

# True Bread

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Study by W. D. Frazee—January 13,

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" John 6:53-58.

The setting of this Scripture is interesting. Jesus found Himself on a mountain by the sea of Galilee, and a great multitude gathered together. There were about five thousand men besides the women and children. They had come to be healed of their various infirmities and hear the Word of God. As the day wore on and the sun was nearing the western horizon, Jesus looked over that vast multitude and said to Philip, Where are we going to get some bread to feed these people? Jesus knew, but He wanted to test Philip. He wanted to see what Philip would say.

Philip said, Why thirty-five dollars wouldn't be enough.

I don't know why he picked thirty-five dollars. Perhaps that was what they had in the treasury. I suppose thirty-five dollars would fall short in feeding five thousand people. But Jesus, having tested the disciples, was pleased to have Andrew come and say, Well, there is a little boy here who has five little barley cakes and two fishes. That is all we have been able to find.

Jesus said, Bring those to Me. Having commanded the multitude to sit down upon the grass in groups of fifty, Jesus looked up to His Father with those five barley cakes and two fish in His hands and ask His Father to bless them.

God did bless them, and Jesus started breaking and giving to the disciples. They started going out here and there on that hillside, and one by one every man, woman, boy, and girl received some of that heavenly food. And when the meal was over there was more left than there was to begin with.

The multitude was thrilled. Here was somebody who knew how to do things. They said, Let's make Him king.

Jesus was already King of the universe. He hadn't come to this world to be king of Galilee or Judea. He had come to set up the kingdom of His grace in the hearts of men.

Seeing the popular enthusiasm, Jesus sent the multitude away. He told His disciples to go on to Capernaum, and He went up the mountain to pray.

How Jesus prayed for those people that they might see more than bread. How He prayed for His disciples that they would see more than an earthly kingdom.

As the hours of the night went by the disciples found themselves in a storm. Wearied, they saw a specter approaching across the water. Full of fear they cry out. But as Jesus passes by, walking on the sea, He said, It is I. Be not afraid. And they willingly received Him into the ship.

In the early morning many of the multitude seeking Jesus found Him at Capernaum. Going to the synagogue Jesus met them and presented the truth we have read in our text this morning.

He disappointed many of them. The day before they had eaten barley cakes. Today, He said, If you really want to live you must eat of me.

They said, As far as furnishing bread for one day, Moses fed our fathers for forty years with manna from heaven. Now what wonderful work are You going to do?

Yesterday they had been thrilled with the miracle. But today, as He urged spiritual truth upon their hearts, they are willing to argue, to bargain, to doubt.

Jesus said, Moses was not the one who gave you that bread from heaven.

Had Moses given the bread from heaven? Oh, no. My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. And while it is true that your fathers ate the manna for forty years, every one of them died. But here is bread, which if a man will eat of he will never die. And this bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world. The man that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has not merely earthly existence, but eternal life.

But the Jews fell into a discussion and controversy among themselves saying, How shall this man give us His flesh to eat? They chose to see in it only the most literal meaning.

But Jesus, seeking to fix the eyes of their understanding and faith upon Him as the source of life, said, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.

I would like to have us meditate on what Jesus means by this. However much we understand it, there are deeper depths and higher heights for us to enter into in the words that Jesus spoke to the multitude that day in Capernaum.

In order that we may appreciate these words more, let us go to Matthew and catch the echo of these words as the disciples are gathered in the upper room just before Gethsemane.

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" Matthew 26:26-28.

Doubtless the disciples recalled the words Jesus said in the synagogue at Capernaum. Notice how similar the language is. At Capernaum He said, You must eat my flesh, my body. You must drink my blood to have life. Here He said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you. Passing the cup He said, All of you drink of this cup, for it is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Whatever else Jesus meant in the synagogue He included the thought of the holy communion which He was to institute as a sacramental services among His followers. For as we come to the table of the Lord, we, in a very definite sense, eat of that bread concerning which He said, This is My body, and we drink of that cup which, in a very real sense, He said, This is My blood.

Those of you who are familiar with church history know that in the Roman Catholic apostasy there came to be a laterality attached to these words. They claim today that the priest has the power to actually change the wafer and wine into the body and blood, soul and divinity, of Jesus Christ. So the priest is extolled as one who has the power to create his Creator.

The great Protestant reformation rejected that as abominable. They recognized what Jesus said:

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" John 6:63.

In other words, if it were possible to transform the bread and the wine into the actual flesh and blood of physical Jesus, and partake of it, it would profit nothing.

So the Roman Catholic position is wrong. In the first place no man can create his Creator. No man can take a piece of bread and actually make it the physical body of Christ. But if he could, it would profit nothing. It would profit nothing to partake of the actual muscle and blood of Jesus.

I fear that as Protestants, in reacting and recoiling from that doctrine of the Roman church, we may back off too far and miss the great spiritual truth which Jesus is seeking to teach us. There is something here that is very essential.

The Roman Catholic is very anxious to participate in mass to receive that wafer which he believes, blessed by the priest, is actually the body of Christ. In fact, that is held as a great power over the people, for a Roman Catholic may not partake

of that unless he has been to confession. One of the great influences of the Roman church is the power of excommunication, because the one who is excommunicated cannot receive of the mass. Without that he has no life.

