

“A Repulsive Command of Jesus”

John 6:53 NIV

“Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”

This statement by Jesus offended most people of his time.

This saying bothers many folks today.

No wonder folks scowl and raise their eyebrows.

It seems to contradict Genesis 9:3, 4:

“Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood in it.”

Along comes Jesus saying:

“My flesh is real food, and my blood is real drink.”

The idea of eating flesh with blood disturbed me.

But the thought of eating human flesh really bothered me.

Some of us love escargot and maybe some chocolate covered ants, but cannibalism, “No!”

Yet Jesus said that his flesh is real food and his blood is real drink.

Not milk. Not beef or pork.

Not chicken or turkey. Not even veggies.

His flesh and blood.

Some think Jesus spoke of something else here.

I have an unpublished manuscript on Communion.

Some old friends from the Hollywood church critiqued the book for me.

One of them asked me why I didn’t use this passage among the many in the *New Testament* that refer to Communion.

I reviewed every other Scripture in the NT referring to the Lord’s Table.

I left this John 6 text out because I’m not sure it refers directly to Communion.

So what does this “bothersome” text mean?

Jesus unequivocally said:

“Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”

Most people love to eat.

During my teen years, doughnuts and hamburgers kept me going.



When I traveled on an oil company expense account, I began eating fancier food; my waistline showed it.

Later, because the Hollywood church accepted folks of all backgrounds, we acquired a taste for many ethnic foods.

We ate Thai, Greek, Korean, Nigerian, New England, Moroccan, Chinese (in Hunan, Mandarin, Cantonese and Szechuan style),

Japanese, Lebanese, Italian, French, Armenian, German, Russian, English, Irish, Swedish, Kosher, Viet Nameese, Mexican, Middle-Eastern, Philippine, Soul, Southern style, Texas style, Western style, a lot we couldn't identify, and much we wish we hadn't eaten.

Now, ethnicity of the food doesn't matter to me as long as it's dark chocolate.

A baseball game in a former cornfield made Iowa the center of attention last week.

Who hasn't heard the lines:

“Is this heaven?” “No it's Iowa.”?

Today's text is about heavenly bread.



Two types of bread from heaven.

God provided the first kind of bread c. 1450 BC.

Led by Moses, the Israelites left Egypt and spent 40 years in the wilderness being tested by God.

That huge group of people suffered food shortages.

In typically human fashion, the Israelites complained that they were hungry.

They beefed a lot.

Exodus 16:13-16 NIV says: “That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.

When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor.

“When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. This is what the LORD has commanded: “Each one is to gather as much as he needs. Take an omer (about two quarts) for each person you have in your tent.””

Except on Sabbath days, that stuff appeared every morning for forty years.

Whatever it was, folks could boil it or bake it.

Exodus 16:31 NIV: “The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.”

Folks speculate about what it was.

Nothing fully fits the biblical description.

God supplied the food.

When the Israelites first saw the stuff, they said, “What????”

The Hebrew word for “**what**” sounds like the English word “**man.**”

That's how the expression “manna**” originated.**

“Manna” means, “What the heck is that stuff?”

The Lord told them: “that stuff you call ‘what’ or ‘manna’ will be your bread until you reach the Promised Land.”

About 28 AD, Jesus reminded his countrymen:

“Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died,” (John 6: 49).

“Manna” was the first bread from heaven.

Much better “food” came later.

Jesus fed people 5,000 and 6000 at one time.

Those folks liked to eat as well as we do.

Early in his ministry, Jesus served good bread and fish, and one day, excellent wedding wine.

No one went away hungry or thirsty.

People love free food.

In fact, Jesus told the folks: You’re here because you, “ate loaves and had your fill,” (John 6:26).

Free stuff makes government programs popular.

Folks can devour all the chips and beer they want and don’t even have to work for them.

Jesus offered something better than free food:

“I am the bread of life,” he said,

“He who comes to me will never go hungry.”

Sounds good, doesn’t it?

Many love the idea of someone taking care of them.

But Jesus meant something else when he said:

“I am the bread that came down from heaven.”

