

# OpenTheo

## John 6:46 - 6:71



### Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg explores the controversial meaning behind John 6:46-71 where Jesus speaks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Gregg notes that this concept is often misunderstood and that it actually represents a metaphor for consuming the word of God in order to have eternal life. The talk also touches on the importance of commitment to following God and that true Christian fellowship involves believers committing themselves to God and repenting when they fall into weakness or foolishness.

### Transcript

Let's look at John chapter 6 for the third time now. This is our third session in this chapter. It is a long chapter and it's not only a long chapter, but it's a chapter full of talk about deep subjects.

And not only is it about deep subjects, but it's controversial talk about deep subjects. It was controversial when Jesus gave it. It has remained controversial ever since.

The portion we took last time was that portion which often provides proof text for the Calvinist position about predestination, irresistible grace, perseverance. And we talked about those verses so as to show that they really don't teach those doctrines and it really wouldn't have made any sense for Jesus to try to make those points in this setting to these people anyway. And there is always the danger that we will look at a scripture that sounds like it teaches something we want to believe or that we do already believe from some other source and as a result see a proof text for that there, but I don't believe that that is correct in the case of those verses we were looking at last time.

We are going to begin at verse 46 now and there is a different set of controversies that come up in modern times from this. Not only modern times, but a very ancient controversy that continues to be controversial and that is what is meant by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus. At verse 47, verse 46 actually, Jesus said, Not that anyone has seen the Father, except he who is from God.

He has seen the Father. Most assuredly I say to you, he who believes in me has

everlasting life. I am the bread of life.

Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves saying, how can this man give us his flesh to eat? Now, Jesus has simply said at this point, he is giving his flesh, which means his body, for the life of the world.

With no further explanation than that, we would assume that means he is going to die voluntarily and vicariously. To give one's flesh, to give one's body, would most naturally mean to die. In Mark, Jesus was quoted as saying that the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.

And to give his life, a ransom for many. So Jesus predicted in other gospels as well as this one that he would die, and that it would be a matter of giving his life for others, a ransom for many as he put it. Now, that he would give his life means it's voluntary.

He's going to die, well everybody dies, but not everybody voluntarily dies. He says he's going to give his flesh for the life of the world. Now at this point, he hasn't gotten very explicit about eating his flesh, although it comes to that.

He has said, I am the bread of life, and bread is something that is usually consumed. And he said, I am the living bread. Very similar term.

In verse 48, I am the bread of life. In verse 51, I am the living bread. And he says, if anyone eats this bread, he will live forever.

Now, having said only that, the people began to wonder, what's he talking about eating his flesh, this bread that is his flesh? And Jesus starts getting not only more explicit, but more offensive in his language. Because he talks about drinking blood now too, and to a Jew, very few things could be more abhorrent than drinking blood. I mean, they couldn't even have blood in their meat.

The Jews had to buy their meat from kosher butchers, or else butcher it themselves, and drain all the blood out. Most people don't do that. They don't go to that trouble in preparing their meat.

And besides, some people like the way meat tastes with some blood in it. So the Jews could not buy meat from normal meat markets in the pagan world. They had to get it from a kosher butcher who would let it go.

That little fly has taken a liking to me, I can see. But when Jesus said, you have to drink

my blood, as we shall see, the idea of drinking blood was just unthinkable to the Jews, of course, as it would be to us. Now, it isn't to everybody.

There's some parts of the world where they have blood soup. Germany has blood soup, and they have blood sausage. Some people like blood, but the Jews didn't like blood.

I don't like that much blood. I don't mind my meat a little rare, but I don't mind if there's a little blood in it. But the Jews were conditioned to be absolutely appalled by any blood entering their mouth.

And so they said, how can this man give his flesh to eat? And Jesus said to them, most assuredly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. So he adds this blood part. He's been talking about being bred.

That's strange enough to their ears, to eat his flesh like bread. But now he adds something that he knows is going to offend them, and drink his blood. Then he gets more offensive, because he changes his verb in verse 54.

Whoever eats my flesh. Now this is not the same verb that was used in the Greek in all the previous discussion about eating. This is a new verb, which means to chomp or to munch.

It's actually used in Greek literature to speak about an animal chewing its food. And so it's getting very graphic and more offensive. It's bad enough to even talk, even figuratively, about eating his flesh.

Now he's talking about munching on it, chomping on it, and drinking blood. So it's obvious that he's choosing his terms in such a way as to offend these people. He could have been more delicate about it.

But he's obviously trying to drive away anybody who can possibly be driven away. And he succeeds. And this is a very different philosophy of evangelism than we would have today.

Jesus was not the one who went begging the people with a cap in his hand. Please accept me. Please join my church.

Please be part of my movement. Please, you know, believe in me. He did urge people to believe in him because that was their only salvation.

But he didn't allow people to do it who weren't so inclined. And people who were able to be put off, he tended to put them off. Remember the rich young ruler? The man comes and he's eager to be part of Jesus' movement.

He comes running to Jesus, eager to find out how to participate with what Jesus is doing. He says, good master, what thing must I do to have eternal life? And Jesus says, why do

you call me good? Only God is good. Then he says, if you want to have life, keep the commandments.

That would put most people off, but not this man. He was a law-abiding Jew. He was a conscientious Jew.

He said, I've kept the commandments for my youth. And Jesus said, well, you lack one thing. Take all that you have and sell it and give it to the poor.

