

# OpenTheo

## Walking on Water, Bread of Life (Part 2)



### The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In "Walking on Water, Bread of Life (Part 2)," Steve Gregg explores the theme of eternal life found in John 6. Gregg notes that the idea of eternal life kept intact by faith in God's work is a major theme in the discourse. He also discusses the concept of the first resurrection and the creation of a new heaven and new earth. Finally, he explains the meaning of Jesus' discussion of eating flesh and drinking blood, emphasizing the importance of the spirit and belief in Jesus for salvation.

### Transcript

So he who feeds on me will live because of me. And he appends that in verse 58. He who eats this bread will live forever.

Then finally, in verse 63, it is the spirit, well actually it's not finally there, but it is the spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life.

And finally, when Jesus asked the twelve if they're going to go away, in verse 68, Simon Peter answered and said to him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Now, that sure is true of this message. He has words of eternal life.

That's practically the main word that reoccurs in there. These are words about eternal life. Now, Peter may have said, you have the words of eternal life to mean the words you speak impart life.

If Peter understood that, then he was quite correct because he says in verse 63, the words I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life. So to partake of his word is to partake of life. Therefore, he does have the words of eternal life.

As Peter said, to receive his word is to receive eternal life in the package. Although the words of eternal life may simply mean the words that teach about eternal life, it's hard to know to what degree Peter understood the spiritual significance and the spiritual nature of his words. Jesus alone was teaching about eternal life.

The rabbis didn't know much about it, but Jesus did. And who could they go to for instruction about how to have eternal life but him? He alone had the message about eternal life. Well, that was the message.

The message is, we call it the bread of life discourse, but it's really the eternal life discourse. The reason we don't call it that is because Jesus talked about eternal life other places too, like when he talked to Nicodemus and other places, he talked about eternal life. But there are issues that come up here that need to be talked about.

I'm not going to go verse by verse to thread through the thought. There's a lot of repetition in it. But I do want to bring out the issues that are of importance to our understanding of Christianity in general from what this discourse is.

It's a major discourse. It's found only in John, but it is one of the major discourses in John. And it's very important because some people have hung a great deal upon it.

Now, first thing I want to observe is that Jesus said in verse 27, You do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal on him. And they said to him, What shall we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he sent. Now, he starts by saying, Don't labor for the food that perishes.

Now, I've known people who have taken this literally. And they have actually felt like it's a sin to work and hold a job. These were, of course, cultists.

There's no mainstream Christians who take this approach. But I remember the cult, the Children of God, under Moses David back in the early 70s. They're still around somewhere.

They change their name all the time so that people can't keep track of them. They're kind of criminal. They move from country to country and stuff.

But they used to be in Los Angeles in the early 70s. And you'd run into them. They'd buttonhole you on the street and tell you that you weren't really saved because you hadn't forsaken everything and you still were working a job or whatever.

And they said, Jesus said, Do not labor for the food that perishes. You go to your job and you labor. And what are you doing it for? For food that perishes.

Don't do it. Jesus said, Don't do that. So they felt that unemployment was the only way to really meet this command.

Here we have, I think, a good example of what we've talked about on other occasions, of the Hebraism called a limited negative. When Jesus said, I didn't come to bring peace but

a sword, I point out to you before, we should understand that to mean, I didn't come only to bring peace but also a sword. A limited negative means not only but also.

It may be stated in the absolute, I didn't come to bring peace. Instead, I came to bring a sword. But what it really means is, I don't think that I only came to bring peace, that but also a sword.

Now we know that Jesus came to bring peace because he said, My peace I give unto you. And these things I've spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. He's called the Prince of Peace.

Anyone who says that Jesus didn't come to bring peace is missing the point. He did come to bring peace but not only peace. Don't think that Christian life is going to be nothing but bliss and peace.

There's going to be division, there's going to be sorrow, there's going to be sorrow and families breaking up and so forth too, he said. Now this is another case of a limited negative. He acts as if he's saying, Don't work for food, just work for the food that provides eternal life.

And if we were to take that without the sense of a limited negative, we'd have to not work at all in any job that earned money to eat. But of course it means not only but also, here also it's that thing. Don't just work for your living, work for your eternal living.

Don't work just to feed your stomach, work to obtain that food that will nourish you forever and sustain your eternal life indefinitely forever. Now they asked about this in verse 28, they said, Well what shall we do that we may work the works of God? He just used the word labor. Labor for the food that endures to eternal life.

