

Before we come to our text this morning (vv46-59), I want to begin with two quick introductory points, concerning Jesus' discourse as a whole—[1] The centrality of the gospel—simply put, the gospel is the good news of God about the person and work of Jesus Christ—and with that gospel there's a promise, that if believed, the gospel gives eternal life...

[2] The importance of faith or believing—throughout the discourse our Savior repeatedly makes reference to faith—He uses various imageries (looking to Christ, coming to Christ, and eating and drinking Christ), and He overtly speaks of believing (v29—"this is the work of God, that you believe" v35—"he who believes in Me shall never thirst" v40—"everyone who sees the Son and believes in him" v47—"he who believes in Me has everlasting life")...

Now—as one reads through verses 46-59, it becomes evident the emphasis falls upon "eating"—beginning with v50, every verse contains the words "eat" "eats" "ate" "food" or "feeds"—thus I want to consider verses 46-59 under the single topic—Eating the Bread of Life—and in particular under the two main-headings—The Bread of Life: Identified, and The Bread of Life: Consumed (or eaten)...

Now—these two obviously go together—as we are reminded what (or who) this bread is, then the need to eat the bread becomes evident...

- I. The Bread of Life: Identified—vv46-51
- II. The Bread of Life: Consumed—vv52-59

#### I. The Bread of Life: Identified—vv46-51

1. Here I want to take our Savior's statement in v48—"I am the bread of life"—and suggest three things from it...
2. [1] It's DIVINE bread—"I am the bread of life"—as many of you know—this is our Savior's first I AM saying...
3. John not only records seven select signs (or miracles), but also seven I AM sayings—I am the bread of life, I am the light of the world, I am the door, I am the Good Shepherd, I am the resurrection and life, I am the way, the truth, and the life...
4. Now—historically we trace these statements back to Ex.3:14—"And God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM. Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you..."
5. The Hebrew root of this word (I AM), is the root of the well known name of God, Yahweh—the self-existent One...
6. Thus—our Savior bowers this name to underscore His absolute and full divinity as the self-existent eternal God...
7. But our Savior's divinity is also found back in v46—wherein He clarifies His teaching on effectual calling...
8. V46—"Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father"—notice two things...
9. [a] He is from God—that is—He is from or of the Father—He is the eternally begotten or generated Son of the Father...
10. Thus—He's the Son of God, the Word of God, and the Wisdom of God—He is from or of God—He is God...
11. [b] He has seen the Father—this basically says the same thing—He eternally dwelt in the bosom of the Father...
12. And this is His point—though the Father teaches sinners to come to Christ—this teaching only goes so far...
13. [2] It's HUMAN bread—"This is the bread which comes down from heaven" (v50), "I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (v51)...

14. Now—as I've said before, this refers to the incarnation of the Son—He's come down from heaven as a man...
15. This is further seen in v51—"the bread that I shall give is My flesh"—that is—He shall give His body as a sacrifice...
16. If the eternally begotten Son of God is ever to die for our sins—He of necessity must have a human nature...
17. Jn.1:14—"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth..."
18. [3] It's SAVING bread—"I am the bread of life"—that is—I am the bread that gives spiritual and eternal life...
19. V51—"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of his bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world..."
20. Here our Savior explains—in order for the bread to give life it must be broken—it must be given as a sacrifice...
21. This is the meaning of the phrase—"the bread that I shall give is My flesh"—He shall give it as a sacrifice...
22. He shall offer Himself up as our atoning sacrifice—He shall give His life—"for the life of the world"—His death gives life...
23. This is bread that gives life as it's appropriated by faith—but, it gives life, because it dies—we live from His death...
24. William Hendriksen—"What Jesus means here is that he is going to give himself as a vicarious sacrifice for sin; that he will offer up his human nature (soul and body) to eternal death on the cross. The Father gave the Son; the Son gives himself..."
25. Lev.17:11—"For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul..."
26. The sacrifice must die if it is to atone for the sins of others—its blood must be shed—its life must be taken...
27. Jn.12:24—"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain..."
28. When a grain of wheat is placed within the ground, there is a sense in which it dies, and from it comes life...
29. Christ must die if His people are ever to live—He must die on a cross, be placed in the ground, and raised from the dead...
30. This is what our Savior means when He says—"the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world..."

