

The Real Presence in John 6

A response to “John 6 for Roman Catholics” show by James White

Because of the length of my defense article, I have added a shorter abstract at the beginning, one which I sent to James White to summarize the larger article. It covers what I believe are the main flaws in his arguments. The article itself begins on page 6. Bless you.

John 6 Response Abstract

Hello, I follow your ministry regularly and truly appreciate your work. I wanted to share with you a short summation of my response to your piece on John 6 for Roman Catholics. Although I am not a Roman Catholic, I believe we can accept the words of Jesus at face value, and furthermore, that those words fit well into their local context. So as not to ask you to read my entire long response, I would like to summarize where I think your allegorical interpretation goes wrong, and on the whole why Protestantism has erred in the rite of Communion, and needs to return to a more biblical doctrine.

1: White’s presentation seems to gloss over the opening verses of the chapter, which in fact set the context very well in the coming Passover, and eating the Passover meal. That’s real food and drink. The original Passover included the death of the lamb, eating the lamb, and was followed by the Exodus, in which the nation passed through the sea. But eating actual food is clearly in view from the very beginning of the chapter.

2:It seems Mr. White liberally misuses the principle of first mention. He claims that because he has found a word or a concept earlier in the chapter being given an allegorical meaning, therefore, the later section must have merely an allegorical meaning too. This is hardly the case. To begin with, he does not find a first mention of the actual phrases used by the Lamb later on, such as being told to eat his flesh or drink his blood. There is no first mention of those at all. Secondly, simply finding a word does not convincingly set the meaning of a later appearance of the word, since there are other factors at play, and other elements of the context.

By way of example, look how Easy Believers take 1 John 3:23 where commandment refers to belief, and then demand that “commandments” in the next verse and in 1 John 5:3 must mean nothing but belief. We’re ONLY being told to believe, they say, not to obey commandments. But they’re wrong. Hence, the law of first mention is not a hard science. Easy Believers get it wrong because they do not have the exact word (they have singular versus plural) and also because they ignore multiple other elements of the surrounding context which speak of righteousness and obedience, a context in which commandments can rightly be read as referring to the moral law (among other things). For similar reasons Dr. White simply cannot point to a word here and there and claim we must take the later phrases to be mere allegory. It just becomes his assertion.

3: James refuses to accept that salvation can include belief AND eating the body and blood of Yeshua, yet he is fine in accepting that salvation can include both coming AND believing, as we see them together in the same chapter. Moreover, other NT passages tell us that professing and believing go together in salvation (Romans 10). So why object if belief and eating the New Covenant Passover go together as well?

4. He claims that the distinction between food which perishes and food which endures has some role in showing that Jesus’ later words are mere allegory. Yet this is a presumption. Logic does not demand that. Moreover, it ignores that the body and blood in Communion are themselves spiritual things. They are NOT mere food which perishes (even though they are real food) but by being the divine being of Jesus are food which ENDURES. He seems to refuse to accept any spiritual level in the eating of Yeshua’s divine body, and locks it into being a merely physical thing. I think it would open his eyes to see that messages about spiritual food DO apply to receiving the Savior’s body and blood in Communion.

5. Similarly, in verses mentioning faith, he seems to demand this means Jesus’ later words could not have literal meaning, but merely refer to faith. However, this is wrong on two accounts. Firstly, faith is certainly necessary to receive the New Covenant Passover (at least in a believing way). So faith will be present there. Faith is required to receive His teaching in this chapter (as Peter’s late response shows us). Moreover, believing on Jesus with faith will include every element of the coming Exodus from sin, including accepting His sacrifice, His resurrection, and participation in the New Covenant memorial meal. ALL of these require faith. This is a multi-faceted event which will soon happen. So we cannot LOCK faith out of the meaning of receiving His body and blood.

6. While pointing to first mention as a (if not the) guiding principle of his presentation, Dr. White seems to ignore what comes first and what comes next when it comes to the later portion, particularly when offense is taken. See, they do not take offense at the first mention of belief or God's sovereignty (and I accept the doctrines of grace as well). They take offense when He speaks of His flesh and blood. Moreover, Jesus' first response is not about faith or sovereignty, but a reiteration of the reality of His body and blood. What more does one really want than – my flesh is food indeed, my blood is drink indeed – to say Jesus defends His own teaching? So it seems in claiming they take offense merely at His teaching on faith or sovereignty, Mr. White ignores the first offense and the first response, instead hopping around the text. I think if read naturally it's fair to say Jesus means what He says, and the crowd takes offense at what sounds like cannibalism (although I don't rule out other reasons as well).

7. The presentation practices selective literalism. If we are to take John 6:39 at face value, we should also take John 6:53-56 at face value too.

8. Brother James is not looking at all elements of the context, and is also demanding that phrases mean what he says, without looking fully at their meaning. I've already mentioned that he makes little of the opening of the chapter's context, which is about real eating of a lamb. I must also add that he ignores other supporting context, such as the lesser to greater comparison with the manna in the desert (which really was miraculous) and the new manna, which truly gives life. Symbolical food does not fit in with this comparison. But the divine body and blood of God's Son does. Also, James demands that Jesus' words about giving his flesh for the life of the world can mean nothing at all but the atonement. But clearly, words such as these contain room enough to also refer to His presence in the New Passover, where we consume the Lamb. Just read them. They can refer to more than one thing. Therefore, the meaning James demands sometimes is little more than his assertion. Do you really think all the countless believers and ministers who accepted Yeshua's words just IGNORED the first two-thirds of this chapter? Or did they read it completely, and see that it all fit in together? I think the latter.

9. Like most Protestants, brother James seems to read verses 63-65 as explaining away Jesus' words as mere allegory. Yet that is not at all what they say. It is true they are somewhat ambiguous, but believers in the Real Presence can easily see these words as referring to the

spiritual faith we need to accept His teaching, as well as to His nature. If we know He is the divine Son of God, the words will be less offensive. There is no explaining away in these verses, and if there were, it would do little to explain both the abandonment by the disciples, and Peter's remaining merely based on faith.

10. Mr. White takes passages about the flesh not profiting and the physical food perishing, to claim that Jesus could not have been speaking about His REAL body and blood, since the flesh does not matter. But this takes that concept entirely out of context. The flesh does not profit in certain regards. But not in all. For example, can we say there is no purpose for the flesh in the Incarnation? There is no purpose in the flesh in the Crucifixion? In the Resurrection?

The passages James mentions put the flesh in its lesser place, and in particular show mere carnal attitudes to not be profitable. Yet they are clearly not saying the bodies can mean nothing at all in the world. That would contradict an abundance of scripture. The Son of God TOOK ON the flesh to save us. It is important to say once again, that the New Covenant Passover includes physical elements as well as the spiritual elements. It is NOT a mere physical eating. Demanding that it is seems to be warping your approach and not allowing you to see the Communion for what it is. It is indeed a spiritual thing. I believe you are wearing blinders in this regard.

11. James' dealing with the Fathers is very incomplete. To begin with, he quotes Augustine when he speaks on the nature of God and the Son in general, yet such statements of a general truth leave room for unique usages too. Even if we say that Jesus is in Heaven, that is the broad truth, and leaves room for the unique miracle of His body and blood in Communion. We communicate that way all the time. Augustine, when speaking directly on what the elements of Communion are, elsewhere says plainly that they are Yeshua's body and blood. Why leave that out? Moreover, James fails to bring up the many other Fathers who spoke plainly and sometimes in detail about the reality of the body and blood. Therefore, I think his mention of the Fathers is extremely misleading. If Augustine really did not believe in the Real Presence, then scripture shows him to be wrong, and he would have been against the grain of the early Church.

Finally, more than any one flaw I see in the presentation, I believe it fails because it places a subjective and personalized reading by Mr. White ABOVE the ordinary reading of scripture in its local context, and remember, unless one accepts James' personalized reading, the latter

context shows that the crowd is shocked by the talk of eating flesh and blood, and departs for this reason. We cannot place such personalized (and I believe erroneous) reading over the ordinary reading. If that were the case, we could really make the Bible say almost anything we want. But that is exactly what EVERY Protestant explanation I've heard (including this one) does. It makes the subjective higher than the objective. So I remain believing in the simple words of Jesus about His Passover.