And they said, Well what kind of labor is it? How hard is it? What kind of work is it? And he says, Well it's quite easy really. This is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent. Now some people have taken this to mean that there's absolutely no works of God that are appropriate for us to preach, that people should do.

Because the only work of God there is to do is to believe. And of course this is the view of those who are anti-lordship salvation. They think that lordship salvation is legalism if you say that people are supposed to obey Jesus because Jesus said this is the work of God, just believe.

If you just believe that's all that's necessary. Well in the context, he had just said you need to work or labor to obtain the food that provides eternal life. Their question, what do we do? What is the labor you're requiring? What is the work that you're talking about? And he says, Well what I'm talking about is believing.

The context is he's just telling them how to obtain eternal life. He's not ruling out with

this one comment any obligation to do good works afterwards. And again, even the good works we do afterwards are not there in order to keep our eternal life intact.

Our eternal life is kept intact by our faith. But faith does produce good works and this statement of Jesus is not supposed to eradicate that notion which is found throughout not only the other teachings of Jesus but throughout the teachings of the rest of scripture as well. So I just want to point this out because some people have used this verse 29 as if it's inappropriate to talk about works in any setting because as soon as you read about the need to do good works they say, Well Jesus said this is the work of God that you believe in him in that sense.

So the only work necessary is just to believe. I would say this, there is a sense in which that's true because if you believe in the way that he's talking about believing good works will flow. You won't have to concern yourself with them.

Your works will be good if you are a believer. The good works are simply the fruit of believing. And if somebody starts trying to fix their life by adding one good work after another they definitely are on the wrong track because you can't fix your life in that way.

Your works can never be good enough. But if you have faith, then the works of God are done in you. This is the work of God that you believe.

He could also be saying that for people as unbelieving as you people are just for you people to believe would be a work of God. That would be a miracle enough for you to believe on me. But I don't think that's what it means in the context.

He's saying essentially I've told you to work or labor to obtain the bread that leads to eternal life. Now I want you to know it's not really very expensive. You just have to believe in me to have it.

And by introducing this element of belief here of course it's not the first time that the Gospel of John has done so. Back in John 3 it said, Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Believing and eternal life are the two issues in this discourse also.

I've already pointed out to you how often life or eternal life is mentioned in this discourse. You might just want to take a look quickly at how many times it talks about believing. It's also a major theme of the discourse.

In verse 29, this is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent. And then in verse 35, near the end of that, that he who believes in me shall never thirst. He said in verse 36, I said that you have seen me and yet you do not believe.

Believing is the issue here. In verse 40, this is the will of him who sent me that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have everlasting life. And say verse 50, this is

the bread which comes down from heaven that anyone may eat it.

That's not what I wanted to point to. That's the wrong verse. Well, verse 47, most assured I say to you, he who believes in me has everlasting life.

The believing is the emphasis here. Now, here are some of the issues that arise in this passage. At least three major theological issues have been contested over this passage.

One of them is relevant to eschatology. I give it first because it's probably the least important. We'll get it out of the way first.

In eschatology, there are essentially two viewpoints hotly debated. You know them. I don't need to go into them in detail.

But the particular point of the debate that focuses over this is how many resurrections are there? Of course, the dispensational view is that there are two. There is the resurrection of the righteous, which takes place at the same time as the rapture. And this is the resurrection only of Christians.

And that is seven years before the tribulation. Or other premillennialists, who are not dispensational, other premillennialists would say it happens at the end of the tribulation, but before the millennium. Then there's a second resurrection of the wicked, of all who are not saved.

But that doesn't occur until after the millennium, at the end of a thousand years. So there's two resurrections. There's first of all the resurrection of the righteous, and secondly the resurrection of the unrighteous.

Now the only passage in the entire Bible that could be said to substantiate this view would be a particular interpretation of Revelation 20. Because in Revelation 20, verses 5 and 6, it talks about those who have obtained the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are they that have part in the first resurrection.

On them the second death has no power. And it talks there about the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years was over. So there in that one passage, Revelation 20, verses 5 and 6, there does appear to be a reference to more than one resurrection.

But I want to make a couple of observations. First of all, there are a number of places, and we have looked at them on other occasions, that speak of a single resurrection that includes the righteous and the unrighteous. One of those places is in John chapter 5. Let me just look at that one passage real quickly here.