Then you'll have life. You come follow me then. Now the man wasn't willing to do that and went away sorrowful.

And Jesus certainly would have liked to have that man follow him. But he didn't change the terms for him. He watched him go.

Now we wouldn't do that if we were preaching the gospel, trying to get someone to join our church, especially a rich man. We like rich men in our churches. Although Jesus said it's hard for rich men to enter the kingdom of God, like getting a camel to go through the eye of a needle, we seem to think it should be made as easy as possible for them.

And so we want them to come. We don't want them to make any serious sacrifices or we don't want to do anything to put them off. But Jesus takes a rich man and tells him, get rid of all you have and then come be my disciple.

The man doesn't want to, and Jesus doesn't modify the terms. He just lets the man go. Here, these people, obviously Jesus has already assessed these people.

They are not the right kind of people for his movement. But they're following him for wrong motives. He fed them the day before with free food, and he told them the only reason they came after him the next day was because they wanted more free food.

He said they had no interest in the spiritual meaning of what he was about. And so in this conversation, he's doing everything he can to drive them away. And he does succeed in driving most of them away.

The disciples stay, which means that they could not be driven away. There are people who are being called of God and cannot be made to leave. And Jesus had said, all that the Father gives me will come to me.

And, you know, the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out, in verse 37. And he said in verse 45, at the end of verse 45, everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. He also says in verse 65, which we have not yet gotten to, he said, therefore I said to you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted to him by my Father.

Now nobody is going to be coming to Jesus unless the Father is drawing that person.

That means that person is convicted of their sin. That means that person is convinced that Jesus is who he claims to be.

This conviction comes from the Holy Spirit. And that conviction must exist prior to a person coming to Christ. And so Jesus was not afraid that he might drive people away who otherwise should stay because he knew that if his Father was drawing them, they were hungry.

They were desirous. They would believe. They had heard and learned from the Father.

So even if they don't understand what he's talking about, they're not going anywhere. Because they've been drawn to him by their commitment to God and by the conviction that he is who he says he is. The other people in whom God has not apparently been doing that kind of a work are not only free to leave, he wants them to leave.

Jesus doesn't want to have a large movement made up of people who aren't true disciples. He wants to have a pure movement made up of people who are true disciples. Jesus never was trying to build a large church, though it would not displease him to have a large church if all the people in it were disciples.

You see, our philosophy is we get a bunch of people, as many people as possible, into church on any pretext. Hope they come. Hope they stay.

Hope they get locked in, get involved in the programs of the church for a long time. And over time, we hope that some of them may get saved. The ones who don't, of course we're sorry they don't get saved, but we'd still like them to stay.

A crowd tends to draw a crowd. If you have a lot of people there, it's going to help other people want to come, because everyone likes to feel they're part of a big movement. So we like to have a big crowd of people.

Obviously, we who are evangelicals would like for them all to be real Christians. We think everyone should be a real Christian, and we'd love for all the people in the church to be that. But if they're not, we don't want them to go away.

We've got good use for them. After all, they still have money, and they still are warm bodies that fill the pews and look like a good-sized crowd, and it gives the church a respectable feel. It's very embarrassing to have a church that you go to and half the seats are empty.

A visitor comes in there, and he thinks, wow, this church must not be very good, or else there wouldn't be so many empty seats. Preacher must not be very good. Music must not be very good.

I think I'll try to sleep out of here before the meeting starts. I don't want to stay, because

this probably isn't going to be very good. But if they walk into a place that's packed out, they say, well, there must be something happening here.

I think I'm going to stay. So that's what we want. We like to have that psychological draw on people.

And Jesus just wasn't interested in that. He didn't have any ego wrapped up in this thing. He just wanted to find his Father's sheep.

And he knew they would hear his voice, and they would follow him. And anyone else who was following him who wasn't one of his sheep, he did all he could to make them go away. And I believe that Jesus' idea was that the fellowship of the saints should be a fellowship of true Christians.

That a gathering of the church is supposed to be the church. And the church is made up of people who are born again and following Christ. And I think it's a sad thing that many churches just see themselves as evangelistic outreaches, so they hope that lots of non-Christians will come so they might hear the gospel.

The early church never asked people to come to their church to hear the gospel. They went out to where the people were and preached the gospel. They weren't even invited to church unless they were converted.

You convert them first, then you bring them to church, because that's where the body is. And you've got to have some place where Christians can meet. If the church meeting is open to all people, saved and unsaved, then where are you going to find some place for the Christians to be? If the meeting is catering to the people who have the lowest common denominator of interest, the sermons have to remain very milquetoast.

The sermons have to remain very pabulum, and very geared to the person who either has very, very little Bible knowledge or maybe isn't even saved. And so week after week, the church caters to this crowd that they're encouraging to come. And the people who are actually saved are starving to death, because they're beyond the point of needing baby food, and they're not getting anything but baby food.

And so the church isn't the church. The church is a big evangelistic meeting. Well, but where is the church then? Where are the meetings for the Christians? Where is the discipleship going to happen, if not in the gatherings of the Christians? So Jesus had a different philosophy.

Let's get rid of all these people who aren't really committed. Let's just keep the people around us who want to follow, who want to be disciples. And so he used what is certainly offensive language, and deliberately so, almost to the point of being inappropriate, though you wouldn't want to say anything Jesus said was inappropriate.

But I mean, it gets to the point, we're talking about chomping on his flesh and drinking his blood, is not even a very accurate depiction of the thing he's talking about. He's not really talking about eating with your teeth and drinking blood. He's really talking about the same thing as when he says, you have to eat me as the living bread.