I think if Protestants were less worried about reacting against the Catholic Church, and simply willing to follow scripture wherever it leads, they would give up on this historical error. Scripture reveals the truth. The New Covenant Passover is clearly a real meal, with real food, and according to Jesus it clearly involves consuming the Lamb of the sacrifice.

I'm sure you're very busy, but here is the longer, 30-page response I have written:

<http://www.holinessofthebride.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Real-Presence-Defense-Article.pdf>

This is the faith confession of a Reformed fellowship I found which accepts that the elements of Communion are the body and blood of our Lord:

<http://www.biblecatholics.com/Statement%20of%20Faith.htm>

A relevant quote from their confession:

We believe that we receive the body and blood of Christ at the Lord's Supper when we receive the bread and wine as Christ himself promises us in the Bible. We do not seek to explain how this is possible or exactly how it happens because Christ did not choose to give us an explanation.

Thank you very much. I appreciate all your hard work and the many good fruits of your ministry. May the Lord bless you and keep you.

Article

Today I am going to spend more time than I usually do on a subject, because I want to address a lengthy criticism given against the ordinary reading of John 6, that we really eat and drink the Lamb of God in the New Testament meal. That we really consume the Son of God. That attack on Jesus' words in John 6 and at His last supper was given by brother James White and it will take some time and detail to answer its attack. I will get into quite a few particulars James brings up, but I will not address every single point; number one, I don't have the time and number two, I don't think it's necessary to address every statement in order to show with confidence that his interpretation of John 6 is awkward, quite subjective and in the end anti-biblical. While I know he means well, in the end, he is waging an attack on our Lord, and I want to defend the one that I love.

To let you know, I deeply appreciate Dr. White's ministry, and follow his work fairly regularly. I respect the great amount of work He puts into explaining and defending the faith, and I also think he stands out as having much more integrity than most ministers out there. He's preaching the Word in season and out of season, and is not trying to be trendy or popular. I completely respect that. However, no matter how good much of his work is, brother James falls prey to the mistake that most of Protestantism does, in that he rejects the Bible's plain teaching when it conflicts with his Protestant traditions, and assumptions; in this case in John 6, and the much-loathed by Protestants latter section, in which Jesus says in explicit language that we must eat and drink His body and blood, giving us a foundational teaching on the New Covenant meal, which is soon to come. He will be the Lamb of God on the cross. He is ALSO the Lamb of God in this New Passover, and this New Exodus from bondage. I realize it is Dr. White who over and over claims that Catholics merely follow their tradition, but the opposite is true; Catholics take the scripture at face value. Protestants have to read into it, and insert their views where they are nowhere in the text. But we'll get to more of that later.

While brother James makes the presentation primarily aimed at the Catholic Transubstantiation, I believe this is a bit misleading. It's true, there is specific language and philosophical constructs in that explanation that are not clearly in scripture, but what Dr. White is really attacking at heart is the plain meaning of Jesus' words, NOT only Catholic doctrine. Moreover, in my own presentation, it is Jesus' words I will be defending, not the exact definition of the Transubstantiation, or other attached dogma of the Catholic Church. In my view, the Transubstantiation, along with both Orthodox and Lutheran explanations, are all within the bounds of scripture and are acceptable. Personally, I lean toward the Transubstantiation as

being the best, but not the exclusive explanation. I should also explain that while I will be defending the plain meaning of Yeshua's words – that He really gives His divine body to His children as the Lamb of God to be consumed – I do not accept other facets of Catholic dogma, such as the need for the anointed priesthood or the claim that the Eucharist is a propitiatory sacrifice. I am defending the plain reading of scripture then, not all of Catholic dogma on the subject. So I hope that makes things clear.

Before I begin, I want to summarize the gist of the argument and I also want to briefly review what the plain reading of the text says. Brother James, like any other non-Lutheran Protestant coming at this question, is going to have to explain why we shouldn't read the text according to its literal meaning, despite not only the literal meaning itself but the supporting surrounding context. He is going to need to show how both the literal meaning AND the surrounding descriptions mean something different. So he will go back through the earlier portions of the chapter, which starts about 40 verses (that's a lot by the way) earlier. He will explain how the exposition Jesus gave then DEFINES the words He will later use and tell us to understand those words NOT according to literal meaning. He will later come up with ways of writing off the surrounding contextual support based on what HE claims the earlier passage meant. That's a lot to handle. So basically, to be fair, brother White is going to have to weave a personal, subjective, and sometimes constraining interpretation of many earlier verse and use that personal subjective interpretation to overthrow a plain text. This is what anyone is forced to do when in a similar situation, and efforts like these are typically ruined by one fundamental flaw – they take many personal, subjective and often doubtful thoughts, and try to place them above the plain reading of scripture. It doesn't work that way. So when I took the time to go through Dr. White's piece carefully, and taking notes, I saw little there which surprised me or even caused me to think he was seriously challenging the later text. It just sounded like mere story telling. And more on story telling later.

But let's get to the ordinary reading of John 6. I say ordinary, because it follows the usual way we understand words, whether in the Bible or anywhere else. We take the words at face value, as understood in context according to their dictionary definition. We do not assume there is allegory unless we have strong reason to believe there is. We do not write off the dictionary definitions of words for unique spiritual meanings UNLESS there is powerful cause. That is the ordinary reading. And the truth about the New Covenant which Jesus gives us in John 6 is communicated and can be understood the same way we understand anything else. Jesus, having already spoken in the context of the coming Passover, having already compared Himself to the bread from heaven, but much better than the manna which came to Israel in the desert,

having already presented the necessity of faith in the Son of God, tells the crowd that He is the bread of life, and they must eat this bread to have eternal life. When they are shocked by this stronger and clearer talk about this New Covenant bread, Jesus does NOT back down from it. Rather, He even states more strongly: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.⁵⁴ Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Then, as if that weren't enough, He goes on to EXPLAIN from a different angle, saying: For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.⁵⁶ He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.⁵⁷ As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. Notice, he never explains His teaching as being symbol, but only reiterates it MORE strongly than before, saying not only the same thing with emphasis, but even confirming that His flesh is REAL food and His blood is REAL drink.

Naturally, there are many disciples who leave the Savior at this point, but only His closest stay. Peter's reaction to Yeshua reveals the reason they stay – because they have come to believe in Him. They will accept His teaching and stay because of this. It is an incredible lesson in faith, right there, and through the whole chapter, But I'd say the lesson in faith culminates for now right there. Faith in Yeshua as Messiah and Son of God ALSO comes along with faith in His words, even when they are shocking to us. His closest disciples accepted the Lamb's teaching, which came in the shadow of the coming Passover, and later broke bread with Him at Passover, and received it from Him. What did Yeshua say at the Passover, which Christians traditionally call the Last Supper? Did He say, this is a symbol of my body? No. He said just a short time after this as he gave them the bread and the cup: This is my Body, This is my blood; alternately, this is the New Covenant in my blood. So just about the same language is soon to be repeated at the coming Passover. If we accept their literal meaning, then the bread and cup are Jesus. We are to consume the Lamb of God, just as the Israelites did, but on an entirely new level. Both the meaning of the words and their local context support that.

Now let me get to brother James' walkthrough of the chapter and what he says should define the meaning differently there and even define the various reactions differently. I want to note that brother James makes the charge that Catholics practice eisegesis, or inserting into the text something that is not there, but this is not the case. Catholics allow the text to speak for itself and read it naturally in its local context. They draw from the text what it is saying. It is the Protestant desire to completely allegorize which reads into the text and James will spend the

better part of two hours trying to claim the Bible means something other than it says because HE says so. So it is he who practices eisegeses.

One of the first things to note about his walkthrough interpretation is that he seems to skip out on the very beginning of the chapter. This is strange, especially since he has billed this session as being a walkthrough of John 6 and repeatedly demands we look at its the broader context. Where is the very beginning then? Perhaps James pretty much ignores it, because it is the OPENING VERSES which spell out the context of the Passover. The Passover just happens to be when Jesus would give up His life. It also happens to be the time when Jesus would give His body and blood to consume, in the bread and cup of the Passover meal. This is very important to the context, especially when we get to the end, which zeros in on what's to come. Just as the **Israelite Passover** was a unity of several events – the killing and eating of the lambs and the departure from Egypt, the **New Covenant Exodus** is also a union of events, including Yeshua's Last Supper, His Passion and His resurrection. This is very important. Keep that union in mind, because James is going to try and splice events very harshly, and to focus on one and not the other, but what is approaching in the Passover is indeed a unity of events. They all come together.

