

**Eating and Drinking**  
1 Corinthians 11:23-26  
January 17, 2010

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1 Corinthians 11:23-26 23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The central worship in the Christian life focuses on suffering, specifically the suffering of Jesus, the Christ. We eat bread that has been broken apart to remember the broken body of Jesus. We drink wine that is dark and red, representing the blood that left the body of Jesus. We do this to remember His suffering. But we eat and we drink this. Why? Is it because we are cannibalistic? Is it because we like to imagine ingesting human flesh and blood? Of course not. Is it because taking bread and wine into the body can give us spiritual benefits? No. It cannot. There is no spiritual healing that comes from food or drink.

We eat to remember. We drink to remember. The suffering is what we remember when we eat and drink. The sacrifice is what we remember when we eat and drink. Today, I'd like us to examine a little more closely the sacrifice of Jesus' body and blood for our behalf. To do this, I'd like us to look at another passage:

John 6:51-58 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." 52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" 53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."

## True Food and Drink

Jesus says He is living bread that comes from heaven. Centuries before Jesus, God had supplied the needs of the Jews with Manna, bread that came from the sky. Bread from heaven they called it. But it was not living bread. It was dead bread. The bread didn't walk or talk or have a spirit. It was just bread. And when you ate it, it kept you alive for a little while. But in the long run, you still died.

Not so with Jesus. Jesus says, "I'm not dead manna. I'm living bread. I'm better than manna. Eat of this bread, and you will never die." He is the bread of the spirit. But that doesn't mean that the bread that He gives is only spiritual. It is His actual body that He is offering. The body of Jesus is true food, the blood true drink. Why? It is because they are not symbolic. They are real. His real body and His real blood were sacrificed. The bread Jesus gives is His flesh. He's not just offering an entirely spiritual transaction. There is real flesh and blood that must be sacrificed. Of course, the leaders of the Jews and many of the people were very put out by this statement. How can it be that He will give His flesh for food? Who ever heard of such a thing? That's strange, but Jesus didn't back off. He said, "I mean it, if you do not eat this flesh and drink this blood, then you have no life. Who ever feeds on this flesh and drinks the blood has life, eternal life. That life will be raised up on the last day. Do you want to live forever? Do you want to go to heaven? How are you going to get there? There is only one way, says Jesus. Eat of Him.

Then He says this: "My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink". Here is where can easily get confused. We know that when we celebrate the Lord's Supper we are ingesting wheat and wine as symbols of His body. We are not eating His actual body. You can't eat His actual body. I mean, if you had to put His flesh in your mouth, there wouldn't be enough to go around. And anyway it's gross. And it would be sin, cannibalism.

Yet, Jesus is here insisting that His actual physical body and blood are the food and drink. How can this be? The Roman church, as the centuries went on, developed a doctrine that said that we are to physically eat His physical flesh and that when a priest prays over the bread and wine it becomes the body and blood of Jesus. It just doesn't taste like it. If this were true, it would be a way of explaining how Jesus' actual physical body could be food. But this is not right. The error the Roman church is making is in thinking that Jesus, because He was talking about His body and blood being true food and drink, that they were to be consumed by flesh and blood. Not so. No, His flesh is food for the Spirit. In His body, the Spiritual world and the physical world are reconciled. His body, His physical body had to die. But His spirit did not, for He was without sin. Then, because His Spirit was without sin, His physical body was not allowed to undergo decay, but was raised from the dead. So, in the body of Jesus, the Spirit met the flesh, and overcame the death of the flesh.

When He says, "My body is true food, and my blood is true drink," He is saying, "Listen, my actual body will suffer. My actual body is the food for your soul. My blood is the drink for your soul." He's saying, "This isn't the physical manna that comes down from the sky and you eat it and your physical body lives. No, this is the physical body that goes to the grave and rises again and if you eat it, you will live also, body and spirit."

## The Mechanical and the Practical

But you might wonder how does the body and blood of Christ become life for us? How does His dying give us life? Those questions have two answers. First, the mechanical, how does it work that His sacrifice gives life? The second is practical, how to eat of the body and drink of the blood?

First the mechanical: His body is real food because on it He bore the suffering and sickness and sin of us all:

Isaiah 53:3-6 3 He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he has borne our grief's and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The man Christ Jesus, perfect and holy, bore all the sadness, all the sorrow, all the mourning of this sad earth. He bore all of our sin and the curse of our sins. He bore our guilt, our punishment, our shame. He bore on His body all the death, and mourning, and panic and disease, and pain that come from our sin. He was a man of sorrow. His physical body bore the sins of us all.

“He, who knew no sin, became sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God.” He who knew no sin, became the sin, and suffered, so that we could become righteous. You see, in His death is our righteousness. In His suffering is our peace. You cannot spare His suffering and be saved. There was no way to save you and me from our sins, our spiritual sins, except for Him to suffer in our place. That is the mechanics of it.

Second, the practical;

Jesus said in order to gain the benefit of what He did on the cross; you must eat His flesh and drink His blood. How do we do that? It is not in eating bread and drinking wine, for those are symbols of remembrance. The food was indeed His flesh and blood, but how can we eat and drink that? Jesus gave us the answer back in John chapter 6. After Jesus explained to the people that His body is true food and His blood true drink, many people stopped following Him. It was just too much for them. But others, they wanted to have this food and drink. And they asked for it. His response to them gives us the practical way to eat the bread and drink the wine.

John 6:34-35 34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread." 35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst".

Here He tells how to eat and drink. To come to Him is to eat of His flesh. To believe in Him is to drink of His blood. In your life, you must decide what you will do. Will you eat of the flesh that suffered and died for your sorrows and sins? If so, you will come to Jesus. But to come to Him; what does that mean? What does it mean to come to anyone? It means to leave where you are and go to another place. To come to Jesus, you leave your life and go to Him. To eat of Jesus is to stop walking in the direction you choose and begin to walk where He goes. Then, to believe in Him is to drink of His blood. You're not drinking blood of course, but you are getting the benefit that His physical blood, spilled for you, offers. Believe. Believe means to love Him; to be a true believer. Adore Him. Want Him. Serve Him. Work for Him. Believe. That's how you do it. You eat the flesh and drink the blood by coming to Jesus and believing in Him. Come to Him now, sinful and sorrowful human being. Leave your life and come to Him. Love Him, trust Him, and believe in Him. On that Cross, He suffered and that suffering was for you.

#### Take Note

So then, if coming to Jesus and believing in Him is eating His flesh and drinking His blood that means that taking communion is not how we eat the flesh of Jesus nor drink His blood. It is what we do to remember His suffering and to declare it. And declaring the suffering of Christ is the work that concerns us. This is the great work of the people of God. We go through the world, in the cities, in the homes, in the streets, and declare the suffering of the Christ for the sins of the world.

What is the message that is needed in this world where children die, and the elderly are in pain? What is the message needed where governments oppress and earthquakes kill? It is this: the suffering of this life has a remedy, that is, that Jesus, the Christ, bore our suffering and sin as a sacrifice. We do not receive a healthy sacrifice but a beaten and bruised one, one that suffered like we do, and bore that on His body so that He could free all men's bodies from the effects of sin.

This world needs to know that God became man and died. This is the highest expression of love. This is the way of salvation for all who will believe. This is the way of eternal life. We proclaim the death of our Lord through the communion. But we eat of Him through faith.