Which means, of course, as a body is nourished by nourishing food, so our eternal life comes by our spiritually ingesting Jesus. As he had said early on, in fact this whole discussion began when he said to them in verse 27, do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to everlasting life. That is, you need to not live by bread alone, but also by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Now that analogy is not too difficult. It's not hard to see an analogy between eating for your body, and eating the word of God for your soul. When it gets down to chewing on flesh and drinking blood, the imagery gets bizarre.

It's almost like Jesus seems to choose that imagery, like I said, it's almost not even appropriate, because it doesn't picture very clearly what is really suggested here. Yet he obviously is going to the point of, he's going over the top to get these people to go away. That's what he's trying to do.

He's trying to get them to go away if they can. And I believe that we'd consider it very risky today, if we tried to get people to leave the church, if they could be made to do so. Some people ask me, how can you get more people to go on the mission field? And my answer is, how can we get less people to go? The mission field is full of bad examples of Christians.

Small-minded, denominational, jealous, territorial people, with their families out of order, and their tempers not sanctified. I mean, there's a lot of good missionaries. I'm not describing all the missionaries.

I'm describing the superfluity of missionaries. There are people that God calls on the issue, like Paul and Barnabas. I'll tell you what, I'd rather have a dozen Paul and Barnabases out there than a thousand people who went because they heard some guilt trip from the pulpit from someone saying, we need to go out and reach the people of India.

Well, we do, but the ones who have to do it are the ones that God calls to be there and gives the gifting and the heart for it. If someone says, how do you get people to go to the mission field? I'd almost want to try to persuade people not to go, because if they are called by God, they will go no matter how hard I try to get them to stop. And the people who aren't called ought not.

And it's sort of that way with the church itself. How do you get people more to come to church? Well, get them saved, I suppose. The ones who aren't saved, you should

probably ask them to go somewhere else so that they don't bring reproach on the name of Christ by being attached to the body and not being Christian.

I read in our Bible forum online recently, someone put the question, why do Christians give as many divorces as non-Christians? And frankly, I think the reason is because most Christians aren't Christians. If you're a Christian, you don't go out and divorce your spouse without grounds. And most Christians are probably married to other Christians who don't go out and give them grounds.

I mean, I hope. Now, if they do, then that's a problem too. If there's a husband or wife that goes out and commits adultery, and they're supposed to be a Christian, well, I don't see how they can be a Christian, really.

I'm not saying Christians never fall into sin occasionally, but how could somebody be a follower of Jesus Christ and think they can have an affair on their spouse? Or how can somebody be a follower of Jesus Christ and think that they can just ditch their family? It's unthinkable to a person who loves Jesus. But it's not unthinkable to half the people who go to church. And so we have people in the church, the statistics show that their families are breaking up as much as others.

And the testimony of Christ is shot to bits. And that's only because those people shouldn't have been there until they were ready to follow Jesus anyway. Now, some people who really follow Jesus do fall away.

Some people really belong in the church, and yet, nonetheless, someday they fall, they do things. David was a true believer, and he fell, but he repented. In other words, he still had a commitment to following God, even though he fell out of weakness and foolishness, he still repented because he loved God.

If Christians sin and then repent, it's a different thing than people who just sin because they don't have any commitment to obeying God in the first place. And so, Jesus was not looking for an inflated crowd to make his movement seem credible. He wanted to find his father's real children and bring them back to the Father.

And these people were not them, for the most part. And so he wanted them to just go away. And he said, in verse 54, He said, in verse 54, These things he said in the synagogue as he taught in Capernaum.

Now, before we go further and see the response of the people, let's deal with this issue that has been so contentious throughout most of church history, and that is, what does he mean, eat his flesh and drink his blood? Obviously, through much of church history, the Roman Catholic Church held the monopoly on Christian doctrine because they held the monopoly on church. There wasn't any other church that could survive against them. Now, I say, I'm talking about in Europe, in the Western world where our ancestors came



from, for the most part.

But, of course, in the East and in Africa and so forth, there were different branches of the church that were never under the popes, never had any connection with the Roman Catholic Church. We don't hear much about them because they aren't the ones that our ancestors were a part of. But, you know, when you read church history, you mainly read about the church in the West, the church in the East that was in India and Syria, and that's Syria and Babylon, and places like that.

They had entirely different things going on. But, certainly, the Western church has always, until at least the Reformation, suggested that Jesus is talking about literally taking his flesh and blood into your body through your mouth. Now, how in the world is that done? He's not here anymore.

Oh, well, it's magic. You know, when you take the Eucharist, the bread turns into the body of Jesus and the wine turns into the blood of Jesus. And this is called transubstantiation.

The substance, trans, changes into something else. And that is the Catholic doctrine and I have many conversations with Catholics about this and they always bring this up. And, of course, one other passage, and you know what that passage is, it's when Jesus was at the Last Supper and he passed around the elements of the Passover meal and he said, This bread is my body, which is broken for you.

This cup is my blood, which is poured out for you. So, you see, look at that. Twice Jesus talks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

And it's very clear, the second instance, at the end of his life at the Last Supper, that he's referring to taking the communion meal. He's taking the Eucharist, as it's called. By the way, Eucharist is just the ordinary Greek word for Thanksgiving.

