

# Come to the Feast

My name's Tom Ackerman. I'm a Bible-believing Messianic Jew, or if you prefer, a simple believer in the Son of God. To put it another way, I'm an ordinary human soul. I'm here to talk with you today about the body and blood of our Savior, whom we call in Hebrew Yeshua, or in English Jesus. The classical name for the reality of Yeshua's body and blood is the Real Presence. These two words communicate that our Savior is "really and fully" present in the bread and wine of communion. He's not there merely in symbol. He is there in reality. Our people over and over throughout the centuries kept the Passover in the covenant of Moses, remembering our deliverance from Egypt, and eating the Paschal sacrifice, the Passover lamb. It is fitting then that our Jewish Messiah, at HIS Passover nearly two thousand years ago, not only gave Himself as the sacrificial Lamb, but also gave that Lamb to His disciples to eat.

If you're like many believers today, those simple words are too much for you to handle. You might have been taught that Yeshua's words about bread and wine being His body and blood are nothing more than symbolism, or maybe you've even been taught that no one can really know for sure what our Savior meant. His words are just a mystery. Well, I'm here to tell you that's not true. The truth is that Yeshua's own words teach us, however difficult it might sound, that He gave His body and blood to us to eat and drink and that this is the bread of eternal life.

I imagine that many of the people hearing this would call themselves Bible believers too, so I'm going to go straight to the text of scripture, which we would all agree is our foundation of truth. The only passage that delves in detail into the body and blood is, as you may know, John 6. In John 6, rabbi Yeshua is travelling around the Sea of Galilee, performing miracles, like the feeding of the five thousand and walking on the waters of the Sea. Then, Jesus tells the crowds which had been following Him since He miraculously fed the five thousand, not to labor for the food which perishes, but the food which endures. He says that THIS food, the Son of Man will give you. Naturally, the crowds recognize an allusion to the manna, which our people ate in the wilderness, and ask Yeshua for a sign to show that He is the one sent from God.

In response, our heavenly rabbi distinguishes again, between the miraculous manna in the desert, and the heavenly food which He has to offer. Yeshua tells the crowds that His Father gives the TRUE bread, which comes from heaven, and even goes on to say – I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

Now at this point, we could still think that Yeshua is speaking symbolically. In other passages Yeshua uses symbolism richly. Also, we don't see any signs yet that the crowds take this as anything more than a spiritual teaching. They DO become upset that He calls Himself the bread from heaven, but that appears to be because they know His parents and knew Him as a youth, so it seems shocking that someone familiar to them would claim to have come from heaven. They're not protesting at this point because they think He's calling Himself a piece of bread.

Rather, the strong basis for the reality of Yeshua's body and blood is yet to follow. For after hearing their immediate protests, Yeshua continues more emphatically, and in greater detail. In a few words, which have forever changed history, our Jewish Messiah says – I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this 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.

And how do the crowds respond to this jaw-dropping statement? How do the people at that time, the one's we would expect to best understand the language as it was used then respond?

Well, as you probably know, they protest again. They protest more strongly, saying – How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?

Now unless you think God is some kind of a joker, or the Son of Man some kind of a liar, then what we see here and what follows, ought to convince us of the reality of the body and blood. For Yeshua responds to the crowd's revulsion by adding even more emphasis – Most assuredly I say to you – says God's Son -- unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

As if we don't imagine THOSE words are enough to make the point, the Truth continues saying – For my flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in Him...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.

You might think this would be the point where the audience takes the words as a mere idiom? But no. That point never comes. Not only do we see another protest by the crowds, but also by the disciples of our eternal Rabbi Himself who complain about the shocking teaching and ask “who can understand it?”

Now let's just stop here, and acknowledge something that really NEEDS to be acknowledged. According to the meaning of the Savior's words and according to the supporting local context, Yeshua is speaking about giving His body and blood to us to eat. Not only do the words themselves mean body, blood, eat and drink, but the protests of the hearers at the time as well as Yeshua's continual insistence on His words confirm that this is no mere symbol. It is a powerful and shocking statement.