Jesus meant that he came from God.

As the Gospel of John says: “He was God . . . and was with God in the beginning,” (John 1:1, 2).

Critics scoffed: “We know him and his parents.”

They began grousing about Jesus.

They grumbled “about him because he said, ‘I am the bread that came down from heaven.’”¹

“Who does he think he is?”

“We know his parents, Joseph and Mary.

There’s nothing special about them. They’ve got a bunch of kids just like everyone else.”

Jesus’ critics didn’t check very well.

Had they looked at the facts, they would have found two vital details.



1. Jesus’ behavior was different.

If you investigate other religious teachers you’ll find they don’t always practice what they preach.

“‘Tis not the dying for a faith that’s so hard, . . . every man of every nation has done that—‘tis the living up to it that’s difficult.”²

Norma and Janice spoke to a woman from a nearby town who expressed admiration for me.

The woman is bright, attractive, well educated, has a great husband, and a nice family.

She said something to the effect that,

“Bob is the next thing to God.”

¹ Verses in red are all from John chapter 6.

² William Makepeace Thackeray, *Henry Esmond*, 1852

**Janice straitened her out responding,
“I know better than that. He’s my dad.”**

Norma knows far more faults than Janice does.

Though early in his ministry, Jesus’ family did not believe in him, they later became convinced of his divinity.

**If your kinsfolk consider you faultless,
You’re probably very special.**

Jesus behaved consistently with what he said.

He was God manifested in the flesh—the true bread of God, who “comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world,” (John 6:33).

2. Jesus came from God, is Divine, will return to Judge us, and he demands absolute loyalty.

Recall Jesus’ reply when the devil wanted him to turn stones into bread?

“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”

Jesus taught God’s Word and lived God’s Word.

He personified God’s word.

When I first went out for football in high school, the coaches made many demands.

They wanted us to make good grades.

“Get to bed early,” they insisted.



“Every hour of sleep before midnight is worth two hours after twelve,” the head coach said. They expected us to take wrestling on the off-season.

- **Eat right and stay in shape.**
- **Run. Run.**
- **Follow orders.**
- **“Take your bruises” and “Hang tough.” They demanded total commitment.**

Mess up and you ran extra laps round the track. Coaches usually want players to eat, sleep, drink, and totally commit to the program.

That’s what I think Jesus meant when he said:

“Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”

“Living in heaven eternally with me requires total commitment.”

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it,” (Matthew 10:37-39 NASB).

- **We give him first priority.**
- **We learn his word.**

In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter quoted from the prophet *Joel* (Acts 2:17), from *Psalms* 16 (2: 25) and from *Psalms* 110 (2:34).

In Romans chapter 10, Paul quoted the *Old Testament* 12 times in 21 verses.

The Lord wants us to take Scripture into ourselves.

John 6: 54 NASB reads: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day.”

John used a different word for eat here: an active verb meaning *munching* and *crunching*.

We munch and crunch on God’s word as if it were potato chips or pretzels.



- **Eat flesh of Son of Man**

We’re talking exclusively Jesus.

Not some church leader; e.g. Calvin, Luther, etc.

The NT always exalts Christ.

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe,” (Hebrews 1:1-3 NIV).

1st We take Jesus into our being.

2nd We exalt Christ, not some person or church.

- **We Drink His Blood.**

Ironically, the Bible forbids consuming blood in any fashion (see Acts 15:19, 20, 29).

James and John had their mother, Mrs. Zebedee, request that her two boys sit on Jesus’ right and left hand in his kingdom.

Jesus asked the two boys: (Matthew 20:22 NIV) “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?”

Cup and blood mean suffering.

Some religious teachers say that once you come to Jesus, all your troubles end.

Jesus taught us otherwise:

“Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”

When the gospel train enters the tunnel of suffering, most people want off.

“He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”

I pray that we are all ready and willing to follow Jesus wherever he leads us.

He truly is the Son of God, God’s true witness.

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Only Jesus can give us new life.

Jesus: “I will raise him up at the last day.”

As the lyrics of the old hymn read:

“The way of the cross leads home.”