The Roman Catholics use the term for what we might call communion or the Lord's Supper or something like that. We have different names for things. But the Eucharist, or the Mass, as they call it, is the taking of the wafer and the taking of wine and believing that those things really are, literally, the blood and the body of Jesus.

Now, is this what Jesus was saying? Probably, it's pretty close to what his listeners thought he was saying, which is why they got upset and left. But it is not what he was saying. For one thing, he could not possibly, on this occasion, have been talking about the Eucharist, for the simple reason that it had not been instituted yet, and it would not for another year.

This was Passover. It was a year from this time, the next Passover, that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper and said, this is my body, this is my blood from now on. When you eat and drink of this, you remember my body, my blood, you remember my death.

So, there's no way that these people, who he says were currently, some of them were eating his flesh and drinking his blood, it's present tense, they weren't taking the Eucharist. There was no mass. There was no priest officiating at a mass.

And so, when he says, whoever, for example, in verse 54, whoever eats, that's present tense. Whoever is eating my flesh, whoever is drinking my blood, has present tense eternal life. He's talking to people a full year before there was ever a Eucharistic meal.

And yet, some were already eating his flesh and drinking his blood in the sense that he's describing, and were having eternal life. This is a present phenomenon. His disciples were already there.

And so, he's not talking about something that would be a ritual set up at some future time, but something that was going on right now for some of these people, and that would set one group apart from the others. That one group was eating his flesh and drinking his blood, the other was rejecting it. So, it would be impossible that this verse was talking about the Last Supper unless it's by way of anticipation.

But that, then, would have to be in the future tense because this was not happening yet. Now, as far as the Last Supper itself, when Jesus said, this bread is my body, which is broken for you. This cup is my blood, which is poured out for you.

Well, was it? Was it literally so? Was his blood at that moment poured out from his body into the cup? No, his blood was going to be poured out the next day, but it wasn't yet. How could they be drinking his blood that was poured out that night when he had not poured out any blood yet? How could they be eating his broken body that night when he had not yet had his body broken? That was going to happen the next day. Are we to suppose that Jesus' chunks of his body came out into his hands and he gave them? I'm not trying to be irreverent, but obviously every part of his body was still intact.

It was not broken for them, not yet. Every bit of his blood was still in his veins. None of it had been poured out.

It wasn't poured out into the glass. So, unless he magically turned bread into flesh, even if he did, how would that be his flesh? If he could turn rocks into bread, I suppose he could turn bread into human flesh, but how would that be his flesh? His flesh was all part of him. None of it was missing.

That was not his flesh in his hands. That was not his blood in the cup. And he was not saying that it was.

You see, the Passover meal that he was slightly modifying for his disciples' sake, had a point at which bread was ceremonially broken with ritual sayings over it and eaten, and the same thing with the passing of several cups during the ceremony. When the bread was broken by the host at the table at Passover, the traditional thing to say was, this

bread is the bread of affliction that our fathers suffered in Egypt. This bread is the bread of affliction that our fathers had in Egypt? Obviously not.

What he means is this bread represents that. It reminds us of that. That bread they ate at every Passover meal had not been around back when their fathers were in Egypt.

It was new, fresh bread that they had baked probably that day or that week. It had no connection physically to anything they ate in Egypt. In fact, he's not even talking about something they ate in Egypt.

He's talking figuratively. They ate the bread of affliction means that they were afflicted. It's a figure of speech.

He's not really saying this bread is the bread our fathers ate, but that's how you'd speak it. That's the way of speaking. Just as if I was showing you my family on Facebook page and showed you a picture of all my kids, I said, now this is my older son here, and this is my younger son, and these are my two daughters in the middle, and this is my oldest daughter here.

You'd say, really, that's them? I thought your children would be human, not just pictures on a screen. Well, I mean these pictures represent them. They aren't them.

My children actually breathe and live and so forth, and the pictures on the screen don't do that. That's not really them there. That's a picture of them.

That's an image of them. But I would still say, now that's him and that's her. We say, this is my son.

It doesn't mean that's really my son. That just means that's a picture of my son. If I'm giving you instructions, showing you a map, and I say, now this line here, this is Interstate 5. No, it isn't.

It's an ink line on a page. It's not Interstate 5. But it represents Interstate 5. This is Interstate 5 means this represents it. We talk that way all the time, and so do they in biblical times.

When David said, oh, that I could drink again from the well in Bethlehem, three of his mighty men broke through a Philistine barrier, drew water from that well, and brought it to David. And David couldn't bring himself to drink it. He poured out the water and said, this water is the blood of those men who hazarded their lives for me.

This water is the blood of those men? Is that right? Was David saying this water is now transubstantiated into the blood? No. This water is the blood means this water reminds me of, or represents, or has the significance to me of. It doesn't mean it is really blood.

He's not making a statement of transubstantiation. He said this water is the blood of

these men. Anywhere that Jesus said, this cup is my blood.

It isn't. It's wine. And you could prove it, too, because if you went to a Catholic church and ate the communion there, and then you went and had your stomach pumped, you could just check.

See, did it turn into flesh, or is it still made of wheat? Is it still made of flour? Yep. It didn't turn into flesh. It's still bread.

It does not change its substance. Now, Roman Catholics have answers to those kinds of things, but as you might perhaps imagine, they are desperate answers. I've read them.