The Walkthrough

James begins most of his walkthrough really at verse 15. He speaks on how Jesus withdrew because He knew they immediately wanted to make Him king. Brother James emphasizes how confused the disciples were, as well as the importance on bringing sincere believers, not just people who get immediately excited by Him. Sure, great lesson. James also notes how Jesus performs a miracle by walking on the sea and makes one of His many "I Am" statements, ego eimi, pointing to His divinity. Dr. White emphasizes the phrase "seeking Jesus" to point out that many were not really seeking Him, but only miracles. Jesus said that they came not because of the signs He gave, but because of the miraculous bread He had provided them. James points out the distinction between the signs and the being filled with bread, the latter of which the crowd longed for.

Now much of what Dr. White has begun with here is correct. There really is a picture here of people who follow Jesus ONLY for carnal reasons, and don't really understand who He is or what He will do. There really is a distinction between being filled with bread, and the purpose of those miracles to begin with. No one could have problem with that. The problem is in how

James will use these observations, which is to try and convince His listener that because there is a distinction between signs and getting filled with food, his later statements will only refer to something spiritual, not the actual food of His flesh, as His words say, and as the later local context supports.

He will also claim we should read the latter words as having allegorical meaning because of Jesus' desire to draw sincere believers to Him; hence He will give a coded teaching, apparently even repeat His coded teaching and never once explain it as symbol, and thus allow the true believers to be drawn to Him, and the ones who are false to leave. Like his other statements there is some truth to it as far as drawing in true believers. However to claim Jesus speaks only in allegory is nothing but pure conjecture, and it flies in the face what the end of the chapter actually says.

What James misses here, and elsewhere, is that the context of false believers following the Savior everywhere, and the context of understanding His nature being superior to getting filled with bread, are not limited in the way James wants to limit them. He wants to be able to tell us very narrowly what they mean, when in actuality (and the Church has understood this for thousands of years) the earlier context and Jesus' earlier words fit beautifully with the latter passage about the divine food of His flesh. It is a complex and developing passage. Knowing who Jesus is, after all, is ALSO tied up with having the memorial meal with Him and consuming the Lamb of God. Knowing what the spiritual meaning of that is, versus merely being filled up with bread, is inclusive BOTH of understanding Yeshua's purpose on earth, AND of consuming His flesh and blood. His nature. His sacrifice. The Last Supper, which is the New Covenant Passover meal. These all go together, and all are touched on by the observations we see early in this passage. So there is nothing here which rules out a literal reading of the latter text. Dr. White is just demanding we follow his subjective view, and his application of interpretive rules. But why should we? One last note here, can anyone explain why pointing to the spiritual meaning of a thing actually means that thing has no actual or literal meaning? For example, the fact that Jesus' miracles had sign value does not mean His miracles didn't involve actual bread and actually eating it. So we need to keep in mind, as a general rule, having spiritual meaning does not rule out the literal value. It simply gives its underlying purpose and has a higher value. Jesus' miracles were signs, but they sometimes involved literal bread. That is key here.

Next, Dr. White points to Yeshua's words: "Do not work for the food which perishes." He emphasizes that Jesus was bringing up activities such as eating and food such as bread, which will both appear later. He also lets us know one of his main prongs of attack, which is to bring up the principle of exegeses called the law of first mention; that is we understand what a word or phrase means best by looking to the first time it comes up. This is going to be the main way in which brother James reinterprets, and I'd say wildly misinterprets the latter portion of the chapter. Although we've only covered a few of his comments here, I need to take a few moments to show how weak this foundation he uses is.

While it's true there is a general principle of first mention, it is not some hard and fast rule that can be spread thin, applied to everything, and work every time. It is a principle, and needs to be applied carefully and in the correct manner. Should we accept that brother James will reinterpret flesh and blood later because of the law of first mention? Is it being applied correctly?

No, for a couple of reasons. Number one, James does not even have the first mention of the phrases Jesus uses. Jesus says we must eat His flesh and drink His blood. These phrases NEVER come up earlier in the chapter. So he's got to grasp at a word or a concept. I find this extremely weak. In fact the phrase to eat a person's flesh and to drink a person's blood, when it DOES appear in an allegorical way in scripture, means nothing like what Protestants want it to mean, which is to believe or fellowship. Rather, if it ever appears non-literally, it just means to hate, harm or destroy a person. So obviously that's NOT what Yeshua means. James is therefore applying the law of first mention without even being able to find a first mention in John 6. Moreover, he cannot find an example of the whole phrase in the Bible meaning what he desires it to mean. That is weak.

To give you an example of why a liberal application of first mention does not work like a hard-and-fast rule, let's jump to the book of 1 John. Now here the apostle John says on two occasions very clearly that if we love Jesus we obey His commandments. Yet Easy Believers (those who say that repenting of sin does not come along with faith) will try and use the law of first mention to disprove the ordinary meaning of John's words, but they do so failingly. For example, they will go to 1 John 3:23, when Jesus says His command is to "believe" on the name of Jesus and then claim all Jesus REALLY means when He says obey commandments is to believe

in Him. He is NOT speaking of the moral law and the need to live righteously. He's already defined the word "commandment" as meaning believe. Pretty interesting. They try and overturn the meaning of 1 John 3:24 that way, and of 1 John 5:3. But it fails for them.

It fails in part because they point to the word "commandment" in the singular, but the other passages use "commandments" in the plural. It also fails because of other passages throughout 1 John speaking of the need for righteousness and obedience (1 John 3:4-5; 3:7,8; 3:10, 4:7, 4:20). You see, pointing to a nearby phrase does not mean they own the context.

Commandment does not ALWAYS mean believe. Yet if anything, brother James has a WEAKER case than the Easy Beliefists do here. Because at least they have a very similar word to work with, the difference is only between singular and plural. Moreover, they only have to go back ONE single verse from 24 to 23 to wage one of their attacks. To wage the other they go back 25 verses, which is STILL less that brother James has to go back in going to the beginning of John 6. So my point here is (and I'd love to get more into why the Easy Beliefist interpretation is wrong but I don't have time) James' mistake is to treat the law of first mention like it's the law of thermodynamics or something. It has to be applied rightly, and it can easily be misapplied. He is misapplying it. He is ignoring the difference in words. He is ignoring the other contextual support for the literal meaning of Yeshua's words. He is focusing narrowly ONLY on what he wants to see. So sorry, first mention fails here.

And I have to point out, just as the Easy Beliefists try to shackle apostle John from being able to speak of two things – both belief and obedience – brother James is likewise trying to shackle John 6 from speaking of multiple things – belief and actual eating (among other truths). Yet we know that we are all free to speak of multiple things in one communication, and just as John does in his first epistle, Jesus does in explaining the New Covenant here, albeit in a more developing and complex way. We have no reason to think He can ONLY speak of a spiritual meaning, and not ALSO be talking of real flesh. We have no reason to believe that messages about faith cannot coexist with messages about food, and remember faith is going to be necessary to receive the New Covenant Passover, as well as to accept His teaching on consuming His flesh. Faith is wrapped up in multiple things. We'll see this again and again. James is trying hard to limit the text, but the words of Jesus will not be so limited here.

Next we'll see brother White really flesh out his argument about context that he has centered things on. He says that the spiritual things only find their origin in the Son of Man, and that the Father has put His seal on the Son of Man and demonstrates whom He claims to be. When the crowds ask Jesus what they may do to do the works of God, Jesus replies with the shocking reply – this is the work of God, that you believe on the one whom He sent. Brother James emphasizes just how amazing this claim would have seemed to the crowd. The crowd then asks for a sign to confirm his claims, and remind Him that Moses gave Israel manna in the wilderness, which being a miracle acted as a sign. Jesus replies that it was not Moses who gave bread from heaven, but His Father who is giving you the true bread from heaven. James summarizes Yeshua's words, saying that instead of pointing to the past, Yeshua said what God is doing now is on a whole new level. James reminds us of the similar language in John chapter 5, immediately preceding, in which Jesus spoke of how He was working as His Father was working. This continues an emphasis on the divine prerogative.