And while as Protestants we reject that false position, let us not lose sight of what Jesus is talking about. There is something in this bread, and there is something in this wine. Referring to our text we read that unless you eat that flesh of the Son of man, and unless you drink the blood you have no life in you.

Is there something essential about the eating of this bread and drinking of this cup? Or is it merely a memorial service? On the strength of Christ Himself, I say to you, there is life here. It is life that I need.

Someone says, How could the eating of some bread or the drinking of a little bit of grape juice affect ones spiritual life? How could one be stronger for having eaten, or weaker for having missed it?

Did you have breakfast? Did you have dinner yesterday? Are you stronger this morning for having partaken of food during the last twenty-four hours? Would you be weaker if you hadn't?

But you say, That is different.

Is it?

Sure, Brother Frazee. There is starch and protein in the grain and sugar in the fruit. It gets into the body and makes muscle and bone and brain, and gives energy with which to do things.

Yes, I have heard that. But I wonder who made it that way? I wonder who arranged that eating of bread makes brawn as well as brain? Looking into it scientifically we can only answer, God arranged it.

The elements that are in the bread are from the earth. But you and I can't take the earth and eat it. No, God has to grow the grain on the sunlit hillside. He has to grow fruit in the orchard, grapes in the vineyard. Then you and I partake of that and receive strength. I say it is God who arranges it. And when we eat bread and the other wonderful foods that God has given, we are simply receiving the life of God in the way that He has chosen to communicate that life to us.

Could God do it without that process of growing grain? That is what Jesus was seeking to show. He fed five thousand men with five little barley loaves. By His creative power He made the bread just like that. But ordinarily He lets it be over a period of days and weeks and months.

So He could make us strong physically just by His word. But ordinarily He lets us eat bread day by day, and thus we are strengthened day by day. It is none the less the life of God. We receive it as we do what He said to do. So at our tables day by day we take and eat the food through which He communicates His life.

That same God who has put life in the bread that we eat on our tables has put a special life in the bread which He blesses in the sacramental service and in the cup which He sanctifies for this service. He has put there a spiritual life for my soul. Do I want it? Do I need it? Can I be stronger by partaking of it? Conversely, will I be weaker if I miss it?

Let me illustrate it. At the door of the church stands the ordinance of baptism. Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" Matthew 28:19. What difference does it make whether I am baptized or not? Can't Jesus forgive my sins whether I am baptized or not? Can't I be a member of the church whether I am baptized or not? Can't I go to heaven whether I am baptized or not? Can't I be God's child here and hereafter whether I am baptized or not?

Dear friends, the question is not what could be. The question is what is. And what is is what God has established. God does not establish that which is unnecessary.

Do we believe that when a person is lowered into the baptismal grave, and that water flows over him, that there has been imparted to that water some mysterious property which cleanses the soul from the guilt of sin? Oh, no. We do not believe in holy water. But I tell you what we do believe. We believe the Word of God. And Jesus said:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" John 3:5.

What does the water represent? The life of Jesus covering our poor lives. Thus we see that while water in itself has no power to cleanse, it becomes the symbol of that wonderful cleansing blood of Jesus which is efficacious in freeing the soul from guilt.

Let's put it simply. When we do what God has told us to do, He does what we have asked Him to do. When we are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Jesus takes that ordinance of baptism and by His wonderful power makes it efficacious in the life.

So it is with this wonderful, sacramental service. As I eat of the bread I see in it the broken body of my blessed Lord. And mark it, just as that bread chewed in the mouth and digested in the stomach passes into the blood and becomes a part of me, so as I feed on Him in this emblem the spiritual life of Jesus enters into my life and makes me more like Him. Oh, I need that. I thank God that there is a church in this world which, by the authority of Jesus Christ, can take the communion bread and present it as the body of our Lord, and feeding upon it we receive His life, just as He, in the upper room, took the Passover bread, and blessing it made it the symbol of His body, and the means of communicating His life to those disciples.

The God who can take wheat, barley, and corn, and these other grains, and make it the medium of communicating the physical life can take this bread of the sacramental service and make it the means of communicating spiritual life.

How He does it I cannot explain. But I believe it, and thank God with all my soul.

As we surround the table of our blessed Lord, may we come discerning the body of Christ. May we come recognizing that in the symbol of the bread we see His body, and in the cup we discern His blood. And may the life which is offered us in those symbols be so desired by us that we shall come like hungry children to the Father's table saying, Yes, I am hungry. I need life.

And to all such the life of God is offered.

Precious Lord, we thank Thee for this view Thou hast given us of Jesus our Lord through Thy Word. We would discern His body. We would partake of His life. Turning from ourselves and all we have and are, we would cast our helpless souls upon the Lamb of Calvary.

We would gather at Golgotha. We would see where love and sorrow meet as our Lord gives His life for us. We would receive of His love. We would accept His sacrifice in our behalf. And thus we would gather new strength for the battle, new courage for the work ahead. We thank Thee in His name, Amen.

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