

EUCHARIST, A BIBLICAL WALK THROUGH THE SACRAMENTS

May 4, 2020

It's time for Bible study spinach that tastes like cake right in your pocket. I'm Sonja Corbitt, your Bible Study Evangelista here to love and lift you a little so you can love and lift all you've been given. I am so excited to be doing this show today about the Eucharist because it was the very first domino to fall for me in my investigation as a Southern Baptist over almost 15 years ago now. I remember as I began to search for the truth about something that I had heard, actually, from someone else who said that the early church believed that the Eucharist was the true and real presence of Jesus. And I just thought that was scandalous. I decided I was gonna try to find out myself. I went to the early Church Fathers, the Ante-Nicene Fathers, and I began reading, and the very first letter from Justin Martyr that I read - it was the very first thing I read from the Church Fathers. He says, explicitly that very thing. It began this complete upheaval for me of everything that I had been taught. As I searched for the truth about that, I was overwhelmed by how obvious, really, it was in the Scriptures as soon as I really turned my attention to it. It was not something - the Eucharist was not something I had ever heard of. I didn't know what the word meant. In fact, if you're one of those people, the Eucharist means *thanks* or *thanksgiving*. And we see that in our text for this week. It is John 6. We're gonna look at that in some detail today.

Before we do that, I'd like to sort of lay the foundation, the biblical foundation for the Eucharist. As I said, that word actually comes from *eucharista* in the Greek which means *thanksgiving*. It's funny to me that during this quarantine, every single time I've gone to the store to pick up some yeast, I can't find it. I mean, it's just never on the shelves. I think everyone has sort of gone back to the simplicity of making your own bread, since, you know, you can barely find it, or you couldn't to begin with. It's sort of relaxed a little bit now.

I don't know, I'm not sure if anything is better than fresh-baked bread. I mean, warm from the oven, and lots and lots of butter.... I mean I love mine - I like sourdough bread especially. When it just comes out of the oven and it's just swimmin' in butter.... I like baguettes dipped in olive oil and herbs. I just - I mean I like bread. I don't eat it every meal. My mother used to always have bread with every single meal. But I'm not a lover of it that much. But I do - I do like it and I love that God uses it because it is the staple for, really, every human community on the face of the earth throughout history.

To say something very basic about His love and His care for us. It's one of life's simple pleasures. It's a very simple pleasure bread. Making it, kneading it, baking it, smelling it, tasting it, holding it, and feeling the give and ev - I like the crusty on the outside.... I know. I'm - Can you tell I'm hungry?

But I love that God shows throughout the Scriptures how it could also be the basis of nourishment for the spiritual life. He began teaching about bread in that way very very early in the Scriptures. The very first mention of an offering of bread and wine comes to us in the reference to Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18-20. It's important to go back to the very first biblical occurrence of something like bread, and especially this priestly offering of bread and wine, because we know that's the forerunner of the Eucharist. It's important to go back and determine how the Scriptures intend a word, an idea, or an element like bread to be understood. The way you do that is to go back to that very first biblical occurrence. It is in Genesis 14.

We can see that this is the only description in the Bible of the actual person, Melchizedek. And yet we hear his name in the Mass every single time we go to Mass. He is mentioned in the New Testament, but it's kinda odd that that's true because his biblical entrance and exit both occur in these couple of verses in Genesis. He just seems to appear in the middle of a conflict between Abram and another king. But as I mentioned, other biblical authors place enormous importance on Melchizedek, and the reason is because he was the first priest mentioned and he offers bread and wine.

We hear his name in that first Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass. "Be pleased to look upon these offerings and to accept them as once you were pleased to accept the offering of your high priest, Melchizedek." So that's the very first mention of bread and wine offered in a - in a worship sort of way.