John 5, verses 28 and 29. Jesus said, Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done

good to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation. In a given moment, in a given hour, all are going to come out, the righteous and the unrighteous.

There's only a single resurrection. There's more on that, but we don't have time to look at all the passages about that because I don't want to belabor that today. But that is one of the issues here, that to read Revelation chapter 20 and say, well, there's two resurrections there.

We need to deal with the fact that elsewhere in Scripture, there's only one resurrection. Now, the second thing to consider is that Revelation 20 is the only place in the Bible that has wording that can be construed to teach two resurrections. It talks about the first resurrection, it talks about the rest of the dead.

That certainly can be construed to teach that there are two resurrections. But it's the only passage in the entire Bible that has anything like wording that would lead to that conclusion. And that's over against quite a few passages that teach the other, that there's only one resurrection.

The third consideration is that Revelation is a book of symbols. Now, it may be that some listeners may not fully accept that fact. It is my opinion that it requires only common sense to note that there are symbols throughout the book of Revelation.

And certainly in a higher degree, a higher density than you find in any other book of the Bible. Or at least in any other New Testament book. And that being so, we'd have to say we want to be careful not to arrive at doctrinal positions from an individual passage found in a highly symbolic text, especially if believing it a certain way would contradict many passages that are not symbolic or that are not in symbolic kinds of contexts.

Now, as you know, I believe the first resurrection, of which John speaks, the same writer we're dealing with here, by the way, the first resurrection in Revelation is being born again. As a non-millennialist, I believe, what the pre-millennialists do not, I believe that the thousand years is a symbolic way of speaking of the whole age of the church. Those who participate in it have already experienced the first resurrection, which is a spiritual resurrection, it's being born again.

Paul says we've been raised with Christ and seated with him in heavenly places. We were dead in trespasses and sins, but God has made us alive in him. That's a resurrection of sorts, it's spiritual.

And the rest of the dead who rise are simply everybody's bodies. Ours, theirs, everybody's. All rise at the end of that period of time when Jesus comes back.

So there's two resurrections in this sense. There is a single physical resurrection of all dead bodies that include the righteous and the unrighteous at the end when Jesus comes

back. Prior to that, there is a first resurrection, which is a spiritual one, it is rebirth, which is experienced only by those who participate in it through Christ.

Now, that's my understanding, at least, of Revelation 20, and it accords well with all the other passages, and the premillennial view does not. But, let me just say this, the question of whether there are two resurrections, one separate for the righteous and one separate for the unrighteous, can be dealt with without any appeal to the scriptures we've made reference to so far. In fact, the passage before us deals a decisive blow in this debate, on the side of amillennialism, by the way.

If you'll look at verse 39, This is the will of the Father who sent me, that of all he has given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. He's talking about the resurrection, at the last day he's going to raise up who? Those that the Father has given, those are Christians. Next verse says, And this is the will of him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Again, resurrection of the righteous, of those who believe in the Son, who have everlasting life, they will be resurrected in the last day. Then, in verse 44, No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. That is the ones that the Father draws, this is the righteous, the Christians.

So at the last day they'll be raised up. And then there's verse 54, Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, which in the symbolism of the passage is the believer, has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. Now there's four times in this one chapter that Jesus says he's going to raise up the believers, the Christians, the ones who have eternal life, at the last day.

Now, in order to make two resurrections, one that involves the Christians and a separate one that involves the non-Christians, you'd have to have another resurrection after the last day. Now, the last day, however, is the last day. So nothing's going to happen after that, there are no days after that one.

Now, of course, in order to maintain a two resurrection theory, one has to say, well, the last day, that's not the last day of the entire world, that's just the last day of the church age. That's the last day before Jesus raptures the church and takes them out of here and begins the tribulation period and so forth. It's not the last day of the whole world and of all God's dealings, it's just the last day of the church age.

That's the only way to deal with this. However, if you look at John chapter 12, Jesus also speaks about the last day, and there's certainly not the slightest clue that he means a different last day than the one of which he spoke in chapter 6. By the way, the disciples didn't know anything about any church age at the time when he was speaking to them, so it seems unlikely that he would have expected them to understand the last day to

mean simply the last day of the church age, since the concept was not even in their minds. But John 12, 48 has Jesus saying, He who rejects me and does not receive my words, now, that certainly is not the one who has eternal life, that's not the Christian, that's the unbeliever, has that which judges him.