Let me stop here and point out that brother James is making a lot of true observations about Yeshua's words. He is indeed showing the divine prerogative, as He has before. He is indeed taking old themes to a new level. Yet what does any of this do the steer away from the plain meaning of His latter words? If anything, I see a great framing of those later words about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. For indeed the supernatural body and blood of Messiah IS a greater food than the manna in the desert. What's coming IS on a whole new level, as Dr. White has said. In fact, I would point out that if ALL Messiah gave us in the memorial meal were a symbolic snack, then it most definitely is NOT on a whole new level. Quite the opposite. It is on a much lesser level. The manna was greater than a symbolic snack. It is the divine body and blood in Communion which is on a whole new level. Dr. White again points out the distinction between the spiritual and the physical, but as I have to mention over and over again in this defense of John 6, this poses no problem for the literal understanding of the body and blood. The spiritual is indeed superior. But being superior does not mean it exists in isolation of the physical. Does it? We see a physical Lamb of God go to the cross and we see physical blood of Christ on the cross! We will be raised in the resurrection of the dead in actual bodies (albeit supernatural ones). So if these incredible spiritual acts of God come with a physical reality, then what's wrong with the Communion bread and cup also coming with the real body of our Lord. You see, he is inventing a problem where none exists.

Next, Yeshua speaks more about the true bread, saying that it is His Father who gives the true bread, which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. The crowd then demands He give them this bread, even calling Him Lord. James points out that the crowd does not see the connection, and how Jesus is identifying who He is. Jesus again says “ego aini”, the I Am of God’s name, saying -- I am the bread of life. James now makes a point that he says is KEY to understanding the chapter, which is that Jesus identifies Himself as the bread. Jesus even clarifies this saying – no one coming to me will ever hunger, no one believing in me will ever thirst. He then concludes we avoid hungering and thirsting not by eating physical bread and wine, but rather by coming and believing.

I have to point out here that there is no rule to say that passages like these cannot be speaking of both belief as well as participating in the New Covenant Passover, which is soon to begin. Why should they be limited to one or the other? It seems it is only by brother James’ personal rulebook. But I see no reason to follow it. And what rule says that words such as bread and hunger cannot refer to both of those things as well. Countless believers since the very beginning of the Church saw they could refer to more than one thing. In fact, and do not miss this point, the bread and cup of communion are NOT mere physical bread and wine. This is a part of correct doctrine on the subject, and a part of the unity that Jesus is speaking of in John chapter 6. Those elements are supernatural, containing the real divine body of Christ. That’s not mere bread that perishes. It is supernatural bread.

Jesus is free to speak of faith AND Communion together, and that union is powerfully relevant, since it takes faith in Him (and this is KEY Mr. White) to accept His teaching on the body and blood. That necessity is very clear at the end, when Peter simply accepts the teaching on faith. They are not mutually exclusive, they are beautifully wrapped up together. I wish Protestants could see that.

One Lutheran confession I looked up (from the Book of Concord) expounded on John 6 and said He was speaking of BOTH spiritual eating AND the Lord’s Supper throughout much of the chapter. This is key. The two exist together, brother White

James next makes another application of the rule of first mention, saying that when in the first place hungering, thirsting and bread are all together, the actions are spiritual. Jesus even speaks of coming and believing. There is no talk of chewing, drinking or swallowing. Dr. White then makes the bold claim that ANY fair analysis of a written document would recognize these as the parameters of what He is talking about.

Now this is what I have already pointed out is a careless and wrong application of first mention. He does not own the context as he thinks he does. And his statement about “any fair analysis” is just his personal subjective view (unlike Jesus’ later words by the way which are clear and which Jesus even defends). Brother James is demonstrating how the Protestant view rests on subjectivity. Number one, James has not pointed out any phrase such as the ones used later in the passage. He’s picking out individual words. Moreover, there is no rule that says a speaker cannot develop a subject, as Yeshua clearly does up to this point in the chapter and will continue to do. So that’s like me saying that the first time manna came up it was real bread, therefore we can’t be talking about anything spiritual later on. It just does not work that way, brothers. Lastly – and please listen carefully – receiving Communion IS a spiritual thing and ALSO it is His divine body and blood. So spiritual things appear along with the literal meaning of Jesus’ later words, as does the necessity of faith. Joining the New Covenant Passover and receiving His body and blood will require faith as well. They are not mutually exclusive. They are wrapped up here together. Please try and see that.

Anyone seriously considering writing off Jesus’ words as being mere allegory ALSO needs to consider this other point about the context, which brother James generally avoids. He wants us to believe all that’s being discussed is faith or intimate relationship. But where else in the Gospels do we see this language appearing? Where is the only other place Jesus’ flesh is eaten or His blood drunk? Of course, we simply go to the narratives of His Last Supper, at the Passover, and we will see (interestingly not in John but in the other three Gospels) the same language used there. We don’t see that language anywhere else. So as far as context goes, there is another reason to understand He’s not just speaking of faith. He is speaking of a real meal and the nature of it.

Brother James continues, reciting Jesus' response that – you have seen me and you are not believing. James points out that the crowd wants to hear his teaching, they want to call Him Lord yet they are not believing. This is because they only desired physical food.

Now there should be no real disagreement with that statement from Dr. White, but the problem is with how he uses it. He uses it to demand Yeshua speaks only of faith and refuses to recognize that His words and the themes throughout could ALSO be pointing to the Passover and His body and blood consumed there. As I pointed out before, was Yeshua crucified physically, or only spiritually? Did he rise only spiritually, or also in a body? James White is simply shackling the text.

Dr. White goes on to say that that statement must have been a kick in the gut, and that this has to be kept in mind in understanding His later words and why the disciples walk away. He then assures us that they did not walk away because His teaching sounded like cannibalism.

Once again, the claim that they walked away over earlier statements like this, and not the later teaching, is truly brother James' conjecture. That's not what the text itself would lead us to believe. They do not get upset when Jesus says we must believe. They do not get upset when He says they want to call Him Lord but are not believing. They get upset after He explains we must eat His flesh and drink His blood and even reasserts that His flesh is food indeed, and His blood is drink indeed. That's when they get upset, and then walk away. And notice, when Yeshua defends His teaching, He does not defend it by reiterating His statement about belief. That's what we should expect if James White is correct. Rather, Jesus reiterates his statements about eating His body and blood, and He does so more strongly than before. So here the Protestant view has to just ignore the text itself in favor of imagination.

Next, brother James brings us to Jesus' powerful statement of God's sovereignty and salvation: "all that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one coming to me I will never cast out" He notes that man's religions are based on what man can do, but this incredible teaching shows what really saves us, which is that the Father gives us to the Son. Then it is the Son who keeps us. He asks if we really believe that ALL the Father gives Jesus will come to Him, or do we believe the Father will fail sometimes? A lot of people like to hear that second part, that Yeshua will never cast us out, but they don't like to hear the first, that every soul given by the Father will come to Jesus. It shows God's incredible sovereignty in salvation, not our own works.

Dr. White actually spends some time on this subject, I think not only because he will fit it into his overall narrative about John 6, but because he really wants to emphasize that point for the listener. We do not decide on salvation. God does. And to let you know how I understand passages like this in the Bible, I understand them about the same way Dr. White does; I believe that God chooses His children and all He chooses will come to Jesus and be saved. There may be a level on which human beings have choice, but it is not causative to salvation. There is no biblical way to paint a picture that we work things out 50-50 with God. Not at all. The salvation of the human soul is a supernatural act of God. It is not an act of man. So I understand verses like these the same way.

However, I object to how brother James will weave this into his narrative, in claiming this offensive teaching is the REAL reason why the crowds left Yeshua. While naturally more than one thing could play a role, it is clear from the text itself that the crowd did not leave because they disliked His reformed-sounding teachings. They didn't leave because they were a bunch of ancient Arminians. They were offended by His talk of eating His flesh, and they left after He reasserted it. And Yeshua, in defending His teachings, never went on to explain He was only teaching about faith, or He was only teaching about sovereignty. He defended His words with more similar ones. God's sovereignty in salvation is not the reason for the scene we see in the final 20-or-so verses. In fact I'd suggest since brother James takes this incredible statement about sovereignty at face value, he ought to take other incredible statements here at face value too. Like the ones at the end. Take those literally too!