They certainly get into the magical aspect, the superstitious aspect of things. But, you know, for Jesus here to be saying you need to literally eat my flesh and drink my blood would be to... for us to say that that's His meaning, we're imparting a literalism to Him that doesn't exist in any of His statements in the Gospel of John. And one of the main things that we see in the Gospel of John again and again is that Jesus makes a statement that people take too literally.

How many times has that already happened? In John chapter 2, He said, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. And they said, We've been 46 years building this temple. How are you going to raise it up in three days? And John says, He was talking about the temple of His body.

He didn't clarify it for them, but that's what He was talking about. They took Him too literally. He said, This body destroyed... I mean, this temple, destroy it.

And they thought He was talking literally. He wasn't. He said to Nicodemus, You have to be born again to see the Kingdom of God.

And Nicodemus said, Can a man go back into his mother's womb and be born again? Of course not. Nicodemus took Him literally. But He wasn't speaking literally.

He was not speaking physically. He was talking about something spiritual. Likened to birth.

Likened to going through a womb. In chapter 4, to the woman at the well, He said, If you had known the gifts of God and who it was that asked you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water. And she thought He meant literal water.

Right? He's speaking spiritually all the way through and people are always taking Him literally. Then later in the same story, in chapter 4, His disciples come and say, Lord, here is something deedy. He says, I have food that you know not of.

They say, What? Did someone bring Him something to eat? And He says, My food is to do

the will of my Father who sent Me and to finish His work. He's continually doing this kind of thing. In chapter 8, verses 32 and 33, Jesus said that, You will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

And they said, We're Abram's children. We've never been in bondage to anybody. And He said, Well, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.

They thought He was talking about literal freedom but He came from literal shackles. He speaks about spiritual things and people take Him as if He means literal. And so it's totally in character for the whole book of John.

For Him to say, You need to eat Me. And they say, How can we eat you? Well, He doesn't mean literally any more than He meant that the woman at the well should literally drink the living water. It's not going to go down her throat, into her stomach.

It's not that kind of drinking. It's not that kind of water. And so also throughout the book of John and much in Jesus' ministry He said things that were not intended to be taken literally and it was a mistake that people made that they took them literally.

The Jews took Him literally on this. Eat My flesh and drink My blood. And Christians throughout history, many of them, have taken Him literally too by mistake.

But what a strange thing that would be in all the teachings of Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John for Him to have such a just a passing reference to something that would be so vital if it was true. I mean, He says in verse 54, Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life. So that would mean that you have to do that.

In verse 56, He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him. So this would be absolutely necessary to do. And to not eat His flesh and not drink His blood is to miss out on having life.

If that's so important, why is it not mentioned to everybody? Why does Jesus only say it here and only basically in exaggerated terms? You see, you can tell what He's talking about here because He's just going into more graphic detail of a general statement He made at the beginning. You need to not only eat the food that perishes, you need to eat the food that endures eternal life. What is that? It's Me.

You need to receive Me. Who am I? I'm the Word. The Word of God.

Believe in Me and you'll be eating Me. And that's what He's saying. Because look, for example, in verse 54, Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day.

Look at verse 40. Everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day. The very same statement that such and such

persons have eternal life and I'll raise them up at the last day.

But in one case it says whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood the other case it clarifies He's talking about whoever sees the Son and believes in Him. Believing in Him is consuming Him. Believing in Him is receiving Him into yourself as you would receive food into yourself by eating.

And clearly when He talks about eating His flesh and drinking His blood He's talking about that which confers eternal life to people. As eating regular bread confers or at least sustains physical life. So, whatever it is that He's calling eating His flesh and drinking His blood is something that confers and sustains eternal life.

So, that He says that in verse 54. If you eat My flesh and drink My blood you'll have eternal life. And in verse 58 at the end of verse 58 He who eats this bread will live forever.

Quite clearly verse 47 No, no, no. Verse 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he will live forever.

So notice verse 51, verse 54, verse 58 all of them say you eat the bread you'll live forever. But He's already been saying a lot of things about living forever before this. He had said at the introduction in verse 27 labor for the food which endures to everlasting life.

But then when He got off and talked about eternal life He always said you have to believe, you have to believe, you have to believe. So, in verse 40 everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him will have everlasting life. In verse 47, He who believes in Me has everlasting life.

It's believing in Him that is eating Him and drinking Him. Why He spoke so graphically and so offensively about eating His flesh and drinking His blood in those terms as I said I've explored with you. I think He was trying to make the people go away who could.

The ones that God wasn't drawing. And it says in verse 60, therefore many of His disciples when they heard this said this is a hard saying, who can understand it? When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured about this He said to them does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? Now this statement does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before? Has always been difficult for you to know how the two statements connect. And it could go one way or another.

He could be saying if what I'm saying offends you you'll even be more offended when I leave. I mean that's possible. But it doesn't seem like that'd be obviously true.

His departure wouldn't necessarily be more offensive than what He said on this occasion.

So He might be saying it the opposite way. You're offended now but when you see me go up you won't be offended anymore.

You'll believe that I knew what I was talking about. Right now this is stumbling you. Right now this is making you have doubts about me.

But what if you see me go up back to heaven? Then you won't have those doubts anymore. That you know if you can endure this kind of talk and not stumble and not depart from me then you will your faith will be vindicated. You'll someday see me go back up into heaven.

You'll watch me go. And then of course all the difficulty you're having right now with my words, these hard words it won't be so hard on you anymore. You'll at least believe that I knew what I was talking about.

Anyway that particular conjunction of two thoughts has always been kind of unclear to me. But in verse 63 he says, it is the spirit who gives life the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life.

