



The St J's Group

John 6:25-60 - 'Eating flesh and drinking blood'

Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Talk Passage – John 6:25-59

25 When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

26 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. **27** Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

28 Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

29 Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

30 So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? **31** Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

32 Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. **33** For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

34 “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

35 Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. **36** But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. **37** All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. **38** For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. **39** And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

40 For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”

41 At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” **42** They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven?’”

43 “Stop grumbling among yourselves,” Jesus answered. **44** “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. **45** It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. **46** No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. **47** Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. **48** I am the bread of life. **49** Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. **50** But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. **51** I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

53 Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. **54** Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. **55** For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. **56** Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. **57** Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so

eternal life. All the Jews who ate the daily manna eventually died says Jesus but whoever receives Jesus Christ into their lives will live forever. When God gave the manna, he only gave a gift; but when Jesus came, He gave himself.

- Jesus and manna have much in common. The word manna translated into English means: “What is it?” That was certainly the question this ‘who are you’ group were asking about Jesus.

- Manna came in the night. Jesus has come to deal with our spiritual darkness. The manna was small representing Jesus’ humility, round representing his eternity and white representing his purity. It was sweet to the taste and it met the needs of the people adequately. Manna was given to a rebellious people. It was a gracious gift of God. All they had to do was to bend down and pick it up. If we want to receive forgiveness for our sins and live with Jesus into eternity then all we have to do is believe!

2.7 The ‘You must be joking’ group (6:52-58)

- Even more shocking than his claim to divinity was Jesus stating: “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them.” (6:53-56)

- All of those listening that day must have thought: Jesus you must be joking. The idea of eating flesh sounded cannibalistic and drinking any blood, let alone human blood, was repugnant and was forbidden by the law. (Leviticus 17:10-11).

- But like every other part Jesus’ teaching that day those listening were failing to understand Jesus. He was, of course, not talking about literal flesh and blood.

- Jesus was saying that when we eat food or drink liquid it becomes part of us and that this is an excellent picture of how we are to receive Jesus into our lives.

- When we become Christians the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our hearts.

- The Holy Spirit is, if you like, the ‘Bread of life’ inside us. Paul explains this brilliantly in his first letter to the Corinthians: ‘Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?’ (1 Corinthians 3:16)

- Do we live our lives as though God is living inside us?

2.8 Conclusion

- Five questions are asked of Jesus that day. Each question reveals a key insight into part of the those who were listening.

- Some were ‘eager for more’ others wanted to know ‘how to earn the miracle food.’

- Many wanted Jesus ‘to prove’ that he was the Messiah but all were shocked by Jesus claiming divinity and repulsed by his cannibalistic recommendations. It should come as no surprise therefore to hear the disciples say: *This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?* (6:60)

- And yet out of the lips of Simon Peter comes the following: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.” (6:68-9)

3. Questions to consider at home?

3.1 What had the ‘eager for more’ group got wrong?

3.2 ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.’ (6:29) How do we do this?

3.3 ‘I am the bread of life’ (6:35) Why is this such an explosive statement?

3.4 ‘Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. (6:53) What did Jesus mean by this statement?

3.5 Why did so many find Jesus’ teaching hard?

3.6 A friend asks you who you think Jesus is. How would you answer?

the one who feeds on me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” 59 He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. 60 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

2. Talk Notes

2.1 Introduction

- Have you ever considered that when you ask a question you reveal part of yourself to others?
- Five questions are asked of Jesus in our passage and each question reveals something about a group of people listening to him:
 - The ‘Eager for more’ group who ask: *“Rabbi, when did you get here?”* (6:25)
 - The ‘How do we earn it’ group who ask: *“What must we do to do the works God requires?”* (6:28)
 - The ‘Prove it’ group who ask: *“What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you?”* (6:30)
 - The ‘Who are you’ group who ask: *“Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven?’”* (6:42)
 - The ‘You must be joking’ group who ask: *“How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”* (6:52)
- What question would you want to ask Jesus today and which of the five groups do you best identify with?

