



AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE®

BREAD OF LIFE

The Eucharist in Galilee

BREAD OF LIFE GROUP REFLECTION

EPISODE 3:

Scandalous Teaching or the Words of Life?

Dr. Tim Gray

STUDY GOALS

After the multiplication of the loaves and fish and Jesus' walking on the water, Jesus returns to the synagogue in Capernaum for one of his most significant sermons. Jesus' words in this teaching will scandalize his listeners and many will fall away. But when he questions his disciples, they respond with faith, and Peter will proclaim, "Lord, you have the words of eternal life."

Scripture

The Bread from Heaven and the Words of Eternal Life

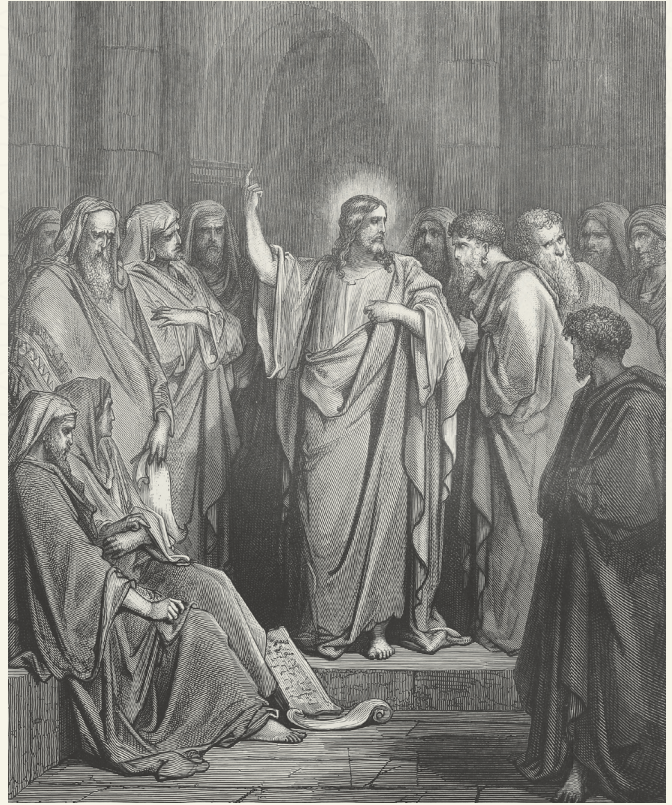
(John 6:25–27, 35, 48–63, 66–69)

²⁵When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

²⁶Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal." ... ³⁵Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. ... ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers ate

the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." ⁵²The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" ⁵³So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; ⁵⁴he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. ⁵⁶He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷As the living Father sent

me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever.” ⁵⁹This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Caper'na-um. ⁶⁰Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” ⁶¹But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? ⁶²Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? ⁶³It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and life. ... ⁶⁴After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁵Jesus said to the Twelve, “Will you also go away?” ⁶⁶Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; ⁶⁷and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”



VIEW AND DISCUSS

1. Jesus speaks about two types of food in this teaching. Why do we work so diligently for the “food which perishes” and less so for the “food which endures to eternal life”? What are some things you can do to reprioritize your desires?
2. Jesus turns their attention to this new food with the words *zoe aionios* (the life of the age to come, or eternal life). How do we get this food? What does Jesus mean when he proclaims, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:48)?
3. What is the statement that causes Jesus’ hearers to be scandalized? Why are the crowds at the synagogue in Capernaum (and even Jesus’ disciples) scandalized by his words? Do you think that some people today are still shocked by Jesus’ words? What are some ways that we can help others understand about the Bread of Life?
4. What is the difference between the reaction of Judas and that of Peter?
5. How and when does Jesus answer the question about how we will eat his flesh and drink his blood?

REVIEW

Dr. Gray takes a detailed look at Jesus' sermon in the synagogue in Capernaum recorded in John 6. Here Jesus redirects the crowds from desiring perishable food to desiring the food that endures to eternal life. Jesus prepares his disciples for the next year's Passover when he will institute the Eucharist and give us his Body and Blood as food—food that gives eternal life and allows us to abide in Christ. This teaching is hard and many turn away from following Jesus because of his words here. But Peter shows us the way, reminding us that Jesus has the words of eternal life.

1. What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?
2. What one thing will you do differently because of this session?



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—John 6:53–56

INSIGHTS FROM THE ANCIENTS

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA:¹ How he will give them his flesh to eat he does not yet tell them, for he knew they were in darkness and would never in that state be able to understand what is ineffable. ... But the power of learning suitably follows on those who believe. ... It was therefore right that faith should first be rooted in them before understanding. ... And it is for this reason (I suppose) that the Lord refrained from telling them how he would give them his flesh to eat, calling them to believe before they seek. For those who believed, however, he broke bread and gave it to them, saying, “Take, eat; this is my body.” ... Do you see how he does not explain the mystery to those who had senselessly rejected the faith without investigation? But, to those who believe, he declares it most clearly.²

¹Cyril of Alexandria (375–444; fl. 412–444), Patriarch of Alexandria whose extensive exegesis, characterized especially by a strong espousal of the unity of Christ, led to the condemnation of Nestorius in 431.

²Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 4.2.4, in *John 1-10, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 213.