The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. Now, the believer is going to be raised on the last day, if the last day means the last day of the church age, and it certainly does, because that's the last day of the church, but it's also the day of the wicked are going to be judged. The words that Jesus spoke are going to judge that unbeliever, the one who rejects his words, on the same day.

In other words, the resurrection and the judgment happens for everybody on the same day. And to say otherwise, one must read between lines, one must twist the passage, one must suggest hidden meanings that neither the disciples nor any Christian in history ever believed were there until a few decades ago. Let me turn, I'll show you what it's in reference to.

Look at 2 Peter. In 2 Peter chapter 3, we have the particular day mentioned again, which by the description is very clearly the last. 2 Peter 3, verses 10 through 13.

But the day of the Lord, that's the day we're talking about, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, that's the second coming of Jesus, he said he'd come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away, so it's the last day of the heavens, with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat, so the last day of the elements, both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up, so it's the last day of the earth and the works that are done in it too. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness? Looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Now, I would say the last day is the last day of the world. Now, here it is identified with the coming of Jesus, the day of the Lord, the day of Christ, the day that will come like a thief in the night, which Jesus said his coming would be, and Paul, by the way, in 1 Thessalonians 5, said the coming of the Lord would be as a thief in the night also. So we're talking about the second coming of Jesus here.

What happens when Jesus comes back? He doesn't set up a thousand year millennium on this planet, he melts the world, burns it up, the heavens are dissolved, nothing left except a new heaven and new earth that he makes in its place. So I'd say the last day would apparently be the last day of the cosmos, the last day of the natural order, before God replaces it with the supernatural, eternal heavens and earth. And that would be the right time to raise us up too, because we'll need new bodies, we'll need supernatural glorified bodies to live forever in such a new cosmos.



You see, according to the dispensational and premillennial view, the believer is raised in his immortal body prior to the millennium, but he still lives on a natural earth for a thousand years, at the end of which Satan is released from his prison, and the nations of the world come out and threaten us, although we're in immortal bodies, invincible, with Jesus in our midst, and yet somehow we're threatened by the devil, and the nations of the world who are not in their immortal bodies, because the rest of the dead do not live until the end of the thousand years. So here we've got a bunch of mortals threatening a bunch of people who have Jesus in their presence, and Jesus and us all have immortal bodies. It sounds like a joke, but that's what premillennialism suggests.

And then after the millennial reign, then God makes the new heavens and new earth, according to the premillennial system. So we have eternal bodies before there's an eternal environment to live in, by that view. But amillennialism, and of course the church view throughout history was, and still largely is, although it doesn't get as much publicity, that the new heavens and new earth are made in order to accommodate our new bodies, which are resurrected at the same time and glorified.

So it's one day. You don't need all these elaborate charts that show the timeline of all these prophetic events. Just one thing, one day.

It's the last day. It's the day of Christ. It's the day of the Lord.

It's the day of God. It's the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are terms that are all used for it.

Jesus refers to it as the last day, so he's going to raise up his people. He's going to judge the wicked. He's going to dissolve the earth and the heavens.

He's going to make a new heaven and new earth. It's all going to happen in one day. So that's what I understand to be his meaning when he says, in the last day.

And since he didn't qualify it at all, we have to assume that his disciples must have assumed something along those lines too. The last day simply means the day after which there are no other days. If the cosmos melts, there's not going to be any more day and night anymore.

No sun, no moon, no stars to measure such things. And in the new earth, there's no sun or moon or stars to shine it because God and the Lamb are the light of it. So it's literally the last day.

There's no more days after that. And that's when the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous will take place. Now, that deals with the eschatological question in this passage.

There's another major issue in this passage, two more. And they are big, but we're going

to have to deal with them briefly because of our time restraints. And that is the Calvinist issue on the one hand, and the Roman Catholic issue.

There's some very strong Calvinist proof texts in this passage, better than anywhere else in the rest of the Gospels for Calvinism. Now, I admit that they are good Calvinist proof texts. You might say, well, then you ought to be a Calvinist, shouldn't you, if there are good, strong Calvinist proof texts? Well, I would be if the rest of Scripture agreed with what Calvinism teaches.

