

# Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life

## (John 6:48-69)

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In the chapter 6 of the Gospel of John, Jesus said:

***“I am the bread of life.*** Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; ***if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.***”

Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” 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 yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. 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 eats Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.” (John 6:48-58, emphasis added)

In verse 60 we see that many of Jesus’ disciples found this to be a hard teaching, and one they could not accept. Jesus knew that they were grumbling among themselves about this teaching, and He responded by saying:

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. And He was saying, “For this reason I

have said to you, that ***no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.***” (John 6:63-65, emphasis added.)

As the passage continues, we see that as a result of His teaching in verses 48-58, many of Jesus' disciples turned back and followed Him no more. Jesus then turned to the twelve and asked them if they also wanted to leave. Peter responded by saying: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:68-69)

So within this passage of John 6:48-69, we see two very different responses to the word of God. Many could not understand or accept Jesus' teaching, as difficult as it was. But to Peter and the others (except for Judas, who would later betray Him), God had revealed that Jesus was in fact the Christ, the Holy One of God, and there was no one else to whom they could go for the words of eternal life. (See also Matthew 16:17.)

As we read this passage, we might wonder why Jesus chose to present His message using metaphors that would be so difficult for many to understand and accept. Why did He choose to use such symbolism when He said that unless we ate His flesh and drank His blood, we would have no life in us? Why did He not just use plain language that everyone could understand to communicate His message to the crowds? Did He not want everyone to be able to understand His message?

The answer to these questions is given to us in Matthew 13. After Jesus had given the teaching of the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:1-9, His disciples asked Him why He spoke to the crowds in parables. Jesus answered them saying: “***To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.***” (Matthew 13:11).

So Jesus taught the same message in Matthew 13:11 that He taught in John 6:65. It has only been granted to God's elect, those whom Jesus calls His sheep, to be able to come to Him and to hear and understand His words. To all of the others it has not been granted. (Consider also Matthew 13:9, 23).

As we are studying Jesus' teaching in this passage of John 6, we could also consider John 10:24-26. In this passage we read that some Jews had gathered around Jesus and asked Him not to keep them in suspense, but to tell them plainly if He was indeed the Christ.

Jesus replied to them saying that He had already told them, and that the miracles He had done among them in His Father's name them bore witness to His claim that He was in truth the Christ. And then Jesus told them: "***But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.***" (John 10:26, emphasis added). It has only been granted to God's elect, or those whom Jesus referred to as His sheep, to believe in Him.

Notice that Jesus did not say to them they were not His sheep because they had decided for themselves not to believe, but conversely, He said that the reason they did not believe in Him was because they were not His sheep. Only those who belong to God, or those whom Jesus calls His sheep, will hear His voice (John 10:3-4, 10:27). ***All the rest will not be able to hear*** (John 6:44, 6:65, 8:43, 8:47, 10:25-26).

As God's elect, it has been granted to us to come to Jesus and to understand His teachings. This understanding often does not come instantaneously as we first read a particular passage of the Bible, but many times it will come over the course of years and decades, as God reveals His truth to us in His time.

Even as believers, we ourselves might struggle with Jesus' teaching in this passage of John 6. However, when any genuine believer is confronted with teaching in the Bible that is hard to understand or accept, they will not turn back from following Jesus as so many will, but they will respond along the same lines as Peter did when he said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:68-69).

When we have questions about what we have read in the Bible, we should look to other passages of Scripture to provide light for us and help with our understanding. As we attempt to understand what Jesus meant in this passage when He said that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood to have eternal life, we can go to John 1 for additional insight.

In John 1:1 we read: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And in John 1:14 we read: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

***With John 1:1 and 1:14 in mind, we can see that to feed on the Bread of Life, or to "eat the flesh" and "drink the blood" of Jesus Christ, is to feed on His***

*word*. Every genuine believer knows what it is like to read the word of God and to be comforted, encouraged, edified, and nourished in our spirit. We know what it is like to draw life from the Word of God, because it has been granted to us to come to Jesus (John 6:37, 65). It has been granted to us to understand His words (Matthew 13:9,11, 23). It has been granted to us to feed on the bread of life, the Word of God.