul from the body, that causes a fear of death. We fear that separation because it is unnatural and was not the will of God for mankind. In a sense we live in an almost imaginary world that was never supposed to be. It's a temporary state for the believer, and as good as life is, you would not want this life to last forever. We are all just kind of waiting for our turn to die. Those who are without Christ then suffer a second death; spiritual death, which is the separating of the soul from God. Those who trusted Christ then await a rejoining of our body and soul which is the intention of God in redemption.

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- John 6:51 "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."
- Here is where it gets a little sticky for the crowd – he continues to speak in terms of consuming his flesh.
- John 6:52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

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- If you are a little repulsed by eating human flesh you should be – it is the reaction Jesus no doubt wanted.
- Jesus repeats himself and adds the drinking of his blood – John 6:53 So Jesus 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 you."
- Later on in history, recorded for us is Revelation 2 is the church at Smyrna who were persecuted for, among other things, being accused of cannibalism.

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“And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” – by saying this we know immediately he is speaking of the cross, but his audience that day didn’t. We are privy to information we assume has been known throughout history. Well, the cross was, in a very real sense, hidden. The Jew of Jesus’ day had lots of familiarity with animal sacrifices and how they pictured the animal dying in place of the sinner. His audiences were extremely well prepared to know that God will accept an innocent as a stand-in for the one who sinned. We will overlook their ignorance for now, but once they see what happens on Calvary, all overlooking of ignorance is done.

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From the Apostle Paul

I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 1:24-27

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

1st Corinthians 2:7-8

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When you see "mystery" in the New Testament you are reading a word to denote truth undiscoverable except by divine revelation. (i.e., it denotes something that, though once a secret, has now been fully revealed in the Gospel.) Truth not fully revealed in the Old Testament, but one that God had planned before the beginning of the ages. This plan originated in God's mind, and though outlined in the Old Testament, it is not as fully explained and understood there as it is in the New Testament.

The Expositor's Commentary

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1st Corinthians 15:51-53

Behold! I tell you a **mystery**. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

You can see hints of the rapture in the Old Testament, but it was by no means plain and obvious until it was revealed to Paul.

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• John 6:54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

• Now Jesus is digging into something no self-respecting Jew would ever do – eat human flesh and drink blood!

• Bear in mind the context – Jesus is teaching that just as the manna satisfied and sustained the Israelites in the wilderness, he, the Bread of Life, will do likewise for all who partake of him.

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• John 6:55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Whoever feeds on 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 whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.

• At this point we must skip ahead to something Jesus says about (6) verses later - John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

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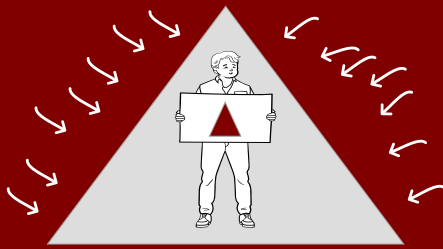
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There is just no way to make sense of Jesus' words apart from verse #63 where he finally and emphatically says he is speaking spiritually. In fact, he points out that when cast in physical terms his words are repulsive and should be rejected. But he is speaking in spiritual terms, and this is a message that will be validated two times in the writings of Paul when he says, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?" and "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God". More simply put, we are with Christ, in God, and the Holy Spirit is in us.

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- John 6:58 "This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." 59 Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.
- Just as he did many miracles in Capernaum he also preached to the people in the area as well – they didn't "get" this one and we can understand why.
- Without the rest of the story of Jesus we wouldn't "get " it either.

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- I would suppose most of us are not sitting here today disgusted with such talk of eating flesh and drinking blood because we assume Jesus is speaking of holy communion.
- But Jesus did not have communion in mind at all – in fact, some gross misappropriation of these words of Jesus have been employed to launch a false doctrine.
- To this day the Roman Catholic church practices something they themselves call “transubstantiation”.

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GREGG R. ALLISON, HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

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Luke 22:19 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

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How can I be sure that Jesus was not speaking of Holy Communion? Because the verbs in the text are in the aorist tense which means a once and done action. “Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him”. He is telling us that we can rest in him – we need not keep coming back and coming back for more of him. When we believe we get all of him, once and for all, today and forever, an action that never needs repeated.

(John 14:17 You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.)

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Questions?

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