Then we see in Exodus 12, the Passover bread. This is another one of the earliest offerings of bread to communicate a spiritual message. If you look in Numbers 11:8 as well, we can see that this is Passover bread. Passover was important to the Israelites because it was their redemption from the slavery of Egypt. That last plague was where God passed over the Israelites when they put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their homes. That's why it was called Passover for all those years and still is, really, in Jewish practice. Bread was significant in that observance because it had to be offered to God. It had to be unleavened. It didn't have any yeast to make it rise. It is mentioned there in Numbers and other places, actually, but specifically the reason why they weren't supposed to add yeast is because they didn't have time to wait on it to rise. They were supposed to be

03_Eucharist, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments

memorializing the escape that was almost abrupt. God said, “You don’t have time.” So they continued, then, every Passover to make bread that was unleavened. Leaven in the Scriptures is a potent symbol of sin. We see that when Jesus talks about the *leaven of the Pharisees*. But I’m getting ahead of myself.

The Passover, with its Passover lamb, both of which had to be eaten in order for the observance to be complete, was an annual sign of the covenant of God with the people and vice versa, and their redemption in Him. Then we see manna. A little more than a month after the Israelites were rescued from Egypt on that first Passover, they began - they moved into the desert and began their journey to the Promised Land and they began to run out of food. Of course, in the desert, food and water are scarce. In their weariness and probably worry, they complained against God. Friend, I want to just suggest to you, if you have found yourself doing this during the quarantine, complaining about not having the Eucharist, just kinda keep this in mind. Because in Exodus 16, we see that the Israelites called it *manna*, which means *What is it?* That’s what the word *manna* means, *What is it? or What?* We see through that manna, it was - it was called bread, or food, from Heaven; it appeared with the dew; it looked and tasted like honey cakes; the people could use it for like - they could bake it or boil it or ground it or eat it raw; and manna appeared for 40 whole years. That says something important about how nutritionally complete it was. They could only gather a one-day supply of the manna except before the Sabbath on which they could gather a two-day supply because they weren’t supposed to be working on the Sabbath.

Of course the instructions were there to teach the people that God is gonna always provide your daily bread. Wisdom tells us that this manna conformed to every person’s taste. That means if you got a hankering for chocolate cake, then your manna tasted like cake. If you had a taste for steak, your manna tasted like steak. I realize I’m being a little bit silly there, but it gives you at least the idea of what that verse kinda meant. It conformed to the taste of every person. That actually remains Rabbinical teaching in Judaism to this day.

Then we see in Exodus 24, that when Israel ratified their covenant with God at the foot of Mount Sinai, they ate and drank a covenant meal. Remember, that part of any covenant includes a meal. We talked about that in the very first show of the series when we talked about sacraments, and also last week when we talked about Baptism. Each covenant includes an exchange of commitment, identity, resources, enemies, life, a mark, and a meal. This covenant meal was at the foot of Mount Sinai and it probably included meat from the burnt offerings, and then bread and wine. It made this big grand celebration of the presence of God with the people and their covenant between God and His people.

Then we see the tabernacle bread in Exodus 25. Directly across from the golden lampstand in the tabernacle sanctuary outside the Holy of Holies, there was a gold, crowned table set to the right. In order for it to be portable, it had rings and poles to make it - so that the people could carry it. It was used for the table of presence bread. It’s interesting. The name of the bread is really remarkable. In Hebrew, it literally means The Bread of the Face, The Bread of the Face of God, or Bread of the Presence, because it was located in the tabernacle where God’s presence dwelt. So it was bread where God was present, and it was place perpetually in His presence, so it was presence bread.

Even when the people moved through the wilderness, the bread was supposed to remain on that table according to Numbers 4:5-7. In Leviticus 24:5-9, we see that there were twelve loaves and they were laid out with frankincense. That was offered with fire. The bread was said to be a perpetual offering. It has to be perpetual forever. The priests cared for it on the Sabbath. The people would bake it, and then the priest would bring it in and change it out every single week. They would eat it, actually, in the tabernacle. More on bread in the Bible when we get back.

