Exploring the Bible—Gospel of John (7)

The Need of the Hungry

**Scripture Reading:**

24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. 25 And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, Rabbi, when did You get here? 26 Jesus answered them and said, Truly, truly, I say to you, You seek Me not because you have seen signs, but because you ate of the bread and were filled. 27 Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you; for Him has the Father, even God, sealed. 28 Then they said to Him, What shall we do that we may work the works of God? 29 Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe into Him whom He has sent. 30 They said then to Him, What sign then will You do that we may see and believe You? What work will You do?... 33 For the bread of God is He who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world. 34 They said therefore to Him, Lord, give us this bread always. 35 Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall by no means hunger, and he who believes into Me shall by no means ever thirst... 47 Truly, truly, I say to you, He who believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life… 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him. 57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (John 6:24-63)

**Ministry Reading:**

HOW CHRIST CAN BECOME OUR FOOD

Christ said to those who were hungry and seeking Him, “I am the living bread which came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread which I will give is My flesh...He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life... For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him” (vv. 51, 54-56). He seemed to be saying, “I came to be the bread of life for you to eat and enjoy. You can eat Me and enjoy Me. If you eat Me, you will have eternal life; you will receive Me into you as your life.” This word is perplexing and hard to understand. It is no wonder that those who heard this word said to one another, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” (v. 52). They asked how He could be their food.

The Lord Jesus said, “My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink” (v. 55). The significance of this statement is very profound. When we eat mutton or beef, we are eating the flesh of a sheep or a cow. In order for a sheep or a cow to give us its flesh to eat, it must first be killed. When it is killed, it will shed its blood. What the Lord Jesus said has the Old Testament as its background. We may not understand what the Lord Jesus said, but the Jews understood Him. The Jews celebrated the Feast of the Passover every year. During this feast they killed a lamb and ate its flesh, and they applied the blood of the slaughtered lamb on the doorposts and the lintel (cf. Exo. 12). The Jews understood the passover, and the Lord Jesus said this to remind them of the passover. He seemed to be saying, “The blood of the passover lamb redeemed you from your sins, and the flesh of the lamb became your food to satisfy you. I will be the same to you. I will be slain and will shed My blood just like the lamb. My blood will redeem you from your sins, and My slain flesh will become your food to satisfy you. Without My shed blood, you cannot be redeemed from your sins. Without My slain flesh, you cannot receive the indestructible, eternal life. Without Me as your bread of life, you will die in your sins. I am the bread of life. If you eat of Me as the bread of life, you shall by no means die, because this bread of life is the living flesh. In order for you to eat My living flesh, My blood must be shed. My shed blood redeems you from all your sins before God. When you are redeemed from your sins, you will also be delivered out of condemnation and death. Moreover, My living flesh, the eternal life, will enter into you so that you may live forever. Therefore, he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life and lives forever.”

When Jesus Christ said that His flesh was true food and that His blood was true drink, He was referring to His death on the cross in which He gave His body and shed His blood for our redemption from sins so that we might receive Him as our life.

There are two key points here. First, every person is sinful before God. As a result, according to the righteous law of God, we deserve to die. Therefore, no one can escape death. Death means perdition. This is our first condition. Second, our human life does not have the ability to live forever. Our life is mortal. Therefore, we are not living daily; we are dying daily. The more we live, the closer we are to death. We live until the day we die. When the Chinese celebrate the New Year or any joyful occasion, they like to write words, such as blessing, prosperity, longevity, joy, and peace from heaven, on red paper and post them. However, no one writes the word death, and no one wants to mention it, because no one likes death. Whether or not we like death, one day death will come and swallow us up. This is our second condition. Thus, we have these two conditions: sin and death.

In order for Christ to give Himself to us as our life, He must first deal with sin and death, because these are our conditions. How does He deal with sin and death? On the one hand, He gave His body and shed His blood on the cross. He shed His blood to redeem us from our sins before God. On the other hand, when His body was broken and slain on the cross, the divine life within Him was released (John 12:24). Now this life can enter into us to be our life, thus delivering us from death. Let us use a grain of wheat as an example. When the grain is sown into the soil, its outer shell is broken, and the life within the seed is released. This life then grows into wheat and bears many grains. In this way the life that was originally in one grain is released into many grains. How wonderful is Christ’s salvation! He shed His blood to wash away our sins, and His body was broken to release the life within Him. If you believe that He died for you on the cross and shed His blood to redeem you from your sins, you will receive Him. Then His life will become your life, and His element will become your element.

Animals need to pass through death in order to become man’s food and enjoyment, and plants also need to pass through death in order to become man’s food and enjoyment. Every living thing needs to pass through death in order to become man’s food. Birds, cattle, and sea animals and also fruit, grain, and herbs must pass through death, through breaking, before they can become our food, enjoyment, and nourishment. Likewise, in order to become the bread of life for our enjoyment, Jesus Christ passed through death. He said that His flesh is true food and that His blood is true drink. This implies His death, because death is needed in order for flesh to be separated from the blood. When the Lord Jesus died, His blood and flesh were separated (cf. 19:34). Hence, we can enjoy Him. Through the death that separated His flesh and blood, He became the bread of life. Now we can eat Him as our life supply.

Jesus Christ the Savior does not teach doctrines; rather, He enters into man to be assimilated by man as man’s food, life, and enjoyment. How does the Lord Jesus give Himself to us? He gave Himself to us on the cross when His body was broken and His blood was shed. His blood washes away our sins and resolves our case before God so that our sins may be forgiven. Furthermore, through His death on the cross His life was released and entered into us to be our bread of life and our element. Thus, He is assimilated into us. If you are willing to believe in Him, you will eat His flesh and drink His blood; in other words, you will eat and enjoy Him.

Question for Discussion: What is the feeling of hunger? What can satisfy the hunger within? Share your experience.

Reference: *Changing Death into Life,* Ch. 5.