The problem is, if we do allow the Calvinists to interpret these passages in the way that they understand them, then we're going to have trouble with other passages of Scripture, which would say seemingly the opposite. But since the bulk of Scripture elsewhere talks along different lines, we have to understand the passages here in line with what Jesus taught in other places and so forth. The verses I'm talking about that are relevant to Calvinism, there are four of them or five.

Verse 37, all that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out. Now, two Calvinist points are addressed here. One is irresistible grace.

If God gives you to Jesus, you will come to him. I mean, it's a prediction. It's not no ifs, ands, or buts.

You're going to do it. If you're one of the ones that God gave to Jesus, you will come to him. Now, verse 39.

Oh, the other issue in the same verse is perseverance or eternal security. I will not cast them out. Anyone who comes to me, I will not cast them out.

Which presupposes, I mean, it is made to presume that a person once saved will always be saved, because they won't be cast out. In verse 39, another verse. This is the will of the Father who sent me, that of all that he has given me, I should lose nothing.

Now, there we go. Eternal security again. All the ones that God has given him will come to him, and it's the will of God that he doesn't lose any of them.

And since the Calvinist believes God's will is always done, then of course Jesus will never lose any of them. Verse 44 is another verse. This is a very important one.

This is for the first Calvinist point of total depravity. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And the word draws is said to mean in the Greek drags.

The same Greek word actually is used in other contexts in the book of Acts when Paul was dragged before the council and so forth. So, it is quite probably correct to say that drags is not a bad translation here. Now, of course, this would seem to support total

depravity and irresistible grace.

Those of you who are not that familiar with the Calvinist points realize that total depravity teaches not only that man before he is saved is totally depraved, but that he is totally unable to do anything toward God. He can't even respond to God unless God puts the response in him. And this is a good verse for that.

No one can come to me. That seems to be a good old theology of inability. You can't do it.

You can't come to Christ unless you are dragged to him by the Father. And that very dragging suggests irresistible grace, which is the fourth point of Calvinism. God drags people irresistibly.

They can't resist him. Then you've got verse 45, near the end there. Therefore, everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

Which suggests that, again, if the Father teaches you, you'll come to Jesus. And that seems to be God's prerogative to do or not. Then verse 65, the last one, he repeats one of the things he said earlier.

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. So you can't come to Christ. It's an inability, unless God grants it to you to come.

And he drags you to him. And all these are good, strong proof texts of three of the cardinal points of the five Calvinist points. Total depravity, irresistible grace, perseverance or eternal security.

These things seem to be taught in these passages. Now, I think it was during the summer I talked about Calvinism. Or was it earlier this year? Were you here? Okay, then you guys have been here.

I don't need to go through it again. We've spent time on other occasions talking about why I believe the scripture teaches otherwise than the Calvinist propositions. But I will say this, I'll grant them this.

If we had no other scripture, these scriptures could incline us to these views. But since we do have other scriptures, scriptures that do talk about people falling away, warning against falling away and so forth. Talking about blaming people who did not respond to God when they should have.

The scripture's full of this kind of stuff. One must question whether the Calvinists are seeing this quite rightly. Now, in my opinion, all these verses can be seen as true.

I love these verses, frankly. I've known them all my life and cherish them. They're great

verses.

But it's not necessary to see them quite in as strong a way as the Calvinists do. And especially if other scriptures would lead us to modify the strong view they take. All that the Father gives me will come to me.

Well, who does the Father give to Jesus? Well, look at John chapter 17 and verse 6. In John 17.6, Jesus makes another reference to those who God has given him. John 17.6, I have manifested your name to the men whom you have given me. Out of the world.

They were yours. And you gave them to me. Now, the ones that God gave to Jesus were the ones that were already God's people.

There was a believing remnant in Israel that were already God's people before Jesus ever appeared in history. And God, because these people were God's people, he gave them to Jesus. That is, he transferred their ownership, as it were, from... They were already God's people because of them being part of the believing remnant of Israel.

And when Jesus came, God turned them over to him. God gave them to Jesus. Jesus says, they were yours and you gave them to me.

The fact that he says, they were yours, meaning before he gave them to Jesus, shows that these were people who were already the people of God. We're not talking about depraved sinners who are lost and God gives them to Jesus. He didn't give any lost people to Jesus.

He gave his own people to Jesus. The people who would have been God's had Jesus not come. The people who would have been the believing remnant of Israel are the ones that were given over to Jesus.

Of course, Jesus called some to be that, who were not currently doing that, but they were people like Matthew, tax collector, and so forth, and the woman taken in adultery, those kind of people. They... God would have reached them some way or another, but it happens he reached them through Jesus. They were people who were God's people, and God had the right to give them to Jesus.

But to say that people who are not God's people, that God just kind of sovereignly gives some of them to Jesus, we don't have any place in the scripture that would suggest that. And when he says in verse 37, the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out, that just means he won't cast them out. He'll accept anyone who comes, but that doesn't mean they'll stay.

He says in verse 39, This is the will of the Father who sent me, that of all he has given me, I should lose nothing. Well, it's the will of God that Jesus should not lose any. But God's will is not always done.

It's also God's will that none should perish, but that all should come to eternal life, that all should come to repentance. The Bible says that too. It's God's will for one thing, but his will is not always done.

In fact, Jesus even said concerning the ones that God had given him, that one of them had fallen away. In John chapter 17. Let me see here.

Don't want to take too much time. He talks about Judas in John 17, and he says he hasn't lost any of those except the son of perdition. If you find the verse that says that, get it for me.

It's right around here. It's John 17. Oh, it's verse 12.

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name. Those whom you gave me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, with one exception, except the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled. Now, in John 6, he said, It's not the will of God that any of those that he's given Jesus should be lost.

He says, this is my Father's will, that of those he gave me, I should lose none. I should lose nothing. But he lost one anyway.

So, the fact that God has given them Jesus does not guarantee that none are going to be lost. It's just not God's will that any of them should be lost. His will is not always done perfectly by man.

Man has a will too. And then, of course, in verse 44, John 6, 44. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him or even drags him.

I've got no problem with that, but I don't understand that of irresistible grace. God was said to have drawn Israel. In Hosea, chapter 14, he says, I drew them with cords of compassion, but they resisted him and they rebelled.

So, even when God's dragging you, I believe that no one will become a Christian unless God's been at work a long time on them in various ways. They may not have noticed it early on, but by exposing them to the gospel, working on their conscience, convicting them by the spirit, sometimes working in their circumstances to make them unsatisfied the way they are, so that they'll start reaching out to him. God is definitely sovereignly at work in people's lives before they come to him.

And once they come to him, they can often look back and say, how many ways God was dragging me to himself? How many ways God was drawing me to himself? But that doesn't guarantee that I couldn't have said no. In Hosea, chapter 14, or maybe I'm thinking of, no, chapter 11, excuse me. Hosea, chapter 11.

In verse 4, it says, I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love. It's like he's got

them chained with chains of love. And I was to them as those who take the yoke from the neck, and I stooped and fed them.

Et cetera. But he goes on and talks about, in verse 7, but my people are bent on backsliding from me. Though they call me the most high, none of them exalts him.

So, I mean, here he drew them, but that didn't guarantee their obedience. God may draw you. If you come to Christ, it's guaranteed God drew you.

But if he's drawing you, that's no guarantee you're going to come. Everyone who comes was drawn. But not everyone who's drawn comes.

That's, I think, a deduction that must be made in the passage. And then, of course, verse 45. At the end of verse 45, everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

It doesn't mean that the Father sovereignly teaches and learns and teaches everyone he wants to. There's many people who don't learn when God's trying to teach them. The prophets complain about this incessantly, how God's trying to teach them the right way, and they don't learn.

They're like obstinate animals that never learn. They're like stubborn donkeys or whatever. They're compared with various creatures that don't learn well.

And so, I mean, to say that, you know, sure, the one who listens to God will come to Jesus. No question about that. But the decision to listen or not is a decision that persons have to make for themselves.

God doesn't decide that. He gives them a chance to hear. He speaks so they can decide to listen or not.

But the ones who do hear and who learn from the Father do come to Jesus. Now, what I'm saying is all of these verses, taken one way, could support Calvinist notions. And they do provide some of the very strongest proof text for Calvinist positions.

But when you look at them, you know, a second time, they don't necessarily say those things. And there are some passages that would seem to contradict the Calvinist interpretation of them. To say that if you're drawn by God to Jesus, you can't be lost.

But Judas was given by God to Jesus, and he was lost. Jesus said so himself. He's lost one of them.