Now, if that's what the meaning of the words tell us and if that's what the backing context strongly and repeatedly supports, why should we claim anything different? Why not accept God at His word? You won't find too many other times when it's a great idea to completely ignore the meaning of the text or dismiss the significance of the supporting context. Those are major principles of how we understand. But that is EXACTLY what many people will ask you to do. They will ask you according to some very imaginative reasoning to forget the meaning of the words and the context, and accept human words of explanation instead. Invariably, these words of explanation DENY the Savior's words, and try to convince you that He DIDN'T mean what He said. However, in a conflict between ordinary human explanations and those plainly given by scripture, I strongly urge you to go with scripture. Here, that means believing in the body and blood that the Son of Man promised us.

Not only that, not only do the words and the context support the Real Presence as it has been taught for two thousand years, but the claim that this is a figure of speech has no strong backing. In fact, you can go through scripture from Genesis to Revelation and you will NOT find the phrase to eat a man's flesh or drink a man's blood meaning anything LIKE what those who insist on symbolism say it means. For example, some will insist that eating a man's flesh and drinking his blood must signify to have fellowship with him. However, I urge all of you listening, to go through the Bible from start to finish looking for that idiomatic meaning. I assure you, you will never find it. Moreover, you can look at texts from ancient near eastern cultures, of whom our Jewish fathers came, and you will find NO example of eating a man's flesh and drinking a man's blood meaning to fellowship with him. You won't find that in modern near eastern culture either. If eating flesh and drinking blood mean ANYTHING beyond their literal meaning in near eastern culture, they mean to absolutely hate or annihilate someone. That's right, to hate or annihilate.

Is that what our Savior meant when He said – He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in Me, and I in Him. I don't think so. I don't think you do either.

To continue to the end of John 6, we'll see that Yeshua gives further insight into His words, although that insight is taken by some to be a denial of the words themselves. For our rabbi responds to the protesting disciples saying -- Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend

where he was before? Incredible question. And doesn't it draw our minds and hearts to the awesome divinity of the Son of Man? Doesn't it take us beyond thoughts of, say, cannibalism, to thoughts on the nature of the living God Himself? It seems to be probing and asking – Would you still protest if you saw the divine flesh and blood of the One who speaks to you now?

Yeshua's insight goes further, and He tells us – It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.

Now let's stop again for a moment, and I'll point out that some will claim these words should be read to mean – Hey guys, I'm only speaking symbolically, I'm not speaking about real flesh and blood. Naysayers will really insist that's what they mean. But there are big problems with this assertion. Number one, it's not what the words themselves mean. If that's not what they mean, then we're reading into them greatly to make that claim. Furthermore, while the words are certainly mysterious and I don't think anyone grasps them completely, they can easily be understood in harmony with the plain meaning of everything else Yeshua has said up to this point. For example, they can easily be read as emphasizing the spiritual faith which is necessary both to believe in the Son of Man and to believe in the words that He speaks here about His body and blood. In fact, in support of this reading, I would point you to our rabbi's final words declaring that some of those listening do NOT believe.

Finally, regarding this bold claim that Yeshua has just plainly denied what he has up to this point asserted, I must bring up that even AFTER Messiah refers to His words as spirit, the text of John 6 tells us that – From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Likewise, in regards to belief, Peter's expression of belief after this statement is a kind of amazed belief, which He holds because of his belief that Yeshua is the Messiah. It's a bewildered belief, resting on his faith in who Yeshua is. Now how can we possibly take Yeshua's reference to His words being spirit to be a denial of His earlier words, when the text coming afterward shows us these things – another statement about disciples abandoning Him and a statement of bewildered belief by Peter himself? Apparently the Jewish audience at the time didn't take Yeshua's words to deny what He'd said previously. Why should we?

