

**"I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE"**  
**- JOHN 6:26-37. - MARCH 8. -**

**Golden Text: – "Jesus said unto them, I am the Bread of Life."**

AFTER partaking of the miraculously provided supper, the multitude, evidently according to their habit, lay down in the fields, wrapping themselves in their outer garments. Indeed, this is even today a prevailing custom in Palestine with the poorer people when on a journey. In the morning they looked about for their benefactor, evidently expecting to find Jesus in the same vicinity, and no doubt also expecting that he would miraculously provide for their breakfast. But not finding him nor the boat in which the disciples had come they journeyed onward towards Jerusalem, but still on the lookout for the reputed Messiah. When finally they came upon the Lord and his company they told of their search – and our lesson for today begins with our Lord's reply, You seek me not because of the miracle, but because of the satisfactory and free supper which you received. Here we perceive the wisdom of the Lord in not pressing matters too earnestly. He preached no sermon when he performed the miracle, but allowed it to have its effect; but now, instead of working another miracle, he preached a sermon, using his miracle as a text.

His reproof was not harsh, although it was quite pointed: Strive not for the food which perisheth, but for that kind which will produce everlasting life. This is the kind which the Son of man is prepared to give unto you, for him the Father, even God, hath sealed, indicated, marked as his appointed channel for blessing. The lesson contained in these words is obvious, and is as applicable today as then. The trouble with the whole world is that they have either earthly aims or no aims at all, and of the two conditions the

latter is the worse. It is the people with aims, with purposes in life who are accomplishing something in themselves and for others. These are the worldly wise, who make two blades of grass grow where one grew before, who build factories and works and conduct large enterprises, and to whom in large measure civilization owes so much. They have ambition to be rich or to be wise or to be famed, and these ambitions spur them on to works.

But, alas! the great majority of mankind are in a much worse case, for without ambition they are merely eating to live and living to eat – merely animals of a higher intelligence. They labor for the meat that perisheth – it is their aim, their goal, and sometimes includes the inebriating cup, which steals from them whatever of sense they may have. Our Lord would have his hearers, including all his followers down through the age, note this message from his lips: that although the meat that perisheth is necessary under present conditions, those who are his followers will remember that their heavenly Father knoweth they have need of these and will not suffer them to come to serious want. And thus being without anxious care for the bread that perisheth they might turn their entire attention not to earthly but heavenly ambitions – the noblest, the grandest of all they might aspire to, because such blessed children come within the range of divine blessing of life everlasting. The meat, the food that would develop in them such an ambition and lead to its satisfaction, would be food indeed and well worthy of every exertion to obtain it.

### **WHAT SHALL WE DO?**

The discourse had its effect; the people realized that they were leading comparatively aimless lives, or that their aims were earthly and therefore would perish with their dying, and they asked the Lord what kind of work or labor he meant they should perform to secure the food that would bring the divine favor and gain them eternal life. What do you mean by works that would please God?

This is just the point that Jesus wished to bring them to and that he [R4146 : page 73] wished to answer. He replied that the work for them to do at once was to exercise faith in him as the Sent of God – the Messiah. But they replied, What reason have we to think of you as the Messiah? Work for us some conclusive sign that will prove that you are Messiah and we will believe. The fact that you fed five thousand of us last evening with five loaves and two small fishes does not prove your Messiahship. Messiah is to be like Moses, only greater than Moses, and the miracle you performed is not as great as some that Moses performed. You furnished five thousand one meal and had the loaves and fishes to start with, but Moses fed our fathers for years in the wilderness without any bread as a start. The manna which he provided came down from heaven; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat." They were good reasoners in some respects – they were not going to be too easily converted, they wished to be thoroughly convinced before they would believe Jesus to be the Messiah; they had heard of others who had been deceived by false Messiahs; they were intending to stick close to the Scriptural record and to see that the one they would accept as Messiah must be greater than Moses, able to feed them and all the people every day – and with bread superior to that which Moses gave in the wilderness.

Then was Jesus' turn to expound his teaching and to show that the comparison as between himself and Moses was not as to who would give a finer kind of earthly food and more of it, but that he would give a heavenly food, a spiritual food, which would secure to them a heavenly life. He therefore called attention first of all to their mistake in thinking the giving of the manna to be the work of Moses, saying plainly, It was not Moses that gave the bread from heaven, but my Father; do not credit that to the wrong source. Moses was indeed an honored servant of the Lord as the Lawgiver of Israel, but he neither gave the manna nor sent it. My Father who sent that manna in the wilderness has now sent another kind of bread, another kind of food, another kind of manna from heaven –

not literal, but symbolical. The bread which God is now about to send to his people, also comes down from heaven and is intended to be the Bread of life for the whole world – not merely day by day for a few years, but for life everlasting.