Now this is so important in understanding eating the flesh and drinking his blood. Because he has said that if you eat his flesh or if you eat him it will give you life. Verse 51, I am the living bread which came down from heaven.

If anyone eats this bread he will live forever. Okay. But what does he mean? He said well it's not the flesh that gives life.

The flesh profits nothing. It's the spirit that gives life. If you think I'm talking about eating my physical flesh well you're wrong.

That won't profit anything. What profits, what gives life is not eating literal flesh but it's the spirit that gives life. The flesh doesn't profit anything.

And the words I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life. So what he's saying is you need to eat my words. You need to receive my words like you receive food.

And that of course is simply the restatement of a very common theme in the Old Testament. That God's word is like food in which godly people take delight and feast and are nourished spiritually. Last time I gave you quite a few Old Testament passages that say that very thing.

We won't go over them again because of our time. But the point is what he's saying is my word, I've been talking about eating my words all this time. And of course we use the term eating your words in a different sense.

But what he's saying is when I say you need to eat me, it's not really me the physical me. I am the word made flesh. My words are spirit and they are life.

You need to eat those. The flesh wouldn't profit. If you ate me physically it wouldn't benefit you.

The flesh profits nothing. The spirit is what gives life and I'm speaking in spiritual terms. I'm speaking about my words which are spirit and they're life and they will give you life.

Now we know that he was talking about his words because when you get down to verse 68 Simon Peter said to him, Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. He didn't say Lord to whom shall we go? You alone have the flesh and blood that we have to eat. You alone can provide the Eucharistic meal so we can have eternal life.

He said no, you alone have the words of eternal life. We can't eat this living bread if we leave you. Because it's your words that give eternal life.

So although Jesus has used language that was very perplexing to the Jews and frankly has proven to be very perplexing to Christians historically, yet it's not hard to discern that what he's talking about is believing in him, believing his words, receiving what he's saying spiritually. It's the spirit that gives life and his words are spirit and they're life. That's what gives eternal life.

It's not eating some kind of bread, eating some kind of flesh, drinking some kind of blood. That's not what gives life. That's taking all that in the fleshly sense and that profits nothing.

Now Jesus said in verse 64, but there are some of you who do not believe, says for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe and who would betray him. And he said therefore I have said to you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted to him by my Father. In other words, you people, some of you are having a hard time with what I'm saying.

I might lose some of you over this. And sure enough he did. As the next verse tells us.

He says, but you wouldn't come to me unless the Father drew you anyway so I can't hold you here. If God isn't drawing you, if God's not granting it to you, then I can't make you come anyway and I wouldn't want to. And so it says from that time many of his disciples went back and walked with him no more.

Now the important thing to note that the people that are being discussed here in verses 60 through 66 are disciples of his. So they are called in verse 60, therefore many of his disciples when they heard this saying, said it's a hard saying verse 61, when Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured. Now this is not the twelve.

The disciples refers to people who had some commitment to him, who had become followers of his at some level and saw him as their Rabbi. There were many of them, far more than the twelve. There were at least 70 we know of at one time because he sent 70



of them out two by two on one occasion.

There were probably far more at times. Real people who were called disciples. The Bible itself even calls them disciples.

So it takes it for granted they were. And yet some of them stopped following him. Doesn't look like perseverance of the saints to me.

Is there a guarantee that if you're a true disciple you'll persevere, that you're really one of the true Christians, you'll persevere? Maybe not. These ones, at least John calls them disciples and they seem to have been, because they're so frequently referred to that way, it doesn't say many of the people in the crowd said this. But he actually did lose most of those in the crowd.

And even many of his disciples went back and walked with him no more. That would mean not being saved anymore. That would mean not being a follower of Christ anymore.

Not being a Christian. Remember a disciple is another word for a Christian in the Bible. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

So, Christian and disciple, same thing. Verse 67, then Jesus said to the twelve, do you also want to go away? And this is just said to the twelve. Now one of them was Judas.

And we've already read in John that there was one of the twelve that was not going to stay with him. But he stayed with him through this test. Now is Judas, was Judas a true believer or not? I don't know.

No one knows for sure. There's been controversy about that. Some say he was a true disciple and he fell away and lost his salvation.

Those who don't believe that's possible say no, he couldn't have been a true disciple. He was a fake all along. Jesus knew from the beginning which one would betray him.

And on this occasion even was going to refer to Judas as a devil. But that doesn't mean that Judas had never been a true disciple at any earlier time. We just don't have enough information about Judas' earliest commitments and his true level of his belief.

But among the twelve, none of them left him at this point. But apparently most everyone else did. And Jesus said to the twelve, do you also want to go away? And Simon Peter answered, Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

You know if you actually have ever had a genuine encounter with Jesus, like the people in Samaria, the woman at the well brought them. They said, now we believe in him not because of your words but because we've heard him for ourselves and we know that this is indeed the savior of the world. Because we have heard him for ourselves.

When you've actually heard Jesus for yourself, when his words have actually resonated with you in the way that they do with a true child of God, then it's almost impossible to imagine how you could go somewhere else. Now one of the twelve did. And Peter did too, but he came back.

Peter denied him three times after this. But he came back to Christ. It is possible for someone who really feels strongly, I could never backslide.

Where would I go? Well, they can. It is possible. But I certainly understand the sentiment of Peter.

I can't imagine ever backsliding. Why would I? I mean, I depend too much on what I receive in my fellowship with Christ and the life I have. I'm not even talking about going to heaven when I die.