## II. The Bread of Life: Consumed—vv52-59

Verse 52 describes the Jews as arguing or debating among themselves concerning our Savior's previous statement—He in essence responds to their confusion with a twofold response—eating His flesh is necessary and nourishing...

### A. Eating is NECESSARY—vv52-55

1. V53—"Then Jesus said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you..."
2. Now—before I go further—I want to point out—our Savior broadens the imagery to include eating and drinking...
3. It's no longer merely eating His flesh, but now drinking His blood—why does He include drinking with eating...
4. Well—I suggest the key is found back in v4—"Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near"—this crowd was preparing to go up to Jerusalem for the feast...
5. Now—as most of you know, there was an important meal associated with this feast—a meal that included flesh, bread, and drink...

6. Flesh—in that a lamb was killed, roasted, and eaten—unleavened bread was also eaten—and wine was drunk...
7. I think our Savior is using the imagery of the Passover, to teach the Jews an important truth—Christ is not only the TRUE bread but also the TRUE Passover...
8. Now—it's because of this close connection to the Passover, that most commentators also see a connection to the Lord's Supper...
9. And in some sense, I personally believe the connection is inevitable, in that the Lord's Supper replaces the Passover...
10. But—here is the main point—Christ is the fulfilment of all the Passover symbolized, 1Cor.5:7—"For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us..."
11. Now—before I leave this point of the Passover, I think it may be helpful to make a few connections between them...
12. [a] The sacrifice was killed, Ex.12:5—"Your lamb shall be without blemish...You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight..."
13. [b] The sacrifice was eaten, Ex.12:8—"Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it..."
14. Thus—by eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood means to believe on Him—to entrust your soul to Him...
15. Accordingly, our Savior says two things about the necessity of eating His flesh—it's a personal and perpetual necessity...
16. [1] It's a PERSONAL necessity, v53—"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you..."
17. Though pastors and parents can attempt to break the bread in bit-size pieces, no one can eat for another person...
18. Unless we come and personally eat the flesh and drink the blood—we are spiritually dead and without life...
19. A.W. Pink—"Eating is an intensely personal act: it is something which no one else can do for me. There is no such thing as eating by proxy. If I am to be nourished, I must, myself, eat. Standing by and watching others eat will not supply my needs. So, dear reader, no one can believe in Christ for you. The preacher cannot; your loved ones cannot..."
20. Now—earlier I mentioned that the Son becoming bread (Man), wasn't enough, but He needed to be broken (or die)...
21. Well as true as that is—there's something else needed—this broken bread must be personally eaten or consumed...
22. [2] It's a PERPETUAL necessity, v54—"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day..."
23. The verb in v53 aorist which refer to a one time act—"unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you..."
24. The verbs in v54—"you eats my flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life" are present active, which describe ongoing activity...
25. In others words—sinners must come and receive Christ, and having done so, they must feast on Him continually...
26. Thus—what I want to do at this point is—suggest three simple helps to assist you in coming and eating Christ...
27. Now—these are helps for sinners (who need to eat initially), but esp for saints (who need to eat continually)...
28. [a] Stay hungry—by this I mean—keep yourself in a humble and dependant frame, knowing how much you need Christ...
29. There is a sense in which, even as Christians, we remain needy beggars, who seek daily bread at God's hand...
30. Ex.16:4—"Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day..."

31. My friends, let me ask you this question—how dependent is your body on food—what if you failed to eat for a few days...
32. There are times when, for whatever reasons, I fail to eat breakfast and lunch, and my body quickly grows weak...
33. So too—if this is so with regards to our bodies, how much more so is it true for our souls—they need daily bread..
34. [b] Feast on the word—there is an obvious and important connection between the written and living Word...
35. In fact—Scripture itself is described as bread for our souls—that must be daily consumed or eaten by faith...
36. Matt.4:4—"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God..."
37. Job 23:12—"I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food..."
38. I don't know how to fully explain it—but it's a fact that I feel spiritual weak if I'm not daily in the Scriptures...
39. Now just reading them—but eating them—digesting them into my soul—allowing them to nourish my soul...
40. Jer.15:16—"Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts..."
41. [c] Prepare for public meals—by this I mean—properly prepare your souls for the formal meetings of the church...
42. Christians must eat every day at home—we refer to this as the private means of grace—and it's absolutely essential...
43. But—every week we gather as a church family, and it's in this setting, the Father prepares a special meal for us...
44. Public worship could be looked at from a few perspectives—we assemble to give to God and to get from God...
45. That is—we assemble to give glory and praise to God, and, we assemble to receive the bread of life from God...
46. Ps.42:1-2—"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God..."
47. Ps.63:1-2—"O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirst for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory..."
48. Ps.84:1-2—"How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God..."
49. These three Psalms describe the man of God as hungering and thirsting after God, in a dry and barren land...
50. In each Psalm, the Psalmist was looking for God in the public assembly—where God uniquely feeds His people...