We’re talking about the sacrament of the Eucharist and how the Eucharist is biblical. We’ve been looking at different ways in which bread was used throughout the Old Testament to communicate the eventuality of the Eucharist which would arrive in Christ. We looked at Melchizedek and his offering of bread and wine. We looked at the Passover bread. We looked at manna that fell every day. We looked at the Covenant Bread, the Tabernacle Bread - that’s where we left off, actually, is looking at the Tabernacle Bread. We saw that the presence bread in the tabernacle was presented in twelve loaves to represent the twelve tribes. Of course that foreshadowed the twelve apostles through whom the Eucharist would be given in Christ.

It was important because it showed that nourishment is from God. It comes from God, it remains in God in the presence in the tabernacle, and its name, of course, is very important, Bread of the Face. I know when I learned about the tabernacle and all of the elements - which I go into great detail in this in my study *Fulfilled*. One of the things that struck me when I was studying as a Southern Baptist is that it was called *showbread*. And that means absolutely nothing. It made no sense to me when I began to research what the Eucharist is and how it was rooted in the Old Testament and foreshadowed there, it struck me as almost deceptive to use that word *showbread*. You know? Instead of presence bread, or bread of the face, which is what it is, especially because it foreshadows the Eucharist. Again, this is another observance that was supposed to last forever like the Passover.

03_Eucharist, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments

The presence bread was a reminder of God's perpetual provision. It was a communal offering rather than a sacrificial one. The people actually baked the loaves, but because the bread was especially connected to God's presence, it was holy bread. So it was to be eaten by the priest every Sabbath in the holy place, the Sanctuary, as they replaced the previous week's bread with fresh bread every week. Along with the bread, there were offerings of incense - we saw the frankincense - and wine and oil. God did not eat the bread. Why do you think it was such an important part of the sanctuary in the tabernacle? Well, as I said, that was because it was to show that nourishment comes from God. Because it comes from God who is eternal, it was to be an eternal observance.

The offering of Melchizedek was Messianic. Passover was a perpetual, annual feast. The memorial pot of manna was included in the ark within the Holy of Holies. The covenant made with God's people was eternal, or everlasting. The presence bread was a perpetual staple in the tabernacle. So the presence bread, offering of Melchizedek, Passover bread, and manna all conveyed a single theme that God was with His people in the most basic, nourishing stuff of life, in bread. He was ever present, feeding and providing for them with care and love.

Of course there was another important reason why He furnished it so miraculously and that is the New Testament Bread. Because Jesus is a better Melchizedek, according to Hebrews 5:5-6. So the provisions of bread in the Old Testament were types of another bread that was to come. We looked at type and antetype last week when we looked at Baptism. Each of the sacraments is an antetype of a previous type. Each of these types in the Old Testament all said the same thing in a deeper and deeper way: Melchizedek's bread and wine, the Passover bread, the manna, the covenant bread, the tabernacle bread. All of these, then, were types of the thing that would come which is the Eucharist.

Remember that the new offering and the new bread is the antetype, the thing that was foreshadowed by the type, but the antetype is always greater than its type. The term *presence bread* as an Old Testament type foreshadows Jesus' actual supernatural presence in the New Testament fulfillment of the Eucharist. If the Eucharist were not in every single way better than the early types, then it could not be a real antetype. If the types in the Old Testament were daily, they were covenants, they were sacred, or holy bread, they were offered by priests.... If all of that were true, then how much more true, and how could the antetype be better except that It give us eternal life, which none of the Old Testament types could do because they didn't have any grace in them. That's exactly why Jesus came. That's why He could say, *I am the bread of life*, because He means *eternal life*.

Hebrews 5-6 talks of Melchizedek. Then we see that the New Testament applies Psalm 110:4 to Jesus and He is the new Melchizedek. Melchizedek was a type of Jesus. Both of them are somehow priests forever, kings of peace without origin, and offering bread and wine. Then you add to that that Jesus is the new Moses. We see in Luke 9:28-26, the Transfiguration where Jesus is speaking in the Transfiguration on the Mount with Moses and Elijah. He's speaking about His exodus. That's not explicit in the Scripture, you have to actually look at the Greek word that's used there which is *exodus*. It talks about his *departure*, is the word that is used in my translation.

