

HARD LESSON

BY: BRAD CULLEN - NOVEMBER, 2004

“... And many followed Him no more.”

What was this teaching of Jesus that caused many to say, “this teaching is too hard; who can listen to it?”

The essence of it is, “If you do not eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will not have eternal life.”

This teaching sounds like a rather key issue to me. Sounds as though we really need to understand it, don't we? Why don't we start with the words in the original language - translated into the English term here as “eternal life”...? To most Christians “eternal life” means [correct me if I'm wrong] “going to heaven after we die.” Is that what is being conveyed in the original language? Clearly and emphatically, the answer is NO! Absolutely not! If it is true that dying and going to heaven is not the meaning of “eternal life” why does Christianity so desperately hang onto that horribly diluted concept? Jesus said that Holy Spirit will lead you into all truth... if you demand to get the truth directly from HIM - you'll get the answer!

Back to the words in the original translated as “eternal life” - without beginning or ending = NOW, in this perfect, unique moment = NOW. We could say, if we are waiting for the death of these physical body bags we occupy to usher us into the kingdom of heaven - that we are standing at the wrong door. The Kingdom, eternal life is NOW. This minute! In this context, Jesus said something else, “My sheep” [that is, those that “eat my flesh and drink my blood”] “shall never die.” In other words, to enter the kingdom of heaven, eternal life, is to enter it NOW.

Christianity has relegated “eating my flesh and drinking my blood” to the celebration of Mass, in which the bread and wine is mystically transposed into the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ... at one end of the spectrum, or the symbolic view of eating a bit of unsalted, stale cracker and the smacking of lips over a thimbleful of Welch's grape juice... on the other end - or the myriad fashions of the “Lord's Supper” between the two solemn versions. Am I poking fun at this practice? I confess that I am on two fronts. Jesus said, “Whomever you get together and eat bread - let it remind you that my body was broken for you. Whenever you have a drink of wine, let it remind you that I died for you.” All good stuff! Let's just do it! The other reason I'm poking fun is that the practice of “mass” or “communion” is just a reminder by Jesus' own definition... I didn't say that; HE said it.

So then, what does it mean to “eat His body” and to “drink His blood?”

In the context of what John reported that Jesus said, it means to understand that the creative - spirit part of God [by whatever other name] became a flesh and blood man and we dang well better pay attention to what he said.

Okay, so I opened up a can of worms by saying “creative-spirit-part of God [by whatever other name].” Here's why: In the history of Christianity there have been huge arguments about the “proper” name of God. Some insist that it's Jehovah; some insist that it's Yahweh. Those are both based on the English translation of the Hebrew symbol YHWH, which, [I kid you not] was supposed to indicate that the Deity was too sacred for mere mortals to desecrate by mouthing. In other words, both Yahweh and Jehovah violate the rule of the symbol. If anyone wonders why I am so brazen about the topic... Jesus said to call God [again, by whatever other name] “Dad.” Don't forget that YHWH didn't make it's first appearance until Genesis 2:4 “Lord God” [another violation of the rule not to pronounce.] Prior to that [Gen. 1:1 - 2:4] THE WORD TRANSLATED AS “God” is the many-faceted [PLURAL] Hebrew “Elohiym.”

We may want to remember that in Exodus 3: 14 - 16, God [by whatever other name] instructed Moses to tell the Israelites that all future generations were to refer to Her/Him/It as “I AM.”* Let's also not forget that Jesus said, “Before there was an Abraham, I AM.”

* Some scholars indicate that the proper translation is actually “I will be what I will be.”

P. S. - I prefer “Dad.” What gives me the right? I am an adopted child and my elder “real Son-brother” whose flesh I've eaten and whose blood I've drunk, said I could. “Mommy's okay, too!”

Finally - are we having fun yet - or do we prefer a hard lesson?

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