### **"EVERMORE GIVE US THIS BREAD"**

The lessons were going home to their hearts, as we know by their reply, "Lord, evermore give us this Bread." We note the similarity of expression here with that used by the Samaritan woman to whom the Lord mentioned the gift of life under the figure of the water of life – "Evermore give me this water." The answers in both cases show us the longings of the people of that time, both Jews and Samaritans, for something superior to what they had. As the poet has declared, "There are longings infinite in the human mind" – longings for life eternal. From remote times history tells us of how people in every clime have sought for health-springs and health-foods that thus they might have a longer continuance of the present life and, if possible, an annulment of death entirely. All realize that this has not yet been attained, and the war still goes on. It is on the strength of such longings of the soul for continued life that patent-medicines thrive. We are glad that there is such a longing in the human mind for a perpetuation of life; it becomes, as in this case and in the case of the Samaritan woman, a basis for further investigation for the eternal life which the Lord proffered.

Our Lord replied, "I am the Bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Again our Lord's words would undoubtedly be beyond the depth of the people's understanding. We can imagine their consternation, and to assist us in sympathizing with them we should remember that they were not Spirit-begotten, because Pentecost had not yet come, "the holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:39.) Indeed, we find that this question is a very

abstruse one with many of the Lord's people today, and few comprehend it with any clearness except the Spirit-begotten. [R4147 : page 73] Let us make the matter as plain as possible by continuing the investigation of the context. Therein Jesus explains that he himself had come down from heaven – not merely like the manna from the clouds, but from heaven itself, having laid aside the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, having humbled himself to an exchange of his previous spirit nature for the earthly nature in which he was then addressing them – the man Christ Jesus. But they could not eat him while he was alive, nor could they even understand what he meant when he said, "My flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed," and they reasoned, Will this man give us his flesh to eat? Is that what he means? The lesson was too deep for them; but, thank God, not too deep for us. As then some of the disciples forsook Jesus and walked no more with him, saying, "This is a hard saying, who can receive it?" so today there are some who cannot receive this teaching, which is the fundamental one of the Gospel of Christ. Whoever cannot receive this lesson cannot receive the other lessons which are built upon it. Our Lord further explained, "My flesh I will give for the life of the world." He had not yet given his flesh, though he was in the process of giving it; he was drawing out its vitality, its strength, in their service, but would complete the work of his sacrifice by surrendering his all to death – even the death of the cross. And this he did later.

### **"WE EAT HIS FLESH"**

We do not eat the flesh of Jesus literally – we eat it by faith; that is to say, we appropriate by faith to ourselves the merit, the efficacy which was in his flesh and which he surrendered to death on our behalf. But why was this, and what did he surrender, and how do we partake of it? We answer that Adam as the head of the race had forfeited his life through disobedience and hence, instead of being able to propagate a race of perfect beings in harmony with

God and privileged to [R4147 : page 74] have eternal life, his offspring was like himself, dying, unworthy of eternal life. In God's arrangement a redemptive sacrifice was necessary – some one must take Adam's place, suffer death for him in order to release him and to justify his race from the original sentence. No human being could be found who was perfect and who could give to Justice a ransom for his brother – for all were sinners, coming short of the glory, the perfection, which God recognizes as essential to eternal life. It was to meet these requirements that God made the arrangement with his Son by which the latter freely, gladly, for the joy set before him, died, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. (1 Pet. 3:18.) So, then, it was our Lord's flesh or human nature that was given for Adam and his race, and hence given for the life of the world, that the world of mankind might be recovered from under the sentence of death. Thus Jesus, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man and we are all redeemed, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood [life] of Christ, as a lamb without spot or blemish. – 1 Pet. 1:18,19.

We see, says one, how it was necessary for Christ to be made flesh and how it was necessary for him to give his flesh for the life of the world by going into death, but how shall we eat his flesh? is the question. Ah, we answer, the matter, as put in that figurative form, is beautifully simple and meaningful when we understand it. The eating of the Lord's flesh must be an individual matter on the part of all those who would benefit by his sacrifice. The eating represents the appropriating by faith. Thus, when one comes to an understanding of the fact of the redemption and believes therein and goes to God in prayer and by faith accepts the forgiveness of his sins and reconciliation with God, he in so doing is eating the flesh of the Son of man; he is partaking of those benefits or advantages which our Lord's flesh or sacrifice secured.

## **JUSTIFIED BY OUR "EATING"**

The result of such eating by faith signifies the appropriation to one's self of all the blessings and privileges which our Lord possessed as a perfect man; it implies our justification on the human plane, our relationship to God as those whose sins are graciously overlooked or covered and who have joy and peace and fellowship with God through faith in the precious blood. We are to continue to eat that we may grow stronger and stronger – that we may be able to appropriate more and more the wonderful blessings and privileges, relationships and divine favors which belonged to our Lord, but which he surrendered on our behalf and on behalf of all the members of Adam's race. Additionally, those who are rightly influenced by the eating – those who are drawn nearer to the Lord and led to a full consecration of their all to him – these receive a special invitation during this Gospel Age to drink of his blood. The blood is the life in Scriptural language, and hence ordinarily the Jews were not to drink blood; to do so would make them guilty or responsible for the death of the person or creature. Thus the Jews said of our Lord, "His blood be upon us" – we assume the responsibility of his death.

And thus also the Apostle explains that those who partake of the blood of Christ symbolically in the communion cup are symbolically representing themselves as being guilty of the blood of Christ, guilty of the death of Christ – unless they partake of it with the proper, the intended signification. What is that intended signification? We answer that our Lord stated the matter at the last Supper, saying to his disciples, "This is the cup of the New Covenant in my blood – drink ye all of it." This cup of the fruit of the vine represents my blood, my death; by it the New Covenant will eventually be sealed, and I invite you who believe on me to partake of this with me, to partake of this not as those who caused my death, but as those who voluntarily gave up their own lives and joined with me in this death, in this self-sacrifice. As you partake

of this cup with me it signifies that you lay down your lives as I laid down mine and that you become participants with me in this cup which speaks, which means the great sacrifice, the great life given through which the New Covenant will be established, under which all the families of the earth will be blessed.

So, then, under the guidance of the holy Spirit through the words of the Apostle we may see a depth of meaning in our Lord's words which the people whom he addressed did not comprehend. Indeed, we believe that while our Lord addressed these words to the Jews he intended them more particularly for us to whom they have been communicated and by whom they have been more fully understood. We rejoice, then, in the justification which we have through partaking of his flesh – through being justified by the sacrifice of his humanity – our appropriation of our share of human justification. And we rejoice also that eventually the whole world shall be privileged to eat of that flesh – to accept the grace of God in the cancellation of their human sins and weaknesses, and to realize that all those blessings of restitution times, the blessings of the Millennium, will come to them because Christ died for their sins, because he gave to them his flesh to eat. The whole world is to eat of that Bread, and, as the Apostle intimates, the Church is now privileged to be a part with the Lord in the Loaf that is being broken, as well as to be participants in the cup of ignominy and self-sacrifice which the Father poured for him and which he permits us to share with him – for if we suffer with him we shall also reign with him, if we be dead with him we shall also live with him, if we drink of his cup we shall also share in his joys in the Kingdom by and by. – 2 Tim. 2:12.

### **WHOM THE FATHER GIVETH SHALL COME**

The multitude who had eaten of the bread the night before, and who now had received the explanation respecting the higher food necessary to eternal life, did not believe, although they



recognized Jesus as a very wonderful personage indeed, and probably, like another multitude, were ready to declare, "Never man spake like this man." (John 7:46.) Was our Lord disconcerted **[R4147 : page 75]** and disappointed because these thousands of Israel, heirs of the promises, received him not, heeded not his message? Nay, verily! Nor should we his followers think strange of it that in this harvest time the divine message should be incomprehensible to the great majority of the household of faith of our time. We read nothing of our Lord's becoming excited to a frenzy and appealing to the people and teaching them that they were about to fall into an eternity of torture if they did not receive him. We read nothing about the apostles going out amongst them and urging them to a mourner's bench. Quite to the contrary of all this. Jesus evidently expected that few would believe; he even turned to his disciples and said, "Will ye also go away?" But they answered, No; to whom should we go? from you we have the message of eternal life which comes from nowhere else. Master, we will stand by you; we could not do otherwise, our every interest is bound up in this glorious message which we have heard from your lips. We are ready to die with you, to drink of your cup.

Instead of manifesting any perturbation our Lord said to the multitude, This is what I told you before; ye have seen me, ye have believed not. Why? Because ye are not of the flock of sheep whom my Father hath given me to lead at the present time. Other sheep I have which are not of this flock; by and by I will attend to them. But now, "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" – reject. What is this if not an election, a selection? How much in harmony it is with what our Lord uttered in his prayer on the night before his crucifixion, "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me...that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world **[R4148 : page 75]** may [then, later] believe that thou hast sent me!" (John 17:9,21.) As our Lord was not expecting all to come to him and to

accept of his gracious offer and God's gracious provision in him and thus to be justified through eating his flesh, so he could not expect either that many would go on still further and make the consecration to walk in his steps in the narrow way and thus be partakers of his cup and prospective joint-heirs with him. Oh, no! these in all, from first to last, are but a Little Flock, but a very blessed Little Flock to whom, as the Master declared, the Father will give the Kingdom. (Luke 12:32.) And when they shall be changed and are like their Master and shall receive the Kingdom power and glory and dominion – then will come through that Kingdom the overthrow of the prince of darkness, the prince of this world; the overthrow of sin and the work of blessing, enlightening and uplifting all the poor world of mankind who are not now called and drawn by the Father!

Note our Lord's words in this connection, "No man can come unto me except the Father which sent me draw him." (John 6:44.) There is an exclusiveness about this: the time had not yet come, mentioned in Revelation, when the water of life shall flow freely, and whosoever will may come. (Rev. 22:17.) That glorious time belongs to the Millennial Kingdom and not to the present time, which is devoted to the election or selection of the Bride class of joint-heirs which the Father is now drawing, calling, sealing. Mark the distinctive difference between this drawing of the present time by the Father and that later drawing of the Millennial Age, which will not be by the Father but by the Son, and which will not be exclusive but inclusive, including all mankind. Harken to our Master's words to this effect, that "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32.) All men are not yet drawn to the Lord. Why? Because the lifting up is not yet complete. The Head was lifted up not only at Calvary but was subsequently highly exalted as a reward, and the members of his Body, the members of the Bride class who follow in his steps, must finish their course and also be highly exalted as his joint-heirs before the lifting-up process will be complete.

With that glorious "change" of the First Resurrection the Millennial Kingdom will be ushered in and during that wonderful reign of righteousness, that shining forth of the sun of light and truth for the blessing of the world, all mankind will be drawn away from sin and selfishness, away from sickness, pain and sorrow, away from everything that is evil, toward the Lord, that they may partake of his flesh indeed and have eternal life with all the blessings of restitution which God has provided through the great Redeemer. We are not in this teaching Universalism, for as many of those who are called and drawn now to be of the Bride class can, and many do, resist the drawings, or, as the Apostle says, "receive the grace of God in vain." So it will be possible to resist the drawings of the Millennial Age, as is pointed out in the Scriptures in various statements, of which this may suffice, "It shall come to pass that the soul that will not hear [obey] that Prophet, shall be destroyed from amongst the people" – in the Second Death, without hope of any recovery. Note again the Lord's promise to these Elect ones whom the Father now draws and who now come and feed upon our Lord's flesh and who drink of his cup, his blood, and participate with him in his sacrifice. Their hope is stated in these words, "I will raise him up at the last day." The last day, the great seventh day, the Millennial day. Ah, yes! We remember it is written respecting the Church, the Bride class, "God shall help her right early in the morning" (Psa. 46:5.) – the morning of that Millennial day. The six days, epochs of one thousand years each, from Adam have passed, the seventh is already dawning and the time is near at hand when the Bride, all glorious, shall be presented to the great King, the Father, by the great King, his Son, our Lord – "with gladness and rejoicing shall she be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace." – Psa. 45:15.

### **"I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT"**

How glad we are that our dear Master added these words. Without them we might have doubted the efficacy of the calling

and the drawing which we receive; [R4148 : page 76] and some might have said, Yes, I was indeed drawn, but evidently the Lord Jesus did not count me worthy of a place amongst his followers. He here assures us that the drawing of the Father which brings us to him with a desire to be his disciples will insure for us his aid, his succor, his assistance, his acceptance. Thus we may know that if we fail of the grace of God now provided for us in the high calling, it will be our own fault, because of failure to give heed to the voice of the Shepherd and to walk in his steps. [R4142 : page 76]

### **"THE STONE WITNESS"**

In a dark, dreary land,  
In a wilderness lone,  
In a desert of sand  
Stands the Witness of Stone.  
So ancient, so vast,  
So majestic its plan,  
It speaks from the past  
Of a strength not of man.

So perfect the whole,  
So true the design,  
It speaks to the soul  
Of a Builder divine.  
Behold how it towers  
In its grandeur alone!  
"God's ways are not ours,"  
Saith the Witness of Stone.

[R4143 : page 76]

It is awful to go  
When the world is asleep,  
And stand 'neath the glow

Of the star-studded deep,  
And gaze at that tower  
With its secret unknown, –  
For great is the power  
Of the Witness of Stone!

They have scoffed at the Truth  
Which is written in ink,  
They have deemed it uncouth  
For the brain which can think;  
But they will awake  
When they see it defined  
In figures which make  
An appeal to the mind!

The Book of the soul,  
The Book of the heart –  
There is naught on that scroll  
For the shrewd or the smart!  
And so there must be  
A witness for such,  
A thing they can see  
And a thing they can touch.

'Tis a book for the wise,  
If the meek and the just;  
'Tis a chart for the eyes  
Long blinded by dust.  
'Tis a proof for the sage  
Whose god is the known –  
There is truth for the age  
In the Witness of Stone.

– *Grace P. Bronaugh.*

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