He's speaking there about His exodus, or His departure, with Moses and Elijah. He's showing Himself, and He does so through the Sermon on the Mount as well, to be a new Moses because there is a new exodus. Rather than coming from the literal Egypt, the slavery of Egypt, now Jesus is the leader of people from the slavery of sin. Then we look at John 6, which is actually in the readings, it's been in the readings all week this week, in which Jesus offers His most personal and explicit teachings on the coming of the Eucharist. If you take a look at that chapter and you look at the paragraph headings in bold print, what we see there is *Jesus Feeds the 5000*; then *He Walks on Water*; He talks about *Bread from Heaven*; He says *His Words are Eternal Life*: He says that we must eat and drink - eat His flesh and drink His blood - and He meant that literally and I'll show you how. And then many of the disciples turn away. He says there in verse 35 that *I am the bread of life*.

Notice what He does throughout that chapter. He's illustrating how He can multiply bits of bread to feed thousands of people. Right after that, He walks on the water showing that He is the Lord of natural elements. He's walking on the sea and there's a storm there. So Jesus is a better Melchizedek, He is the new Moses, and then we see that He proclaims Himself to be the new manna. In chapter 6:26-71, once Jesus knows that the people understand that He is a prophet, He compares Himself to Moses, who was the greatest prophet in the history of God's people and who also prophesied One who would be better, who would come after him.

Then He makes one of the boldest statements of His entire ministry. We have to be careful to understand that His teaching there is in the context of the Old Testament bread, which the people completely understood. It's lost on us because a lot of times we don't know the Old Testament and we don't know the way in which all of those types spoke of Christ Himself. But it's important - that's the reason I'm going through it piece by piece. It's important to know how God set this up to begin with, so that we can understand that our Eucharist is a true antetype. It is truly salvific. Jesus says Himself, *I am the bread of life*, and He means He is talking about eternal life.

03_Eucharist, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments

And of course, we see in John 6:66, or 666, that many of those disciples turned away. We learned in chapter six of John that Jesus is our new Melchizedek, our new Moses, our new manna, and our new presence bread. Rather than mere bread and wine to nourish our natural life, Jesus offers the Eucharistic bread of His body and blood, the bread and the wine, for eternal life. He is our new Moses. He leads and He feeds us with the bread of life on our exodus to the Promised Land of Heaven. He is the true presence bread, the bread of the face of God. He tells us that we are to literally eat His body and blood because it is the sustenance and the eternal life of the soul. He says it explicitly.

Then we see our daily bread in the Church. In Matthew 6:9-13, we see the Our Father, right? It says, in verse 11: **Give us this day, our daily bread.** I always wondered why Jesus was being redundant there, saying *this day* and *daily* in the same sentence. But what we see there is that He is teaching - well, you don't actually see it unless you know what the words are in Greek, which I'll get to in a moment. I want to just point out that when Jesus talks about His words are spirit and life. *Spiritual* does not mean *symbolic*. *Spiritual* means *super* or *hypernatural*. Spiritual bread means more than just bread. Moses' daily manna fed the lives of God's people, their physical being, but the bread of life, Jesus, He feeds our spirit, our souls. He feeds us supernaturally. He feeds us eternal life every single day that we receive that Eucharistic bread. It's because eternal life is in Him. So, Jesus commanded us to eat His flesh and drink His blood.

The Church did not invent the Eucharist, it received it from Jesus on the night before His crucifixion, and the Church continues to offer it to us today, every day, at His command. As I mentioned earlier, Eucharist means *thanksgiving*. At that annual Passover meal, Jesus took bread and gave thanks, and He broke it and He gave it to the disciples saying, **This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.** A remembrance, or a memorial, in the Old Testament was not just thinking about it in your mind with a happy thought. It was a re-participation. More on that when we get back.

I always imagine, when I think of that last supper, what the disciples must have been thinking when Jesus said, **This is my body given for you.** And He breaks the loaf and He gives them pieces of it. We spoke over our Lenten series about the honored bread and how Jesus dipped it and He gave it to Judas, knowing that Judas would be His betrayer and how having a meal with someone and then going to betray them was the highest form of betrayal that you could ever participate in. And yet Jesus, He gave Judas the honored bread, knowing he was the betrayer. And He says, **Do this**, to the apostles. **Do this in remembrance of me.** We spoke about that being a re-participation.