James asks the theological question – why is it that Jesus will never cast out those coming to Him? As the Savior says, He was come out of heaven to do the Father’s will. This reflects once again His perfect union with the Father. He is the incarnate one.

I can’t help wishing again that Dr. White would listen to His own statements. Jesus is the INCARNATE one. The in-the-flesh one. He may be from heaven but His being is incarnate, and in fact always will be. We CANNOT toss aside that physical side of things in this chapter. The physical side, as James is willing to note there, is quite real.

James continues on the theme of the Son doing the will of the Father. He cites Yeshua’s further words: “This is the will of the One who sent me, of all He has given me, I lose none, but raise it up on the last day” He continues on the theme of God’s power in salvation, pointing out that Jesus delivers all that the Father sends. He does not have a 95% success rate. He delivers all. Amen. Then Jesus says: “for this is the will of my Father, that everyone gazing upon the Son and believing in Him...and I myself will raise Him up on the last day” James summarizes, saying that if you are given by the father, you are going to be the one gazing on the Son, beholding Him.

Now this is going to come up a number of times in defending John 6 from James’s spiritualizing of it, but I really wish James would listen to his own words right here. Because this is key. James claims that we should not accept Yeshua’s literal words because He said if we eat His body then He will raise us up on the last day, yet we know that it is faith by which we are saved. Well, James has got the answer to the apparent conundrum right there in his own words. James can fully accept that those given will also behold and believe. But then which one saves? Does “beholding” save anyone? I don’t know anyone who would claim that looking, even spiritually seeking, is what saves someone. Yet James is perfectly fine with looking and believing BOTH being connected to salvation. Thus, He should have no problem with believing and consuming the Lamb of God ALSO going hand in hand in salvation. That is because the one is the direct cause, the other something which goes along with it. If James consistently played by his own rules, he should have no problem with accepting that eating the Lamb of God raises us up in the sense that it is the outworking of faith, or something that intrinsically goes along with it.

To give a few more examples of such unities that I think everyone accepts, we know in Romans chapter 10, that Paul speaks of professing with our mouth AND believing in our heart as leading to salvation. Yet do any churches teach that it is our words that save us in Christ? I don't think so. They would see professing with your lips as a natural outworking of that faith, or something like that. We even have a statement in 1 Timothy 2 that women are saved in childbearing. Yet we can accept that we are all saved through faith, and see the childbearing, and often the suffering and sacrifice that come along with it, as an outworking of that faith-based salvation. Moreover, we speak of salvation through faith, yet we qualify that faith by multiple characteristics, such as knowing Jesus is God's Son and that He rose bodily from the grave. That's only a few things that come along as an intrinsic part of a saving faith. Therefore, if we can accept unities like those and others regarding salvation, then we can also accept the unity of faith and eating the Lamb of God in John 6. Dr. White himself shows he accepts such unities in the very same chapter, unities of looking and believing. He needs to stick to that reasoning when it comes to the later part. But unfortunately he won't.

Now Dr. White does some further emphasizing of God's sovereignty in this teaching. He points out that the same "him" in the text which comes and the "him" who is raised up are the same "him." We need to know that if we accept that Jesus raises all His children up on the last day, we need to also accept that He saves all whom the Father sends. God both determines salvation and keeps us safe in His Son. The ones coming, believing and looking are all the same ones given by the Father. Amen to that. This is part of one of the themes in John's Gospel, as the Son being the one who reveals the Father. Brother James then returns to his main arguments, saying there is already a great deal in Yeshua's teaching that is "in their face" so the crowds must have abandoned Him for that reason, not for His words about eating His flesh.

As I've pointed out before, now Dr. White's just sticking his own thoughts in the text. The crowd did not walk away when Jesus said any of this. They walked away when He spoke of consuming His flesh. Moreover, when questioned, Yeshua does not reassert his teaching about God's sovereignty, but reasserts the reality of eating His flesh and blood. That's what the text actually says. He even goes so far as to say – my flesh is food indeed, my blood is drink indeed. Notice, He did not say, truly truly I say to you, all the Father sends are mine, or truly truly I say to you I WILL raise them up on the last day. No, Christ reasserts the thing that was offending them – consuming His flesh. THAT is the offending factor. How anyone can translate – my flesh is food

indeed – into – I save all the Father sends me indeed – I do not know, except by imagination. So this is a brutal forcing of man’s words into Jesus’ teachings,

Brother James goes on with a comparison to John chapter 8, taking note of those in the chapter who believe in a flash, but do not have true belief as an ongoing action. He questions how anyone could think Jesus meant believe and then also have access to sacraments, as the Catholic Church teaches. He also recites more of Yeshua’s teaching, that He is: “the bread that comes down from heaven so that anyone may eat of it and not die.” He emphasizes the contrast with the preceding verses about manna, because: “if anyone eat of this bread, he will live forever.” He then concludes (as he’s mentioned already) that if one lives forever by believing, then to eat must mean to believe.

Now, I’ve addressed that restrictive reading of the text already, but let me return to it briefly. We have already seen in this very chapter how believing can come along with other things, such as being sent or beholding. If James can accept that, then he should be able to accept that eating the Lamb in the New Covenant meal can come intrinsically along with faith too. Hence, Jesus speaks of it as bringing eternal life. And remember, the New Covenant and the New Covenant meal are things that Yeshua will IMMANENTLY provide. That’s mentioned in the very beginning of this exposition. They are coming up very soon, and this whole chapter comes in the shadow of the Passover. So we have a unity here. Not an exclusive talk about belief. James obviously accepts that other things besides belief can be said to bring eternal life, but he does not want to accept it here because he wants to stick with Protestant traditions OVER the words of Jesus. Those traditions are powerful things.

James goes on to say Yeshua is pointing to Himself as the means of eternal life. He is the source of life. This is what we must believe. Amen. Yeshua also says that the life He will give is His flesh. James explains he sees this pointing to the cross. Naturally then we should NOT see it pointing toward the bread and cup in the new Passover.

As I have said before, James through his walkthrough is trying to restrict the text as much as possible. He's trying to say it can ONLY speak of this or that, but not of the actual body and blood. But is that reasonable? Remember, the sacrifice of the lamb of God in the Mosaic Passover was not isolated from its being consumed in the Passover meal. They went together. In like manner, the New Covenant sacrifice is not isolated from the New Covenant meal, the new manna, the body and blood of Christ in Communion. They are part of a unity now as they were in the Mosaic Covenant. Does it point to the cross? Sure. Absolutely. Does it also point to consuming the Lamb of God in our memorial meal? If we accept the text at face value, without trying forcefully to reinterpret it, then absolutely, yes it does. We are talking of a unity here.

Continuing on this very fractured base, James asks if the crowd has gotten the point here, and of course they have not. They THINK Jesus is speaking of physical food but He is not. So when the Lamb says: "Truly truly I say unto you, unless you eat the flesh..." He must not be speaking of any real eating whatsoever. Then brother James asks his audience to "lay aside your traditions" since the concepts present in the Catholic Transubstantiation could not possibly have been in their minds, concepts such as substance and accidents which distinguish between what the bread and cup really are and what they look like. James then comes up with his own definition of "literal" saying that when the author has given you the parameters of what he is speaking of, the "literal" meaning is his intended meaning. So for James, the literal meaning is to believe.

Well, there a couple of big things here to respond to. Firstly, I find it confusing that he demands to work with a rare use of the word literal. To most people, the literal meaning of a word is the dictionary definition of a word. It is NOT the mere intended meaning, as Dr. White defines it. So I will use the common meaning of literal when I speak. The literal meaning of Yeshua's words is that we really eat his flesh and blood. James is speaking of what he believes is the INTENDED meaning. Not the literal one.

Secondly, I think he confuses the issue, both for himself and for his listeners, when he makes the issue about the precise wording of the Transubstantiation as opposed to the literal meaning of Jesus' teaching. The Transubstantiation is a mere philosophical explanation of what is going

on the Communion. The fact that the audience would not have thought according to that exact philosophical terminology changes the situation not one iota. Jesus is speaking literally in John 6 regardless of whether one understands them according to substances and accidents, or according to some other terminology. He is speaking of real flesh and blood, as He says in His own words and expressly defends. That truth is not dependent on the wording of the Transubstantiation. In a similar way, the exact wording of the doctrine of the Trinity certainly was unknown to 1st century Jews and was never expressly taught by Jesus or the apostles. Does that mean it's not true? Of course not. That's because the content of the Trinity is all found in scripture, even if the exact language to explain it came later. It doesn't make the Trinity any less true. The same is true here, and James misses it. Jesus means what He says, Catholic definition or no.

Furthermore, as James has already done, he continues to misuse the law of first mention. He is eager to point to elements of the passage that support his view, but he ignores elements of the context that support the literal reading. After all, we have the context of the Passover, which is a real meal, we have a greater food than the miraculous manna, as well as Jesus being the true bread from heaven. There's a lot of eating involved. He also fails with first mention because he is working with individual words, but simply cannot the phrases that Jesus uses appearing earlier in the chapter. Lastly, He ignores the fact that the spiritual nature is indeed present in Communion, NOT JUST physical food, and that faith is present in Communion too, and is necessary to receive it. So faith cannot be isolated in the earlier verses and be said to not exist in the later literal words of Jesus. Faith is wrapped up in the new Passover. Faith is NEEDED to consume the Lamb. For these reasons, if not others, this argument cannot work for brother James. Pointing to a few similar words a bunch of verses earlier does NOT as a rule allow you to redefine a text. You need stronger arguments than that.

James continues with the same point, claiming that words like "filled" and "have thirst", and the contrast between food which perishes and food which endures mean that Jesus' final speech is about believing, and that's it. He then amazingly accuses Catholics of ignoring everything that came earlier in the text when they take Jesus at His word. He furthermore claims that the real Presence (the belief that the bread and cup really become His body and blood) came 1,000 years later.

Wow. This is where Dr. White, as someone I follow regularly, really disappoints me. The former part of his comments here I've answered to already, but I want to address the others. It is truly absurd to claim that Catholic theologians simply ignored the rest of John chapter 6 in taking Jesus' words literally. Catholic theologians, rather, have read the whole Bible, and the whole Gospel and the whole of John chapter 6, just as he has. Yet they do not see any need to jump through hoops to make the literal meaning of the words disappear. The earlier portion of John 6 is in good harmony with a literal reading of the later portion. One really has to stretch to see a problem there. Moreover, it is incredibly misleading to claim the Real Presence came 1,000 years later. The content of the doctrine was present in the earliest of Christian writings and quickly became the doctrine of the early Church. Early Church fathers spoke in plain language of the bread and cup being Jesus' body and blood. There is a mountain of commentary to show that. So why would James say 1,000 years later? Jesus gave the shocking teaching to His disciples, Jesus defended the teaching, Jesus never explained the teaching as an allegory (as He had done with some other of His teachings) and the early Christian leaders, who actually overlapped with the lives of the apostles, overwhelmingly taught that Communion was His body and blood. It is true they did not have the same philosophical language, but without a doubt they took Jesus literally. Jesus is the new Passover Lamb and they understood that. And similarly to the old, He both gave His life, and is consumed at the feast.

From here, James repeats his assertion that the "literal" meaning is not the dictionary definition, or the common understanding of a word, but rather what you get when you "read the text through" to understand what it intends. So he insists he is giving us the "literal" meaning of eating Yeshua's body and blood. Dr. White then tries to reinterpret the context surrounding Jesus' words, and insist Jesus said these shocking words to Jews who would be disgusted by them because they were not believing in Him, and He repeated His shocking words with strength and emphasis because He wanted to reassert the centrality of Himself.

I've got to say, this is just a radical rereading of a text. It is odd that he is sure that Catholics and others who believe in the Real Presence are ignoring the context of the earlier part of the chapter, but he feels fine with ignoring the context here, and stopping at nothing to reinvent it. And of course he would never allow anyone to play with such rules to reinvent the teaching

about God's sovereignty in salvation, which, in a sense is also very shocking. He's playing very fast and loose with scripture when he hears the words body and blood.

This kind of thing is exactly where Protestants NEED to step back from their own traditions and read the Bible honestly seeking truth. Jesus does not double down on the Father sending Him souls. He does not double down on the need to believe. No. In plain and explicit language He doubles down on the need to eat His flesh and drink His blood. Just read it for yourself. That is what He doubles down on, and it makes good sense both in the context of the coming Passover in which He is the Lamb, and also in its plain reading and local context. The coming Passover will involve eating the Lamb.

James White does try out a different approach than most Protestants I have heard, in that he seems to say the disciples do NOT misunderstand Jesus, but rather they understand Him correctly to be speaking of believing, and they leave because of this. It's a very clever attempt and I don't think I've heard this approach before. However, as I've mentioned, James may talk about the law of first mention a lot, but he pretty much ignores the first offence taking place right here, because when the disciples first took offence, it was to language about eating flesh. And when Jesus first reinforced His statement, it was also in language about His flesh truly being food. He's got to ignore that fact of context and point to something else there later to paint this picture. Too bad that's not how almost everyone normally reads this text, and it requires some hopping around to do so.

His claim that the disciples who abandoned Jesus actually understand He's only speaking of faith also ignores Peter's reaction later, which to almost any reader is not one of understanding, but rather of amazed belief: We're going to believe you on this, because of the faith we have in you. It does not express understanding of Jesus' words. If we allow in the elements of context Dr. White is ignoring, we see why most people are fine with saying that Catholics read John 6 literally. Because we see a context in which it is eating flesh that causes offense and eating flesh which Jesus defends. We see no explanation that this is merely symbolic. Then we see many abandon Jesus and Peter believe merely because of faith. I believe if you read it for yourselves, you will find that to be the natural reading of the text. And you will also find brother James' interpretation of it to be awkward at best, and one which ignores multiple elements of the context.

What that means, is that Protestants are back to their old dilemma in this chapter; one of denying the literal meaning of the words, and hence making Jesus, and God, a liar. Because if the disciples are offended because of eating flesh and drinking blood, and Jesus does NOT really mean that, then God is guilty of lying, and that is impossible. Allegory is allegory, but lying is lying. Telling a meaningful story with embedded meaning, which not everyone will understand, is allegory. But taking active steps to deceive a person, as Jesus would be doing here, is lying. So ask yourself: when does the crowd get offended? And what does Jesus respond?

Brother James continues with his radical reinterpretation of the later teaching of the Lamb, certain that his earlier assertions about the text will set him up very well here. What Jesus is really talking about is having an intimate relationship with Him. This goes throughout the chapter from the beginning to the end, including the teaching “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood...” He’s talking about our intimacy with Him. James point to the ones given to the Son and risen on the last day in versus 39 and 40 and reminds us these are the ones coming and believing. Therefore, this is what Jesus is talking about here.

Well let me start by saying that if you asked any Roman Catholic, or believing Lutheran or others who take Jesus at His word, they would agree that they DO have an intimate relationship. And a big part of intimate relationship is receiving His body and blood. Jesus certainly is speaking of intimate union. But here and elsewhere James is demanding this union exist in isolation from the memorial meal and Jesus’ actual body and blood, when of course it need not. He’s forcing that logic upon the text. You see there is no disconnect between the intimacy of believing and the things that we do IN that state of belief, such as the new Passover and the body and blood. The faith comes along here with the things intrinsic to a relationship of faith. The Protestant position simply tries to splice one from the other.

Dr. White sums up saying all Jesus does here is give a description of what it means to do these things. He couldn’t be speaking of real eating, since he speaks in the continuous and nobody

eats continuously. Then he goes on to attack other particulars of Catholic doctrine including the priesthood, although some of those particulars are not necessary to a literal reading of the text.

Here I see brother James contradicting Himself again, as he is able to see “looking” to Christ as the source of salvation as distinct from believing in Christ, but he is unwilling to think the same way regarding believing and eating the body and blood of the Lamb. Faith absolutely does go together with consuming the Lamb, and as I’ve pointed out will be required to join in the New Covenant memorial meal to begin with.

His argument by verb tense is not very convincing. One can do something continually, but not every waking moment. One can do something continually, but in periods of activity spread out over time, as we very regularly do. The resources I consulted on the present tense in the Greek said it can refer to something ongoing OR repeating. Communion would be the latter.

Moreover, there is nothing to say that there cannot be a spiritual meaning regarding faith and ALSO a real activity of eating, both of which are continuous in their own way. So James is inventing a problem with the present continuous that simply does not exist for a literal understanding.

After repeating a few of his earlier statements reinterpreting Jesus’ words, James claims that the Lamb cannot be speaking of eating His flesh, since according to Catholic tradition there are many who eat His flesh by taking Communion, yet end up in hell. He then repeats his claim that to eat this bread simply means to be coming to Christ and believing in Christ.

Now I do not share the same understanding as Catholic theology, so I can’t explain completely from their perspective. I accept that the true saints of God will persevere, and will enter heaven. However, this argument still does not take away from the meaning of body and blood in John 6, as many who would literally take Communion do not actually believe anyway, and being without faith do not have eternal life. James’ words reiterate one of his faulty premises, as he once again is willing to unite coming to Christ and believing in Christ, but refuses to unite believing in Christ and eating the body and blood, which certainly go together too.

Brother James now puts his reitnerpretive brush to some more words toward the end of John 6. He cites verse 60: "therefore, many of his disciples, when they heard this said, this is a hard saying, who is able to hear it?" and claims they left after they heard a "summary statement" of everything he had said. He then tackles Yeshua's response: "Does this cause you to be scandalized, what then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?" Dr. White explains this means that if My words offend you now, what will you think when you see me glorified. He goes on to explain the words "it is the spirit who gives life, the flesh profits nothing" as many Protestants do, saying they only confirm the Savior is not speaking of real flesh and blood.

Brother James is once again demanding we accept his subjective rereading of the text, and I would add one that is unnatural according to the context. The disciples who abandoned Jesus did not say "these are hard sayings" but rather "this is a hard saying." So the idea that they did not leave because of disgust at eating his flesh is a stretch. Their abandonment comes immediately after that teaching. Not that the former teachings played no role, but in context it is the eating flesh that is clearly first disturbs them.

James reading of verse 62 has some truth to it, but he misses out on a powerful message of faith there: if these disciples find this teaching hard, they would not have such problems if they understood His nature; if they understood Him as the one who is from heaven and will rise up to heaven. His very nature plays a role in accepting this teaching (as we will see with Peter's confession of faith.) So this verse, while obviously a bit ambiguous, easily fits the literal understanding.

Lastly, the claim that the "flesh profits nothing" somehow disproves the literal meaning of Yeshua's words is to simply insert one's own meaning. Granted, their meaning is not crystal clear (similarly to the previous verse) but they do not say -- I am speaking only in symbol -- as Protestants wish them to say. Just read them yourself. As I've mentioned before, if the flesh profiting nothing can be taken in a hammered flat way, then did the flesh profit nothing at the Incarnation? Did the flesh profit nothing at the Cross? Interestingly, while accusing Catholics

and others of isolating these verses from spiritual meaning, he himself is isolating them from spiritual meaning. The Real Presence of Christ in the bread and cup does not deny any spiritual meaning here. As Yeshua's words here reveal, they DEMAND spiritual meaning, a part of which is understanding Christ's nature, and having faith in Him to accept this teaching. This is a major part of the meaning of verses 62 and 63. It is indeed the SPIRIT that gives life. The Spirit is not absent from the act of consuming the Lamb. It is present there, as is faith.

Brother White soon returns to a comparison with John chapter 8, noting that there too Jesus pressed the need to continue in his word and be set free, but by the end of the chapter they were trying to stone Him. Jesus was not all about appeals to the flesh and seeker-sensitive approaches, and as a result many of his disciples withdrew. James notes Peter's words of faith in Jesus and acceptance of his hard teaching, "Lord, to whom may we go." He explains that Peter is able to say this because it is He who chose them, not the other way around. He summarizes much of his talk saying that we have seen you can walk through all of John 6 noting the language and concepts used in the text, seeing that they continue on to the end. We do not need to build a wall between the later part and the rest.

James is certainly correct that Jesus is not about seeker sensitive approaches. True. One thing I appreciate about Dr. White's work is the he's not all about that either. He places truth above popularity. However, James is ignoring the part of that truth which actually points to the literal reading. For in not being "seeker sensitive" all the time, He is giving the blunt and shocking truth both of who He is and of what the New Passover meal is. So do not let James White limit what this fact can mean regarding doctrine.

James claims to have given a walkthrough that shows if you read the whole chapter CONSISTENTLY, you will not understand the body and blood literally. But those words do not accurately describe all he has done. He has pointed to certain elements of the context, and he has avoided others. He has put unnecessary restrictions on the text, to unfairly limit to only speaking spiritually. He also has had to ignore the literal meaning of the body and blood and grossly reinterpret the later context. He has given us a very subjective, as well as flawed reading

of the earlier text, and then tried to force it on the end of the chapter. It is not a natural reading of the whole chapter.

Brother James now speaks directly to the early Church and its beliefs. He rightly states that the early Church did not have all the rules and regulations about the Eucharist as the later Church did. He also states that the early Church believed the doctrine of the Real Presence, and not the Transubstantiation, although he seems to define Real Presence as a mere mystical presence, from what I can tell from his words.

James then goes on to quote a few passages from Augustine, which he believes refutes the idea the early Church took Jesus' words literally. He quotes Augustine speaking about the nature and presence of God, saying: "do not doubt that the man Christ Jesus is now there whence He will come again...and will come from no other place but there to judge the living and the dead and He will so come...in the same form and substance of flesh in which he gave immortality but He did not take away its nature...according to this form we must not believe he is everywhere present....it does not follow that what is in God is in Him, so as to be everywhere as God is...God and man in Him are one person and both are the...but in heaven as man...but in heaven as man."

He also provides another quote: "to answer for ourselves in the first place... while we consider it no longer a duty to offer sacrifices, we recognize sacrifices as part of the mysteries of Revelation...they all pointed to the one sacrifice which we now commemorate. Now that this sacrifice has been revealed...sacrifice is no longer binding as an act of worship, it retains its symbolical authority"

For assuredly, He would not have required offerings of which He had no need, except to teach us something that it would profit us to know, and which was suitably set forth by means of these symbols"

"Before the coming of Christ the flesh and blood of this sacrifice were foreshadowed in animals slain, in the Passion of Christ the types were fulfilled by the true sacrifice; after the ascension of Christ, this sacrifice is commemorated in sacrament"

James also summarizes Augustin elsewhere as saying: We have been deprived of body of Christ until second coming.

To tell you the truth, I think Dr. White's treatment of the early Church's beliefs is not fair at all to his readers. Such a brief and misleading section of quotes could give someone who didn't know better the wrong idea. Dr. White, in avoiding the many teachings of the early Church supporting the literal meaning of Yeshua's words, has focused on Augustine, and not only that, he has focused on texts speaking primarily of the nature of God and His presence with us. Why only mention those? That they speak in a broad sense of Christ not being present incarnate with us is true, that is the broad truth. Yet the body and blood in the Eucharist is a unique miracle, and its uniqueness does not always factor in to how we speak of God or Yeshua's presence here. It is common for people who believe in Christ's body and blood in Communion to state we will not be with Him until the next world, simply because that is the common truth. In fact, if you asked me right now, having spent quite a few hours defending the Real Presence - where is Christ -- I would almost automatically reply that He is in heaven at the right hand of the Father. Yet I am not denying the His real presence in Communion. I am simply speaking in a blanket way that leaves out that unique miracle. We speak that way all the time. Therefore, I believe James is likely reading too much into Augustine's philosophical statements about God and Christ's presence here.

Moreover, James also cites a few phrases in which the meal is spoken of as a commemoration, but that does not contradict the literal meaning either. It is both a memorial meal and ALSO the divine body of Christ. Such passages do not disprove that Augustine accepted the literal meaning. James cites several places where the meal is called a symbol. However, those of us who take Jesus literally believe that symbol coexists quite fine with the reality of Christ's body. Now, it is possible that Augustine had a different view of the sacrifices than the Roman Catholic Church developed, but since I do not seek to defend all of Catholic theology here, only the plain words of Jesus, that possibility is really beyond the scope of this already lengthy essay.

I believe brother James also somewhat muddies the issue by an apparent reinvention of the term Real Presence, which he claims to accept is true. But he claims Real Presence only means a

mystical presence, the same way Jesus is present whenever we obey Him. Yet the doctrine of the Real Presence includes that He is present in His divine body, not just mystically, as He is all the time. He is present mystically even when we are sleeping. So while the early Church did not have the full language of the Transubstantiation, it believed in a Real Presence that was very similar, and accepted the elements as His body and blood. Some of the early Christian teachings sound more like the Sacramental Union or Consubstantiation of Lutheranism, as opposed to the Transubstantiation, but they commonly take Jesus literally, as most Protestants refuse to do.

Let me provide a few different statements from the early Church, which left a mountain of teaching supporting the literal understanding of Christ's words. Firstly, let's go to Augustine, not when he is speaking about the nature of God or his Son, but about the Eucharist specifically. Isn't that fair? Here is what Augustine says: "You ought to know what you have received, what you are going to receive, and what you ought to receive daily. That Bread which you see on the altar, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the Body of Christ. The chalice, or rather, what is in that chalice, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the Blood of Christ."

Does that sound like nothing but symbol to you? It sounds pretty real to me. However, even if Augustine DID have a purely symbolist view, he was simply wrong according to Holy Scripture, and was going against the flow of the early Church.

Here are a few more teachings from the early Church, which I found among others at therealpresence.org:

Justin Martyr

"This food we call the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake except one who believes that the things we teach are true, and has received the washing for forgiveness of sins and for rebirth, and who lives as Christ handed down to us. For we do not receive these things as common bread or common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Savior being incarnate by God's Word took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food consecrated by the Word of prayer which comes from him, from which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation, is the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus."

Irenaeus

"For just as the bread which comes from the earth, having received the invocation of God, is no longer ordinary bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly, so our bodies, having received the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, because they have the hope of the resurrection."

[Christ] has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be his own Blood, from which he causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, he has established as his own Body, from which he gives increase to our bodies."

St Cyprian of Carthage

"So too the sacred meaning of the Pasch lies essentially in the fact, laid down in Exodus, that the lamb - slain as a type of Christ - should be eaten in one single home. God says the words: 'In one house shall it be eaten, ye shall not cast its flesh outside.' The flesh of Christ and the Lord's sacred body cannot be cast outside, nor have believers any other home but the one Church.",

St. Athanasius of Alexandria

'And again:' Let us approach the celebration of the mysteries. This bread and this wine, so long as the prayers and supplications have not taken place, remain simply what they are. But after the great prayers and holy supplications have been sent forth, the Word comes down into the bread and wine - and thus His Body is conected."

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

"Contemplate therefore the Bread and Wine not as bare elements, for they are, according to the Lord's declaration, the Body and Blood of Christ; for though sense suggests this to thee, let faith stablish thee. Judge not the matter from taste, but from faith be fully assured without misgiving, that thou hast been vouchsafed the Body and Blood of Christ.

I think in doing your own research about the early Christian belief in the real presence, you will only find more similar passages. The early Church took Jesus at His word in John 6, as well as in His words of institution. They also saw how His words fit into the overall context of not just the chapter James is speaking about, but the whole Bible. They never isolated John 6 verse 40-or-so from everything else. They took it all in together, and they saw the beautiful harmony and consistency which James refuses to see.

To give you a brief overview from the whole Bible, let's go to the Passover at the Exodus, and look at what happened to the Passover lamb:

Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. ⁷ And they shall take *some* of the blood and put *it* on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses **where they eat it**. (Exodus 12:6-7)

In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones. ⁴⁷ All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. ⁴⁸ And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants* to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For **no uncircumcised person shall eat it**. (Exodus 12:46-48)

"You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you; ⁶ but at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight, at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt. ⁷ **And you shall roast and eat it** in the place which the LORD your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. (Deuteronomy 16:5-7)

Now let's look at how some of the offerings in the Temple were eaten:

'The flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering for thanksgiving **shall be eaten** the same day it is offered. He shall not leave any of it until morning. (Leviticus 7:15)

And Moses said to Aaron and his sons, “Boil the flesh *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting, **and eat it there** with the bread that *is* in the basket of consecration offerings, as I commanded, saying, ‘Aaron and his sons shall eat it.’ (Leviticus 8:31)

The priests, the Levites—all the tribe of Levi—shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; **they shall eat the offerings of the LORD** made by fire, and His portion. (Deuteronomy 18:1)

Now let’s look at Jesus’ teaching about eating the NEW Passover:

I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I 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.” (John 6:48-51)

Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless you eat the flesh** of the Son of Man and **drink His blood**, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:53-54)

Next let’s look at what Jesus says AT His new Passover:

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, “**Take, eat; this is My body.**”

²⁷Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸For **this is My blood of the new covenant**, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

(Matthew 26:26-28)

And He took bread, gave thanks and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, saying, “**This is My body** which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

²⁰ Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, “**This cup is the new covenant in My blood**, which is shed for you.

(Luke 22:19-20)

I know that is a brief review, but I think it enough to show you that not only are Jesus’ words consistent with the whole of John 6, but they are also consistent with overall biblical patterns, including the Passover, the temple sacrifices, and His own later sacrifice and Passover meal. The eating of the offering is consistent in all of them.

Concluding Thoughts

In review, let me point out the main reasons why Dr. White’s walkthrough of John 6 and his allegorical interpretation fail. Firstly, he fails to notice elements of the early context which strongly support the literal meaning, such as the Passover, Jesus being the bread from heaven, the lesser to greater comparison between the old manna and the new manna. James White also attempts a very loose version of the law of first mention, one which fails to actually find a first mention at all, but leaves him grasping at concepts and then using them to paint his own picture. We just have to trust his say-so. Moreover, in reinterpreting the later section, James ignores the fact that the shocked reaction of the crowd immediately follows the teaching about eating flesh and blood, but demands we accept it is a reaction to the teaching about Jesus and His centrality. He also ignores the Jesus immediately reiterates His words about the body and blood, rather than reiterating His words about His nature, or faith, or His centrality in salvation. James just demands we ignore these elements of the local context. He also claims the disciples abandon Jesus because He has made a summary statement about belief. This reveals he is suddenly willing to ignore his own rules, as he refuses to go back to where the crowd actually gets offended by talk of flesh and blood, but demands the crowd leaves because of one phrase he thinks is really offensive. Thus he chops up the flow of the ending section, and ignores any need to go back earlier. He furthermore ignores the fact that apostle Peter’s response is not one of understanding, but rather simple acceptance based on faith, which completely undermines his reinterpretation of this section. If Peter didn’t get it, are we to think that the disciples who abandoned Jesus DID? James is just picked and choosing what he wants to pay attention to here.

Also, from start to finish, James makes the error of demanding that words can ONLY be speaking in a spiritual sense and not also be inclusive of literal meaning. As I pointed out many times, he thinks that if Jesus refers to faith, then He cannot also be speaking in the same long narrative of actual eating. He assumes that if Jesus calls Himself bread, He cannot possibly mean His REAL flesh. However, in this complex and developing passage, we can easily see BOTH spiritual meaning and actual eating. Jesus' Passover includes both, being His real body and blood and ALSO unifying us with His spirit. Faith is a part of His Passover as well, just as faith has been mentioned before. Theologians for thousands of years have realized this. There is no need to accept Dr. White's demand that we see ONLY a spiritual meaning. All in all, beyond those particular mistakes and the use of inconsistent thinking, James simply wants to rest his case on his own subjective reasoning and very complex picture painting. Rather in understanding the Bible, it is much better to rest our case on the ordinary meaning of words, as they are understood naturally in their local context. James' case then is weak, because it is based on his subjective rulebook and the mind of man.

That's not to say his walkthrough is unintelligent. Of course not. His reading of John 6 is intelligent, thought-out and very educated. And as I've already stated, I really appreciate most of his work teaching and debating. However, no amount of education allows us to place subjective reasoning over what the text plainly says. Therefore, I consider his nearly two-hour walkthrough an open demonstration of the weakness of the Protestant approach. As well as the failure of the symbolist approach. If the most educated of commentators cannot do better than that, we can be sure we can trust in the words of Jesus, and be confident the early Church got it right. Eating spiritual bread and eating physical bread at Communion are a unity. They are not something to be ripped apart. At a time when the Body of Messiah is itself in many pieces and suffering a breakdown of doctrine and unity, getting the New Covenant Passover right is more important than ever. Just as Jesus is one, we are to be of one doctrine and one body. In Communion, we should have one fellowship together in the Church.

Thank you very much.

God bless you.