I'm talking about right now. The words of eternal life. I live on those things.

Where would I go? Would I go somewhere where they aren't? What are you going to live on then? What in the world are you going to live on if you don't have the words of God that you're meditating on day and night? That's what Peter said. And he says, and we have come to believe and know that you are the Christ. That is the Messiah, the son of the living God.

You know, it wasn't very much after this. It was shortly after this, according to the other Gospels, that Jesus took the disciples to Caesarea Philippi and said, Who do you say I am? And Peter gave this same testament. You are the Christ, the son of the living God.

Essentially the same words that we have here. But at that later time, only days later in all likelihood, Jesus said, Oh, blessed are you, son of Barjah. Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father has revealed it to you.

And it was no doubt because Jesus realized his disciples were kind of teetering here. I mean, many of the disciples departed from him and left, it says. And now the twelve, he wasn't sure about them even.

And so, shortly after this, he goes up to the mountain, or up to Caesarea Philippi, and he asks them, Who do men say I am? And after hearing the recitation of the different views, he says, Well, who do you say I am? And Peter gives this exact same testimony. And apparently Jesus was relieved to hear it. His response makes it sound like he wasn't sure he was going to hear the right answer from these guys because, well, because why? Because they had just seen the collapse of an extremely popular movement where they had been riding the crest of the wave as the right-hand men of the leader.

You know, they also shared most of the Jews' other opinions that the kingdom of God was going to be political, that the Messiah was going to reign like David. And it was

obvious that they were positioned to be in the most privileged positions when he came to power. They had every reason to believe at this stage in their lives that Jesus was someday going to sit on a throne in Jerusalem before his life ended.

And that they, at least some of them, would sit at his right hand and his left hand. Remember, James and John asked, Could it be us? Could we sit at your right hand and left hand? They knew it would be either them or some of the others in the twelfth, so they wanted to get their foot in the door early. But they believed that it was obvious.

You know, when our master becomes the Messiah, becomes the king, obviously we'll be his cabinet. We'll be rulers. And when there were 15,000 people following him the day before this, they must have felt like, Wow! Our guy, he's a household word now.

He's famous. He's definitely not far from the point of seizing power and becoming the king. We're going to be right there with him.

And then the next day, his movement just collapses. Everybody's gone. It's just the twelve again.

And certainly that would be discouraging to anyone who had cherished hopes that they would soon be influential at the top of a very powerful movement. Maybe a worldwide movement of the king of the world, the Messiah. And now he's not, doesn't look like he's the king of anybody, but just a few people.

And it seems like he lost his opportunity. I mean, he should have struck while the iron was hot. These people were ready to take him by force and make him king, it says in verse 15 of this chapter.

And he wouldn't let him. And the disciples no doubt were thinking, he's not going to get a chance like this again. And especially after the whole campaign collapsed and there was only them left, thought, boy he blew that opportunity.

And that would have been a time, if there was any, that they'd be discouraged. That they'd be thinking, are we right about this guy or not? And if we are, how come everyone else is wrong? How could we be right when everybody else has decided he's not the guy? What makes us so stubborn? You know, that's the temptation people begin to have. In fact, we begin to have that temptation.

You know, 30 years ago, in this country, or make it 40 years ago, in this country, an awful lot of people thought of America as a Christian country. A lot of Christians did. I was raised in a Christian home.

We just kind of thought this was a Christian country. And we knew not everyone in the country were Christians, but we certainly thought Jesus is the most popular person in the popular mind. Virtually everybody that I knew, no one I knew, would deny that the Bible

was the Word of God in those days, even if they weren't Christians.

The Bible is respected. I remember having a friend who got saved in the Jesus movement, and he told me that when he was an unbeliever, he used to hear Billy Graham preach on TV, and he said every time Billy Graham said, the Bible says, just the very phrase, the Bible says, made him take notice, because he knew the Bible, that's the Word of God. He wasn't raised in a Christian home, he wasn't a Christian himself, but there was just this general respect for Christ, general respect for the Bible in the culture.

And that was a generation ago. Now it's the opposite. The average person thinks the Bible is a lot of hooey.

They think Jesus maybe didn't even live, or maybe he's a maybe he was, you know, the husband of Mary Magdalene, and just some kind of a deluded peasant rabbi, and there's all kinds of views out there that people are buying. You talk to the unbelievers, and they either think that he never lived, and he's just a myth that's based on the myths of Mithras, and Horus, and the false pagan gods, and that he's just another legend like that, or they think that he's the Da Vinci Code version of Jesus, who is just a man, and his followers later deified him, and you just don't find the standing for Christ 40 years ago, most people I think tended to admire you. I remember that when I was just entered the ministry when it was like in 1970, that in almost any non-Christian crowd, if people knew I was a minister, they'd kind of they'd stop cussing, you know.

They didn't want to offend me, you know. If they asked me to cuss, they'd say, oh I'm sorry, like they had to apologize to me for what they said, and there's just that general feeling, you know, a Christian's near, if that's a man of God, be careful, don't do anything wrong around the man of God. It wasn't because he's so thin skinned he'll be offended, it's more like you don't want to get caught doing that when there's a man of God in there, you know.

That's kind of how people were a lot of times. That's the opposite now. They love to offend you now if they can.

They'll cuss at you, they'll curse God at you, they'll do everything. As Chauncey knows from being out on the streets trying to do some evangelism recently. There's no respect for Christ.