That means that every person that receives the Eucharist, does so in union with all of the people in the world who receive it with them on that day or at that time. All of the people who have received it in the past, all of the Jewish people who observe the Passover, and all of the people in the future who would do the same. That's why it's called *communion* because it ties us together. We think a lot of times that Jesus breaks the bread and multiplies the pieces and somehow we each get a piece, but instead He gives us the pieces and draws us into one body, one loaf. Each of us receives a - the Eucharist in its entirety, body, blood, soul, and divinity. Rather than being divided, it instead brings us together in a unified body, or a unified loaf. You cannot even think that the disciples would have doubted at all what Jesus was referring to when He said, **This is my body given for you.** And He broke that bread.

Here they are at the Passover. They were familiar with the Passover, with the 12 loaves of presence bread, with Moses' manna, with that Pass - with that covenant meal at the foot of Mount Sinai. They knew all of that. They knew it like they breathed. So when Jesus did this, I imagine that they were utterly shocked. I wonder when they looked back on that after the Resurrection and the Ascension, if it must have just struck them with this complete awe. I don't - I don't know, but I know that the Church retained that Old Testament understanding of remembrance as a re-participation because they called that sacrament the *Breaking of Bread*.

If you look in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, we see that Saint Paul teaches about the Eucharist, that the Eucharist is a participation that unifies, which is what we just talked about. He says that if we don't discern His body, then we are guilty of His body. How can that be true? How can you be guilty of the body of Christ if you don't discern His presence there if He's not really there?

Paul himself - and he talks about the Eucharist or the breaking of bread, as a body of teaching that he received from Christ directly. He handed it down along with the rest of the apostles to us. That's why we continue to do it. It is the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The Catechism says in 1367, *The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice. The victim is one in the same. The same now, offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the cross. Only the manner of offering is different. In this divine sacrifice, which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered Himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross, is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner.*

The Eucharist cannot merely be symbolic. It is the literal presence of Christ. In fact, that was a heresy that became prevalent around what non-Catholics call *The Reformation* around AD 1500. The Catholic Church has preserved and taught the real

03_Eucharist, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments

presence since the apostles' time. I saw that when I was reading Justin Martyr and the Fathers following him and their writings about it.

We also see that Saint Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 11, that that was where he talks about discerning the body. The fulfillment and the interpretation of all the Old Testament bread, is Jesus Christ present and feeding us in the Eucharist. The Eucharistic bread is better than manna because we can live forever with God by becoming one with Him, eating Him, His body and blood, in that presence bread, that Eucharistic bread.

Just a quick review before we move forward. Through numerous Old Testament types, especially the daily manna and the presence bread in the tabernacle, God prepared His people for the presence bread of life in Christ offered daily for the Church. In order to be a true antetype, a thing has to be and always greater. None of the New Testament fulfillments of the Old Testament bread can simply be physical or simply symbolic. The Lord's Supper, or the Mass, in which the Eucharist is half, and the source and summit of the spiritual life, it must communicate grace and therefore, eternal life.

Jesus said the Eucharist is *supernatural* bread, not *symbolic* bread. That's in His prayer, the Our Father, which we'll look at in a moment. *Receiving the Eucharist is a participation in the body and blood of Christ*, according to 1 Corinthians 10:16. It is *real* and *true* eternal presence bread. Receiving the Eucharist unworthily makes me guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:27. Because Jesus' flesh and blood are resurrected and alive, He stipulated that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood, or we cannot also have eternal life in Him. The Catholic Church has wholly maintained Jesus' teaching on the real presence in the Eucharist since the apostles. The only other church on the face of the earth that continues to do so the way the Catholic Church has continued, is the Orthodox Church. That's the only church. Even the liturgical churches that are non-Catholic, the Lutherans and the Anglicans.... They believe in what we call *consubstantiation*, while we believe in what is called *transubstantiation*. *Transubstantiation* is the change into the real body and blood of Christ through the words of the priest which are the words of Christ Himself. Because the priest has that unique power and authority given by Christ through his ordination and Holy Orders which we'll look at in another sacrament. Because he has that in Christ, he is able to utter the words of Christ. Jesus perfects and transubstantiates the bread and the wine into His body and blood.