And the ones that God gave him were not necessarily people who were resistant to God. They were people who were already gods. They were yours, and you gave them to me, he says.

So, really, the information in these verses does not support the Calvinist views. If the rest of the Bible did, I'd be glad to interpret them that way. But it seems to me the rest of the Bible very strongly resists Calvinist presuppositions.

Anyway, that's my understanding. There's one other issue that we need to deal with. We can deal with it somewhat briefly, but we could deal with it at length if we had the time.

The clock doesn't say so, but the tape recorder says we have about 11 minutes. I don't know if we'll take that long, but let me try to work it out. The Roman Catholic use of this passage.

In the passage about, well, right from near the beginning, Jesus talks about his flesh being given to the world. He gives his flesh to the world. Then he starts talking about the need for people to eat his flesh.

And that bothers people. He says in verse 48, I am the bread of life. Then he says in verse 50, this is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread, verse 51, which came down from heaven. If anyone eats 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.

And the Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, how can this man give his flesh to eat? And it stumbled them, rightly so. They weren't allowed to eat human flesh. And it really bugged them.

And then he goes on, and he doesn't soften it. If anything makes it worse, he starts talking about blood too. And Jews couldn't even eat animal blood, much less human blood.

And Jesus said in verse 53, 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. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

This is very offensive to the Jews. It's not even that easy for us. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on me will live because of me. Now, he begins to talk about eating himself, drinking his blood. And there's a very strong temptation, and many have succumbed to this temptation, to look forward to the Last Supper, when Jesus breaks the bread and says, this bread is my body, which is broken for you.

Eat it. This cup is the New Testament, my blood. Drink ye all of it.

And say, well, that's what Jesus is talking about. He's talking about to have eternal life in you, you have to eat his flesh and drink his blood. Therefore, one must take communion.

One must take the Eucharist. Now, Catholics are not the only persons who tend this way in reading this passage. But it is much more an article of faith to the Roman Catholics than to anyone else.

Because the Roman Catholic religion bases salvation very largely around the participation in the Mass. And the Mass is the sacred meal in which the wafer, the host, becomes the body of Christ, the flesh of Christ, when it's blessed by the priest or whatever, I don't know at what point it does, I guess it's there when it's blessed, and the cup is the blood. And I was listening to a Catholic theologian the other day on a tape.

I mentioned a Presbyterian guy who converted to Catholicism. He was trying to convince us Protestants to do the same. He was talking about this.

And he was saying, Jesus made it very clear. You have to eat his flesh and drink his blood. Therefore, you have to be part of a holy Roman Catholic church so that you can do so.

Because the Protestants don't even believe that the wafer is the body of Jesus or that the cup is the blood of Jesus. See, of course, Protestants believe that whole ceremony is symbolic. But the Roman Catholics think something mystical, something supernatural happens in the Mass so that the actual body of Jesus is being consumed and the actual blood of Jesus is being drunk by the participants.

And one of the best verses for intimidating people to succumb to this is here in verse 53, where Jesus said to them, Moses, surely I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. And in the context, eternal life is the life he's been talking about this whole time. So you don't have eternal life unless you eat his flesh and drink his blood.

And if that means taking the Eucharist, taking communion, then the person who doesn't do that isn't saved. Now, of course, it doesn't say how often. Even in the passages that do talk about the Lord's Supper, it doesn't say how often it's to be done.

Shortly after the time of Christ, the Church apparently began to do it weekly. And of course, the Catholic Church and some others still do it on a weekly basis on Sunday. In fact, I think the Roman Catholic Church offers a daily Mass, do they not? And some denominations, Protestants, do it once a month.

Some do it four times a year. And some do it not at all. Now, it used to be quite common for the Popes to say that there's no salvation outside the Roman Catholic Church.



Since the Protestant Reformation has had such enormous success, that is, so many people have succeeded in breaking away from Catholicism, and since the Catholics want to draw the lost sheep back into the fold, they don't want to sound so harsh. The intimidation doesn't work on Protestants that well. So they have been saying lately, essentially, that there is salvation outside the Catholic Church.

This guy on this tape and other Catholics I've met recently say, I say, well, you think I'm not saved because I'm not in the Catholic Church? They say, oh, we never say a thing like that, you know. We believe the Catholic Church is right, but that doesn't mean you can't be saved outside of it. Really? The Popes, who are supposed to be infallible, used to say that.