And so, in the Jesus movement, which is when I started the ministry, it looked like it was the wave of the future. I mean, everybody I knew in my high school was going to Calvary Chapel and getting saved. A thousand of them a month were getting baptized in the ocean.

It was like a swelling revival. I thought, wow, man. And I was lucky enough to be right in the middle of it.

I got a head start because I was saved before the revival came. And so, it's like I was in this really popular movement and I thought, well, this is a very privileged position to be in. Kind of like one of the disciples that got in at the ground floor of something that's going to become huge.

And it did become huge for a few years. The Jesus movement spread around the world. But then it went down again.

And it's such a different experience today to stand for Christ with the public attitude the way it is now compared to then. Back then, I never slightly would be at all embarrassed to say in any crowd, you know, I'm a minister. I still would not be embarrassed to say I'm a Christian.

But to say you're a minister is risky these days because there's been television evangelists who've fallen and there's, you know, priests that molest children. I mean, the perception of men who are, you know, vocational ministers, it's taken a big hit, too, in the public eye. To say you're a minister almost... Back in 1970, to tell anyone you're a minister, they'd say, oh, you know, they'd respect you.

Even if you weren't a Christian. If they weren't a Christian. But now, it's like you might as well say I'm an axe murderer, you know, or I'm a pervert or something like that, because that's kind of what lots of people think about anyone who's in the ministry.

So, if you can stand for Christ when the crowd has disappeared, when the masses that followed him enthusiastically are no longer doing so, and many even of the Jesus people have just drawn back and walked no more with him. If you're still walking with him because you think there's no place to go to get the words of eternal life except from him, you're going to stand in a less popular light than you did before. And it takes more of a genuine faith in Christ and, frankly, more courage than it used to to stand for Christ in the culture.

And that's where the disciples were, that's what they were looking at. They had been part of the revival. Their church was a mega church, 15,000 people.

And now it was a little church with 12 people. And I think, as I mentioned in our last lecture, today if a mega church called a pastor to come and candidate and he preached one sermon and no one came back the next Sunday except for 12 people, his sermon would have been considered a disaster. And they wouldn't be able to get rid of him fast enough because he obviously doesn't know how to hold the crowd.

But Jesus had just made that same mistake in the eyes of the public and the disciples could easily have felt, well, maybe we were wrong. Everybody else thinks we were wrong. Who are we to think we're right? And sometimes I know Christians begin to have those questions in their minds.

Or the children of Christians in this generation because there's not a revival going on among the youth and the average young person in our society does not believe in Christianity and even the kids who are raised in Christian homes, they think, well, how do we know we're right when we're in such a small minority? Why aren't the Hindus right? Why aren't the Muslims right? Why aren't the atheists right? How come we're right? And it's easy to feel like you're right when everyone agrees with you that you're right, but when suddenly most people disagree with you, then you have to really know why. Why you think you're right. Why you believe it's true.

And the disciples were facing that very crisis at this point. And Jesus when he took them to Caesarea Philippi and said, well, who do you say I am? And they gave the right answer. Jesus, I felt like he just kind of wiped his sweat off his brow and said, wow, that's great to hear you say that.

You know, blessed are you. It's obvious that that's not something you're believing because some human told you. Because most humans don't agree with you.

Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you. My Father has revealed it to you. That's why you still believe it.

Because my Father has granted it to you. My Father has revealed this to you. And therefore, no matter how many people are saying it isn't true, you're not going to be following them because you're not basing what you believe on what flesh and blood human beings have told you.

Their opinion is not the basis for your belief. Verse 70, Jesus answered them, did I not choose you twelve and one of you as a devil? He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray him in one of the twelve. You know, it's funny how if this was a novel, the novelist would keep you in suspense as to who's going to be the betrayer.

And that's like the big crisis in the plot. You know, one of the good guys turns out to be a mole, a betrayer in the crowd. And all the Gospels, as soon as they give a list of the apostles, like early on they say and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him? You know, they don't even keep you in suspense.

Judas Iscariot is known for one thing. He betrayed Jesus. I mean, what a reputation that is to live with for two thousand years and more.

You know, the one who betrayed him. And the sad thing is for Judas that he's not the only one who betrayed Jesus. Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

A lot of people have betrayed him for far less than that. A lot of them will do it for free. But he was the first to betray him.

And he was the closest and the most privileged person who ever turned and betrayed Jesus. And so he is said to be a devil. Now, of course, this is a figure of speech.

Devils are not human beings and Judas was not a true devil. But he was possessed by the devil at a certain point. And that is, the Bible says that Satan entered him and he went and betrayed Jesus.

So, that's, he's an adversary, an accuser. That's what the word devil means. In case you wondered.

So, that's the end of that. And it's a very long monologue that Jesus gives there. Obviously, passing through several different theological issues.

But apparently the whole gist of his thing was, if you're not following me for the right reasons, if you're just wanting a handout, if you just want bread, I don't want you in the movement. Not that I don't want you, but I want you on my terms. Not on those terms.

And it's instructive to us when we're trying to get people to become Christians, that we realize that God doesn't want them on their terms. And a lot of times we try to soften the terms of discipleship. We try to make it sound like it's not that hard.

But if it is, it's better to let them know. Because if the Father is drawing them, then they'll come anyway. And if he's not, then there's no sense in trying to make them have a false assurance that they're Christians.

They shouldn't really be among the Christians in that case.