Our eternal Lord and Savior at His time with us on earth told us—My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in Me, and I in him. Those are the Savior's words, however confounding they sound. Those words are the focal point of this whole discussion, and we can believe in what our Savior said or we can call Him a liar. I certainly haven't responded to every last objection to His teaching to us, but I think you'll find in hearing them, they mostly come down to this – that Yeshua was just playing with His audience, that He tricked them and they fell for it. Really? Is that truly what you think? You know, that's exactly the same claim that

Jehovah's Witnesses make about John 8:58 when Messiah calls Himself by the great I Am. Jehovah's Witnesses will say – Oh no, the Lord and Savior is just playing with them. He's pulling the wool over their eyes. He does NOT mean that He's the great I Am. Do you really want to buy into the same line of reasoning here used against the Real Presence that Jehovah's Witnesses use against the Deity of Yeshua elsewhere? I sure don't. It sounds like weak reasoning in BOTH cases, and I don't think I'd want to be in that company.

What other company are we in if we deny the reality of Messiah's body and blood? Well, it doesn't get any better. From John 6 alone we're in the company of the easily excitable Galilean crowds as well as the company of the disciples that abandoned our Lord. Those are our companions if we scoff at His words -- the ones who walked away and abandoned Him. We're also in the same company with ancient pagans who both mocked and accused early believers of cannibalism, and naturally in the same company with all of the recent theologians who have abandoned the meaning of Yeshua's words, ignored the context of the audience's response, and created a doctrine out of an idiom which nowhere in history exists. That is the company we keep if we abandon the Lord's feast, and it is the company of mockers and scorners.

I know there are some who will reply to these words by asking why it's worth all the argument. Can't we just agree to disagree on what Messiah provided at His Passover? What's the big deal about doctrine? However, I must reply by asking how many other of Yeshua's words you would be willing to treat as virtually irrelevant, and how many other teachings you would treat as inconsequential. I tend to think, if Yeshua said it, it must be important. And one more question I'd pose to you – If God really did offer up the body and blood of his Son, if He really did give us the gift of what is by extension Messiah's entire being, if God truly offered us the chance to eat and drink His divine Word, would you, believer, ever think to turn it down.

And to point to scripture on its amazing importance, Yeshua Himself tells us – Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day. These are Yeshua's own words right here. Does that sound inconsequential to you? It really really doesn't to me. It sounds immensely important. Now there may be some debate in how exactly we describe that life He is promising through His body and blood, but if we don't at least consider it to contain sanctification, holiness, grace in our walk of salvation then we have made the Lord's words nearly meaningless. Yet if our Lord meant what He said, if He wasn't pulling the wool over everyone's eyes including His own apostles, then this teaching is an incredible reality. We should be receiving Him at the feast.

Therefore, I want to ask you to consider all I've said as an invitation to that feast. I'd like you to think about sitting down at our Messiah's Passover, and joining us there. Because when our Lord sat down with his disciples to eat the Passover meal, He offered up the sacrifice of the Passover, and that sacrifice was Himself. He gave Himself body, blood and eternal divine soul saying – Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you – and then – this cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for you. And the Passover is never complete until the sacrifice is eaten. Come. Join us in the upper room. If you feel you can rightfully express your desire, please go to your pastor, and ask him to provide the feast of our Savior's Passover. Ask him to join with our eternal rabbi, and eternal high priest, in giving the bread of life. Consider it a part of being the Remnant of Israel that Messiah has invited you into. A part of the heritage of Abraham, the heritage of Moses, and the heritage of our ancient Jewish priests.

If you're a pastor hearing this, and you've always believed the body and blood to be nothing more than symbolism, please think about all that I've presented here. What I have shown is little more than the ordinary reading of the Bible with attention to its local context, methods we should all agree are sound in knowing the truth. Perhaps you were taught by a minister who was convinced that Jesus was practicing mere trickery in this teaching. Perhaps you accepted it from the beginning. I am sure that whoever taught you was likely a sincere and pious man, and probably a holy man on multiple levels, but what he taught you about the body and blood is wrong. It's been a terrible, tragic nearly-five-hundred-year mistake. Please take on the mantle of our Rabbi and Priest. Go and feed His sheep.

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*Then they sought Yeshua, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, "What do you think-that He will not come to the feast?" (John 11:56)*