As I said, the Catholic Church is the only church on the face of the earth who continues to teach that, except for the Orthodox. I want to mention them. I always leave them out. They - the two, these two, are the only two churches who continue to teach what the apostles taught. The liturgical churches who hold that the Eucharist is special, they do so with that term *consubstantiation*, which just means that God - or that Jesus is near it, He is with the bread, but He is not literally the bread. That's the difference in - even as close as they get, they don't get to the real and true teaching of the Church from the beginning, of Christ.

Because of all of those Old Testament types, Melchizedek's bread and wine; the Passover lamb with bread and wine; the morning and evening sacrifices on the altar with incense, bread, and wine; the covenant inauguration sacrifice and meal with bread and wine; the daily manna in the wilderness (a pot of which was preserved in the Arc of the Covenant with the priesthood and the law); the 12 loaves of presence bread in the tabernacle with bread and wine. All of these witness poetically to us for generations and generations of God's promise of spiritual nourishment to come in Christ through bread and wine. That's why theologians tell us that typology is the spirit of prophecy. *Everything in the Old Testament witnesses to Christ*, the book of Revelations says. And Jesus said it Himself that **A good steward brings from the old and the new**. And that's why, because the Old Testament is a foretaste. It foreshadows all that would come in Christ.

The promise of all of that Old Testament stuff is swallowed up in the real event. The blueprint is filled full to overflowing. The Old Testament economy of shadows has given away to the New Testament sacramental economy, the covenant in the sacraments, in Christ. The Eucharist has come. The new covenant is present in His Eucharistic person. Hallelujah!

Because the Eucharist is so central to Christianity, as to be a matter of life and death and salvation, the Catholic Church is the only church on the face of the earth that continues to teach what the apostles originally understood and taught about the Eucharist. So we need to look at some of the Church's early understanding and the treatment of the Eucharist. We're gonna start there in the gospels.

We wanna begin in the - on the road to Emmaus where Jesus explained Himself to the grieving disciples through all of those prophecies of the Old Testament. They did not discern Him in His word, even though their hearts were burning with the truth of all of it coming out of His sacred lips. I mean, He was teaching them with His own Word in His person, standing before them, and yet they did not discern Him in His Word.

When they asked Him, though, to stay with them, He answered their request by staying with them in the Eucharist and He disappeared. Why did He do that? Because He wanted them to stop looking for Him in His physical body and begin trying to see

03_Eucharist, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments

Him and discern Him in the Eucharist. That's why He disappeared. So until He broke bread with them, they did not recognize His presence. The Church has seen great significance in that episode. He disappeared because they no longer needed His personal, physical body. Could His earthly body in fact have been even an impediment to His fuller presence in the Eucharist? I think that it was. I think that's exactly why He disappeared. He said, *It is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.* John 16:7, which we'll look at when we unpack the Pentecost later. But in essence, His Eucharistic presence is more present to us than His earthly body could be. Isn't that amazing? More on it when we get back.

In my years leading up to my full communion with the Church, I remember I prayed a kind of strange prayer for a Baptist, but I prayed something similar to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. I kept saying, "Lord, I just wanna be closer to You. Is there not some way we can closer?" I longed to the point of almost desperation for a closer closeness. I thought it was impossible. But He led me to His Church and He gave Himself to me in the Eucharist. It's an incredible miracle that I don't take for granted. It is the Lord, indeed.

We remember, in John 6:63, he said, *It is the Spirit that gives life. The flesh is of no avail.* Of course we know that He didn't mean that there was no prophet in His own flesh, that broken and spilled out flesh and blood in the new covenant. And He wasn't just talking about symbolism. He was making His meaning plain when He used the word *masticate* in Greek, which means *chewing*, literally, and drinking His body and blood. He's talking about literally eating and drinking. And yet, when He talks about *It's the Spirit that gives life*, He's saying that we can't understand His teaching on the Eucharist in a human sense. It's a miracle. It's a sacrament. And He wasn't talking about cuttin' His flesh into pieces and distributing bloody bits of it to everybody. That's what they thought because of the - in the prohibition of the law against eating and - flesh with blood in it. In Leviticus 17:11, they took offense and they ceased following Him.

That Levitical prohibition was given so that it would point to the promise to come in Him. An animals' blood cannot give us eternal life. But Jesus' divine flesh and blood separated on the cross and offered to us can, and it does, because of His own word.

The spirituality of the teaching does not make it symbolic. I want to hammer that home because I was always taught that this whole passage in John 6 is just symbolic. But it's - just because it's spiritual doesn't mean it's symbolic. *Spiritual* never means *symbolic*, actually, in the Bible. It always means *super- or hypernatural*.

So when they saw how literally Jesus was speaking, those - a lot of the true disciples stopped following Him. It was spoken as a statement of absolute fact. Eternal life is only in Christ. So when we eat His eternal flesh and we drink His eternal blood, we have His eternal life. Despite all that, some didn't believe. Jesus claimed they couldn't believe what the Church teaches us, that Jesus is present in the Eucharistic bread of the presence. He's feeding us in this scandalous humility.

Only when we are illumined by the Holy Spirit can we accept that teaching and can we receive it for ourselves. Of course, this is the section in the Bible when the Church Fathers say that Judas turned away from Christ and toward betrayal in John 6:66. When we try to explain, *You must eat my flesh*, as a figure of speech, it is, it's just - it doesn't make sense. Even among the Jews to whom Jesus was speaking, when they said to eat one's flesh, it was used figuratively, but it meant to hate that person or to take revenge against them. In the same way, to drink someone's blood meant to torture him. So neither of those figurative meanings would have made any sense either.

The apostles took *This is my body and this is my blood* literally. They preached this doctrine - it's very mysterious, but they preached it to the infant Church. Of course Jesus wouldn't have allowed Himself to be misunderstood in that very solemn, serious moment of the Last Supper. It was immediately before His passion. And so it would've - any sort of metaphor would have been inappropriate and even mean. Instead, Jesus' true, literal presence in the Eucharist has been the universal belief of all Christians for a thousand years, until a heretic named Berengarius in the 11th century taught the figurative interpretation. Then his teaching was condemned by three Church councils as heresy. Eventually, thankfully, that's why that correction is done in the Church. He redacted that teaching and he returned to Communion.

Then the teaching remained completely unassailed until Martin Luther. He wanted to abolish the priesthood. He rejected - well, he didn't personally reject the doctrine of true substantial presence of Christ, but his followers did eventually do so because of those splits.

Either Jesus lied, or He allowed a misunderstanding that is basically idolatry in the early Church that has led Catholics to worship a piece of bread for 2,000 years. The idea of Jesus speaking in metaphors at the Last Supper is cruel, and we - especially if you think of the fact that He's addressing people who are mostly poor fishermen and they weren't educated in rhetoric.

03_Eucharist, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments

We know that the apostles in the early church understood Jesus literally, partly because of the way they spoke of the Eucharist in the Scriptures. We've already looked at Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:26 when he says that, *Whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of Christ*. This is why it's so important not to receive the Eucharist in a state of sin. You must be in a state of grace. Because he says, *Let a man examine himself and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment upon himself, and for that reason, many of you have died*. One - you can't be guilty of the body and blood of Christ if He's not really present.

Just as the Old Testament tabernacle was presence and sacrifice, the New Testament tabernacle, Jesus' body, is both presence and sacrifice. In fact, I think it was Brent Petri who talks about the Jewish custom where the priests lifted the table of presence bread in procession without - throughout the congregation a lot like we do in the monstrance at adoration. They proclaimed, "Behold, God's love for you," with that table. So how much more now? The real presence of God's love in Christ, our living presence bread. How can we not worship Him there as He reigns in the monstrance?