The Popes made it very plain on previous occasions that there's no salvation apart from submission to the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church. But even if the Popes hadn't said that, Jesus said that, if they're interpreting correctly this chapter. Because Jesus said, if you don't eat my flesh and drink my blood, and if the Roman Catholics are right, that means take the Eucharist from the hand of the priest.

If you don't do that, you have no eternal life in you. And if you separate yourself from the Roman Catholic Church, so that you're not participating in the Mass, you don't have any eternal life in you. I mean, to say, I mean, they're talking on both sides of their mouths, really.

I mean, on the one hand, they really do believe you can't be saved without taking the Eucharist and without, you know, being in the Church. But because that sounds so harsh and narrow, many Catholics say, well, that's not really our belief. But if they're going to argue that eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus is, in fact, participation in the Roman Catholic Eucharist, then, according to Jesus, you don't participate, you're not alive.

You're dead. You've got no life in you. That's what Jesus said.

Now, on the other hand, Protestants have often said that Jesus was speaking symbolically. What is the evidence for this? Is Jesus speaking literally or symbolically here? Well, first of all, there's plenty of evidence that he was speaking symbolically. For one thing, the disciples themselves had not yet taken communion with Christ in the Upper Room.

They wouldn't for yet another year or so after this. They had never eaten of the flesh or drunk of the blood of the Son of Man at this point in time. And yet what he says is, in verse, for example, in verse 47, Most assured I say to you, he who believes in me has, present tense, has eternal life.

And also, verse 54, whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. Now, in

some of the other passages, he says, will have or can have or whatever. But in a couple of places, he talks about people who are within his listening audience right there, some of them already have eternal life.

They are said to be the ones who are eating, present tense, verse 54, his flesh, and present tense, drinking his blood. Well, he hadn't offered it to them in the Upper Room at this point, but he says, anyone who is eating my flesh and drinking my blood has, right now, eternal life. Which suggests that whatever he means by eating his flesh and drinking his blood is something some of them were already doing and already participating in eternal life as a result of it.

And we can be sure they weren't taking any Eucharistic meals at this point. Now, another consideration is in verse 63. Jesus said, it is the Spirit who gives life.

The flesh profits nothing. Now, the flesh profits nothing. We can take that out of context and talk about, well, human effort doesn't profit anything.

It's only what's done through the Spirit of God. It's not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit to save the Lord. That's not what Jesus is talking about.

In the context, the flesh, he's been referring to it as his flesh, his body. Eating the body of Jesus physically isn't going to profit you anything. Being a cannibal and eating human flesh doesn't profit.

The life he's talking about is spiritual. It's the Spirit who gives life, not the flesh. The words I speak to you, they are Spirit, they are life.

Now, the words he's speaking are spiritual in nature, not literal. He's given us a key right there. Don't take me literally.

I'm speaking spiritual words. The words I'm speaking are Spirit and they're life. It's the Spirit who gives life, not eating my flesh literally.

The flesh doesn't profit anything. It's the Spirit who gives life, and my words are Spirit, and my words are life. You've got to eat my words to have life.

Okay? Verse 63. Now, one other consideration here. And that is this.

He doesn't leave this in any suspense as to what he means by eating his flesh and drinking his blood because he makes parallel statements. For example, way back in verse 27, he told them to labor for the food that endures to everlasting life. And when he was asked what that labor was in verse 29, he said, it's to believe.

If you believe, then you've done what is necessary to obtain eternal life. Okay? Now, look at verse 54. We looked at it a moment ago.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. But look up at verse 47. Most assuredly I say to you, whoever believes in me has eternal life.

Eating his flesh and drinking his blood is parallel to believing in him or in his words because he says the words I speak to you, they are spirit and their life is a spirit that gives life. Believing his words. That's eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

Now, there's plenty on that. The word eat is used many times in this passage. In verse 50, verse 51, verse 53, verse 54, verse 56, 57, 58.

And drink is used a few times. Verse 35 and in verses 53 through 56. But those are parallel to places where he says believe, come, and abide.

In verse 35, he said, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger. He who believes in me shall never thirst.

Now, ordinarily you have to eat to assuage hunger and drink to assuage thirst. But he says it's coming to me and believing in me that alleviates this hunger. There's eating and drinking of me is coming to me and believing in me.

Now, I would make this final. And by the way, abiding in him too. Verse 56.

He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides.