

Metaphors of Christ #6: Christ as the Bread of Life, continued

One thing that is very interesting about Jesus being the Bread of God is his place of birth – Bethlehem. The name of the town actually means “house of bread”. *Bayit* means bread, and *lechem* means bread. When you put *bayit* together with a following word it is shortened to *bet*, or *beth*, meaning “house of”. So Beth-El means house of God, Beth-shemesh is house of the sun, etc. Many Jewish synagogues are commonly named Beth El, Beth Shalom, Beth Or, Beth Israel, etc. But it is very significant that God chose “Beth-lehem” as the birthplace of the Messiah, because he was to be the true Bread from heaven.

In Jn. 6, Jesus calls himself the bread that came down from heaven, and that unless we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we have no life in us. This was such a hard saying that many of his disciples stopped following him (not the 12, though). Last time we concluded that to eat his flesh and to experience him as the bread of heaven is largely by reading, studying, and obeying the Word in the Bible, daily. We need that word daily, it is how we partake of eternal life.

That Christ is the True Bread is closely related to the fact that he is the Word of God, and the Life (Jn. 1). Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. His words are life to us, and Christ is the very essence and personification of the Word.

But afterwards Paul Peachey had a good question that seemed to flummox me a bit. Basically it was, “If the way we eat his flesh is to read and study the word, what does it mean to drink his blood?” My answer was true but I don’t think it was getting to the real nub of the question, so I have been doing a lot of thinking and praying about it, to come up with something better.

What I was attempting to say off the top of my head was that Jesus’ flesh and blood were sacrificed together in a single event, and while we separate them in the communion (we eat the bread, and drink the “wine”), that in our daily reading/obedience of the word, we are in effect both eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood.

It seems that there are two main ideas involved in the “drinking of the blood” – first is that it is the sign of the new covenant, and secondly that “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev. 17:11-14).

The Blood of the Covenant

Ex. 24:3-8 - The OT blood was sprinkled on the people at the giving of the covenant on Sinai.

But that covenant was not meant to endure, and God said that he would give a new covenant. Jer. 31:31-33, Heb. 8:6-13 This new covenant was made, not with the blood of animals, but with the better blood of Christ. Heb. 9:15-24

We commemorate this in the communion – 1 Cor. 11:25 – “This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”

So to Paul’s question (“How in a daily sense, are we to drink of the blood of Christ?”): Even though we only take the communion on occasion, we can keep that remembrance daily. Not by physically drinking wine or grape juice, but by a continuing awareness and thankful consideration of how we are living in a new relationship to the Father, through this new covenant in Christ’s blood. The new covenant is to have his laws in our minds and in our hearts, and that each individual person would know God personally. If we are not living in a daily experience and awareness of this, we can hardly be said to be “drinking of Christ’s blood”.

The Life of the Flesh is in the Blood

Jews were forbidden to eat living flesh, or even to eat the blood of animals, because “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev. 17:11-14). In the NT sense, this brings us to a couple other metaphorical ideas in John – that Christ is the Life of the world, and that he is the Vine and we are the branches (Jn. 15 – we partake of his Life by “abiding in the vine”).

We already studied Christ the Light from John 1, and we will deal more fully with Christ the Vine in the future (Jn. 15). Much that could be said here would fit better there, in allowing the life of Jesus to flow in us, like life from the vine to the branches. But to get back to Paul’s question, how can we daily live to be able to say that we are partaking of the life of Christ through his blood?

This is a quote from an earlier study on the Blood of Christ, showing observations from actual scriptures that mention the Blood of Christ:

According to the Bible, the blood of Christ has initiated the new covenant, giving us justification, remission of sins, a cleansing not just from sin itself, but of a guilty conscience. It propitiates God's holy wrath against sin, reconciles us to God, redeems us to God from sin, saves us from His holy wrath and eternal punishment, and sanctifies us. It gives us a holy fellowship and communion with one another, gives us access to God, and the right to enter boldly into His presence. It is how He purchased and redeemed us to be a part of His bride the church, and makes us near to Him. It helps us to walk in obedience, and is one of the main ways we are preserved from the destroyer and overcome the devil.

We could say that to drink of his blood is to recognize and appropriate in our daily lives all that he has done for us in the shedding of his blood.

So in summary, to Paul's question "How can we be drinking of the blood of Christ in a daily sense?", let us ask

1. Are we really living in the new covenant every day, in our innermost being and hearts, or are we just going through external motions? Is his law (word) really written in our hearts? Do we as individuals, really know God?
2. Are we recognizing, confessing, and appropriating the power and life of Christ's blood in our daily lives?
3. Are we allowing Christ's life in us to function like blood, in bringing the living Word to our minds and bodies for life, for strength, and to fight against and remove sinful inclinations and practices? (this one will be discussed more fully when we study "Christ the Vine")

I believe that if we can answer "Yes" to these questions, we can honestly say that we are "eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood".