

## “This is a Hard Saying”

Matthew 26:17-30

“This is a hard saying, who can listen to it?” That is what many of Jesus followers said back in John 6 when Jesus had said, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.” This is a hard saying.

Jesus says to His disciples, in the Upper Room, “Take, eat; this is My body.” This is a hard saying. “Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant.” This is a hard saying.

Back in John 6, upon hearing those “hard words” many turned away and stopped following Jesus. Jesus asked the disciples, “Do you want to go away as well?” And Peter replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

Jesus says, “This is My body . . . This is My blood.” This is a hard saying, if we are relying on our mind, on our great mind, to bring us understanding. What we need to remember is that God has always presented Himself in the way He wanted to present Himself, and God has rescued His people in the way He wanted to rescue His people. If you are searching for the true God, you don’t get to shop around until you find one that suits your style. There is only One.

And this One, True God has said, “This is My body; this is My blood; given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. I have come to fix the problem of death, and this is how I am going to do it.” But these are hard words. Then again, fixing sin and death; separating us from sin and death for all eternity is not easy.

Do you really think that this could be done in a simple way – free from pain; free from blood. You are saved by the shedding of blood. The wages of sin is death. The only way for God to fix the problem of death for you is for something (or someone) other than you to die in your place. The problem of death cannot be fixed without death. This is a hard saying.

The Covenant with Moses and the people was put into effect with the shedding of the blood of animals. And the blood was put in bowls and half of the blood was thrown against the altar, and half of the blood Moses took and threw it on the people using the stalk of the hyssop plant. As I said, “God has always presented Himself in the way He wanted to present Himself, and God has rescued His people in the way He wanted to rescue His people.”

But it was not the blood of animals thrown on the people that saved the Israelites in the days of Moses. If throwing the blood of animals on the people would save you, guess what we would be doing tonight. Instead, God has chosen a different way for you to participate in the blood that saves you. The blood of animals was a

foreshadowing of a greater reality. The blood of Christ is the greater reality.

Jesus gives His disciples His broken body and shed blood for the forgiveness of sins, and they eat it. He says, “This is My body . . . This is My blood” and none of the 12 question it or ask if He means really or just metaphorically or symbolically. Then the churches that these same men establish all teach that Christ is truly present under that form of bread and wine.

It wasn't until about 1500 years after Jesus that followers of Jesus started questioning this and saying, “This is a hard saying, who can listen to it?” Keep in mind that if we only believe the things about God that we understand in our mind, then the God that we believe in can only be as smart as we are.

It is a mystery confessed to us by the Word of God; it is a mystery that is to be believed. Don't trust your mind to figure this one out. Just remember that God has always presented Himself in the way He wanted to present Himself, and God has rescued His people in the way He wanted to rescue His people.

What does make sense is that, since sin and death entered the world by the first Adam eating food from a tree, God saving us by eating the food (the broken body) of Christ from the tree of the cross would be a logical fix to the problem of death brought on by Adam.

Does that explain it? Not in a way that will satisfy your skeptical

friends. But it does confess it and shows the continuity of the Word of God from Old Testament to New Testament to life in the church today. The purpose of studying the Word of God is not for the sake of knowledge, but faith.

We come together this evening, not for increase in knowledge, but Christ our Lord, in whom we have been called to place our faith; He has said, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” Not as a work we must do in order to receive God’s grace, but this is the vehicle, the means, by which God’s grace comes to you. Again, this is how God has chosen to present Himself; this is how God has chosen to save you.

This is God participating with you. This is God in action, in your life, in the here and now. The body of Christ is here for you to eat. Christ is bringing His body to you, so that you can participate in the body of Christ. This is life in the church. And what a blessed life it is.

Your salvation is not based on your knowledge or some level of good works and the sanctified life you must achieve – now, that would be a hard saying. I am much more content with the assurance of the forgiveness of sins through no work of my own. I rejoice that this forgiveness is real and complete. But that forgiveness did come at a great cost. The problem of death cannot be fixed without death.

A body was broken. Blood was shed. Jesus says, “This is My body; This is My blood. Take, eat; Drink of it all of you . . . for the forgiveness of sins. Amen.