#### B. Eating is NOURISHING—vv56-59

1. Having underscored the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, our Savior now describes the life derived from Him...
2. There is a sense in which, put another way, our Savior now provides three wonderful motives to come and eat...
3. In short He describes three things about the life that believers find in Christ—it's intimate, derived, and eternal...
4. [1] It's intimate, v56—"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him"—this is an amazing statement...
5. The person who believes on Christ, will sustain the closest possible relationship to Him—we in Him and He in us...

6. When a person consumes food and drink—parts of it are incorporated into our bodies and are a means of nourishment...
7. There is a true sense in which—the food and drink provide life to our bodies—they animate or nourish the body...
8. In some sense—the two become one—there exists a most intimate and inseparable relation between the two...
9. Well—all of this is also true with regards to Christ and His people—the two are intimately and inseparably connected...
10. Perhaps, put another way—when we come to Christ by faith, we are joined together with Him in union and fellowship...
11. J.C. Ryle—"Just as 'food and drink' received into a man's body becomes part of the man's self, and are incorporated into his system, and add to his health, comfort, and strength—so when a man by faith feeds his soul on Christ's sacrifice for his sins, Christ becomes as it were part of himself, and he becomes part of Christ. In a word, there is as intimate an union between Christ and the believer's soul, as there is between a man's food and a man's body..."
12. Notice—this union is mutual—we are in Him by faith, and He is in us by His Spirit—we are joined together as one...
13. Now—surely this ought to be a grand incentive for poor sinners to come to Christ—eating His flesh and drinking His blood...
14. For every souls that does—will be joined to Christ in the closest possible union which results in personal communion...
15. [2] It's derived, v57—"As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me..."
16. Having illustrated the closeness of this union with the imagery of food and the body, our Savior now illustrates it from the union that exists between the Father and Son...
17. Now—I trust it's evident this statement is very dense and glorious—let me explain it by considered each part...
18. [a] The Son lives because of the Father—"As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father"—this refers to His eternal generation...
19. From eternity past, the Son of God is begotten or generated by or of the Father—the Son exists from the Father...
20. Now—this in no way denies the Son's self-existence—the Son is eternally and equally self-existence with the Father...
21. But—it simply means, all that's unique to the Son (as God's Son)—is eternally derived from or of the Father...
22. Jn.14:20—"At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you (Jn.10:38; 14:11; 17:21)..."
23. By "that day" our Savior refers to the day of Pentecost, when He would give them further revelation and knowledge...
24. Thus—they would come to know things more fully—here our Savior refers to two very wonderful unions (that of the three persons in one essence, and Christ and His people)...
25. [b] The saint lives because of Christ—"so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me"—that is—lives from Me...
26. Every Christian lives, spiritually and eternally, because of their union with Christ—Christ is the source of life...
27. Gal.2:20—"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me..."
28. Col.3:3-4—"For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory..."
29. [3] It's eternal, v58—"This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever..."
30. V50—"This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die"—that is—have eternal life...

31. This doesn't deny Christians physical die—but it asserts they shall be raised from the dead, and live with God, body and soul...
32. V54—"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day..."
33. Now—this doesn't deny that the wicked shall be also raised—but they shall be raised not to eternal life, but condemnation...
34. In essence what our Savior is promising is this—those who believe upon Him, will live with Him, that's eternal...
35. Now—I want to end this morning by suggesting, that behind the imagery of eating Christ, is the first Adam...
36. If you remember, Adam was promised eternal life if he obeyed God, and threatened with death if he sinned...
37. In other words—he brought death upon the human race through eating, and now, in the gospel, life is regained through eating...
38. Everything the first Adam lost, the Last Adam regains—life that begins with Him now, and continues for eternity...