2.2 Context

- Jesus is teaching a group of people who have gathered to listen to him. Given the size of the crowd this teaching probably started in the open just outside Capernaum (Jesus’ home town) and finished in the synagogue: *‘He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum’* (6:59)
- This teaching comes immediately after Jesus has performed the feeding of the 5,000.

2.3 The ‘Eager for more’ group (6:25-7)

- Impressed by what they have witnessed thus far the ‘eager for more’ group are excited to see what Jesus will do next.
- Jesus sees the hearts of this ‘eager for more’ group and reveals their true motives: *“Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. (6:26)*
- Jesus points out to this ‘eager for more’ group that there are two kinds of food: food for the body, which is necessary but not important; and food for the soul which is essential: *‘Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life.’* (6:27)
- As Christians we need spiritual food to survive.
- The Bible is our spiritual food and we need to ask ourselves whether we are feeding on the word of God. If we aren’t then maybe we are spiritually starved?

2.4 The ‘How do we earn it’ group (6:28-29)

- Hearing Jesus use the word ‘work’ in answer to the ‘eager for more’ group, Jesus flushes out another group in his audience the ‘How do we earn it’ group. They want to know how they can earn this miracle food from heaven that he has just produced: *“What must we do to do the works God requires?”* (6:28)
- Many of us have that little inner voice telling us that ‘nothing is free’ and that if we want something we are going to have to earn it.
- The only ‘work’ that Jesus wants us to do is to ‘believe’: *‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.’* (6:29)
- Satisfying God does not come from the work we do, but from whom we believe.
- Paul explains this brilliantly in his letter to the Ephesians: *‘For it is by grace you have*

been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.’ (Ephesians 2:8-9)

2.5 The ‘Prove it’ group (6:30-40)

- Probably the largest group in the audience listening to Jesus that day would have been those expectantly waiting for a Messiah. A new earthly king, like David, who would make Israel great again and end the occupation of Rome. Part of the reason that Jesus had so quickly slipped away following the feeding of the 5,000 was so that the crowd did not ‘jump the gun’ and make him king: *After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.* (John 6:14-15)
- Having calmed down a little this ‘prove it’ group now wants answers. They want Jesus to ‘prove’ whether he is the Messiah with yet another sign and they ask him: *“What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you?”* (6:30)
- Jesus responds by correcting them: *“Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. (6:32)*
- If they had but realised it *‘the true bread from heaven’* was standing there in front of them. Jesus’ audience was fixated on signs and physical bread satisfying their immediate worldly needs whereas Jesus was encouraging them to engage in the spiritual world and to see that God had indeed done something unique and different.
- Yes, the Messiah had indeed come, not as an earthly king but in the person of God’s own son. If only that ‘prove it’ group had listened carefully to what Jesus was saying they would indeed have had their answer.
- Jesus then makes a claim that would have shocked all those who were listening. A claim that we all need to carefully evaluate. Jesus says *“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (6:35)* Jesus knew what he was doing when he used the three letters: *‘I am’* or *‘YAHWEH’* Jesus was claiming to be divine, he is claiming to be God with human flesh on. The million dollar question is do we believe him?

2.6 The ‘Who are you’ group (6:41-51)

- Clearly a group listening to him then and many others down the centuries have asked themselves this question: *‘Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven?’”* (6:42).
- This group then and many others since have found the idea that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine difficult to understand. They knew Jesus the son of Joseph and Mary who had grown up in Nazareth but did they really know the whole story? Were they aware of where Jesus was born and that both Joseph and Mary knew Jesus was not a result of their union.
- We have the advantage of 2000 years of historical analysis but we too need to come to a conclusion about Jesus. Who he was and what he came to do.
- The one thing we cannot be in any doubt about is who Jesus thought he was and what he thought had come to do. He now makes this clear to those listening to him on that day: *No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever.”* (6:46-50)
- Jesus says here that he has seen God and that those who believe in him will receive