

John 6:52-71

Why were the Jews confused and argumentative (v. 52)? They were still thinking in terms of literal, physical bread and flesh. Their thoughts were unable to rise above the things of this life. They did not realize that the Lord Jesus was using physical things to teach spiritual truths. And so they asked among themselves how this mere Man could possibly give His flesh to be eaten by others (v. 51).

A parachute opens only after you jump out of the plane. Faith precedes sight and prepares your soul to understand, your heart to believe and your will to obey. All your questions of “How?” are answered by yielding to the authority of Christ, as Paul did when he cried, “Lord, what do You want me to do?”¹

When Jesus talked about eating His flesh and drinking His blood what was He talking about (vv. 53-57)? Jesus was introducing a metaphor for believing in Him, namely, eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Jesus was using physical things to teach spiritual truth. The idea of drinking blood was obviously repulsive to the Jews (Leviticus 17:10-14). Jesus’ hearers should have understood that He was speaking metaphorically, but this reference offended many.

By comparing v. 54 with v. 47, it can be definitely shown that to eat His flesh and to drink His blood means to believe in Him. In v. 47 we read that *“He who believes in Me has everlasting life.”* In v. 54, we learn that whoever eats His flesh and drinks His blood has eternal life. Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other.²

Some religions teach that in some miraculous way the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ and that in order to be saved, we must partake of those elements. But this is not what Jesus said. The context makes it quite clear that to eat of Him means to believe in Him. Augustine said, *“Believe and you have eaten.”*³ The New Testament presents the Lord’s Supper as a commemoration of Jesus’ death, not a means for obtaining eternal life.

Jesus warned them solemnly that if they did not eat His flesh and drink His blood, they would have no life in them. This could not refer to the bread and the wine used at the Lord’s Supper. When the Lord instituted His Supper, on the night in which He was betrayed, his body had not yet been broken and His blood had not yet been shed. The disciples partook of the bread and the wine, but they did not literally eat His flesh and drink His blood.

What was the reaction of many of the disciples (vv. 60, 66)? They rejected and abandoned Jesus when He told them things that were difficult to accept/understand. They limited their commitment to the ability of their finite minds to understand the infinite mind of Jesus.

Many of those who professed to be His disciples said, “This is a hard saying.” They meant that His teaching was offensive. It was not so much that it was hard for them to understand, as that it was distasteful for them to receive. When they said, “Who can understand it” they meant, “Who can stand and listen to such offensive doctrine?”⁴

What was Jesus saying in vv. 61-62? They took offense because He said that He had come down from heaven. Now He asked them.....if you think that was unbelievable, what will you think if you should see Me ascend back into heaven.....which He knew He would do after His resurrection.⁵

What did Christ mean in v. 63? These people had been thinking in terms of Christ's literal flesh, but here He told them that eternal life is not gained by eating flesh but by the work of the Holy Spirit. Flesh cannot give life, only the Spirit can do that. They have taken His words literally and have not realized that they are to be understood spiritually.

What did Jesus explain next (v. 65)? Now He explained that it was because of their unbelief (v. 64) that He had previously told them that no one could come to Him unless it were granted to him by His Father. Such words are an attack on the pride of man, who thinks that he can earn or merit salvation. The Lord Jesus told men that even the power to come to Him can only be received from God the Father.⁶

What did Jesus followers do next (v. 66)? These hard sayings of the Lord Jesus proved so distasteful to many who had followed Him that they now left Him and were no longer willing to associate with Him. These disciples were never true believers. They followed the Lord for various reasons, but not out of genuine love for Him or appreciation of who He was.⁷

What did Jesus ask the disciples (v. 67)? *"You do not want to leave too, do you?"*

How did the twelve disciples respond to Jesus question (vv. 68-69)? Peter's answer is worthy of note. He said in effect, "Lord, how could we leave You? You teach the doctrines which lead to eternal life. If we leave You, there is no one else to whom we could go. To leave You would be to seal our doom."

Speaking for the twelve, Peter further said that they had come to believe and know that the Lord Jesus was the *Messiah*, the Son of the living God. Notice again the order of the words "believe and know." First of all, they had put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then they came to know that He was indeed all that He professed to be.⁸

How will you handle the difficult-to-understand portions of scripture? The ones that are tough to reconcile. Will you become discouraged and abandon your faith?

What did Jesus prophecy (vv. 70-71)? The betrayal of Judas.

¹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1505.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 1506.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 1507.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.