All of the accounts of the Last Supper say that on the night He was betrayed, He took bread and wine into His sacred hands and He gave thanks. If Jesus can give thanks in being betrayed, so can we, right? But from the Greek word there, *giving*, or *gave thanks*, *eucharista*, that means *a giving of thanks*. That's where we get our sacrament, the holy Eucharist from.

Jesus, in His own body and blood, is both sacrament and sacrifice in the Eucharist. He doesn't give Himself in miniature. He's there in the fullness of His resurrected, glorified person, but in a supernatural way, that suspends the law of space and time. Of course this is a great mystery, right? It's not even something that we can fully comprehend or understand. But His body and blood - you know, they don't have weight or height or breadth or thickness because He's present supernaturally in that bread and wine. He doesn't multiply Himself into many different Jesuses or divide Himself into as many pieces as there are hosts. There is one Jesus, whole and undivided.

So, Saint Ignatius of Antioch, who was a disciple of Saint John, said, *Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us. They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Flesh which suffered for our sins and which that Father, in His goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes*.

Pope Benedict XVI said, *The Eucharistic celebration is the greatest and highest act of prayer, and constitutes the center and the source from which even the other forms receive nourishment, the Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic Adoration, Lectio Divina, the Holy Rosary, meditation...all of these expressions of prayer, which have their center in the Eucharist, fulfill the words of Jesus in the priest's day and in all of his life. I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own me as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep*.

So in the Eucharist, we're all gathered into one through Him, in Him, and with Him, and that's where we get that word *communion*, *with union*. Some of the earliest prayers of the Mass that we see in the Didache, which is the writing of the apostles. It's a short catechism as early as the apostles. They said, *As this broken bread was scattered over the hills as grain and was gathered together and became one, so let your church be gathered together*. I think that's beautiful.

As long as the appearances in bread and wine remain, then Jesus is still present with us. But once the appearances of bread of wine are digested, then Jesus is no longer physically present, but the grace, then, remains.

Our Eucharist, because it began as the breaking of bread and was later called the Agape Feast in the Book of Acts - that's what the Eucharistic liturgy was built on. It was built on that Agape Feast in the Old Testament. Then, of course, they added the readings, they added some of the prayers and the liturgical music. But it has always been a memorial according to the catechism, a participation according to the Scriptures. It's been - it is a covenant meal just like the meal that was shared by the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai. Our Mass is a sacred banquet. It is also a sacrifice. We sort of associate that word *sacrifice* with something painful and distasteful that we have to either not do or do. But the original meaning of sacrifice was tied to the priest who offered a group sacrifice to God for group worship. So the Eucharist is a true sacrifice in the strictest sense of the word. It's the offering of a worship gift to God on behalf of the whole group.

We do it in remembrance of Him. We carry out that command of the Lord by celebrating the memorial of His sacrifice and we offer to the Father what Jesus Himself gave. The gifts of His creation, bread and wine, which by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the words of Christ, become the body and blood of Christ. Christ is, then, *really and mysteriously made present*, the Catechism tells us. I want to just mention - I don't have time to go into it. But I wanna mention that God removed His presence from the people when they were being judged for sin throughout the Old Testament. It was called *Ichabod*. The presence of God in the pillar of fire and cloud would disappear, it would go away. That happened because of their sin.

03_Eucharist, A Biblical Walk Through the Sacraments

We sort of have to think that in this time of quarantine that God has removed Himself in the public Mass probably for that reason. The Church has become so sinful. In this time, as we miss the Eucharist and we miss those public Masses, contemplate the fact that the Eucharist is such a privilege. It is a part of our covenant in God - in Christ in His body and blood. We look toward that day and we anticipate that day when it will be restored to us and Jesus gives Himself to us once more.

Sacrament of the Eucharist is covenant. It is covenant in Christ. Until next week, my friend, I'm Sonja Corbitt, your Bible Study Evangelista.

