

# Why did Jesus say, “... *he that eateth me, even he shall live...*”?!

After Christ's resurrection, “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.”(Luke 24:45). **Before this opening of their understanding, the disciples had not understood the spiritual meaning of what Christ had taught them. And it is necessary now that the minds of God's people should be opened to understand the Scriptures. To say that a passage means just this and nothing more, that you must not attach any broader meaning to the words of Christ than we have in the past, is saying that which is not actuated by the Spirit of God. The more we walk in the light of the truth, the more we shall become like Christ in spirit[,] in character[,] and in the manner of our work, and the brighter will the truth become to us. As we behold it in the increasing light of revelation, it will become more precious than we first estimated it from a casual hearing or examination. The truth, as it is in Jesus, is capable of constant expansion, of new development, and like its divine Author it will become more precious and beautiful; it will constantly reveal deeper significance, and lead the soul to aspire for more perfect conformity to its exalted standard. Such understanding of the truth will elevate the mind and transform the character to its divine perfection.** -Ellen White, RH October 21, 1890, par. 1 (What is it that elevates the mind/character? "understanding the truth".)

Many of Christ's followers left Him because they failed to understand the "spiritual meaning" of eating His flesh and drinking His blood:

**John 6:53** Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. **54** Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. **55** For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. **56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.** **57** As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.... **60** Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

**What is the "spiritual meaning" of eating Jesus?** I'll let Ellen provide the answer later. But for now, I'd like us to focus on John 6:56(above), which is quoting only one sentence from Jesus. Should this sentence be taken just as it reads? Many(maybe most) did take it literally when He said it. Or, should we consider that Jesus was applying a "spiritual meaning" to His words? I accept the whole sentence/verse as having a "spiritual meaning". However, some don't apply a spiritual meaning to the entire sentence. They take the last 3 words of this verse literally - "I in him." **I see two problems with this:**

1. Splitting one sentence into two parts - one literal; one spiritual - seems against good Bible interpretation principles.
2. If I were to accept the idea of "I[Christ] in him[us]" as the disembodied spirit of Christ literally inside of my physical body, then I would also have to accept "[we] dwelleth in me[Christ]" to mean that my disembodied spirit is literally inside of Christ's physical body in Heaven. How could I possibly interpret it any other way, when the wording in this single sentence is the same?

I(Sid) **see no way** to resolve the above two issues(especially the 2nd), other than to assume a "spiritual meaning" in the entire verse and accept the following inspired writings as a truthful explanation. **This is Ellen, quoting Jesus, and expounding on His words:**

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. **As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father;** so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."(John 6:53-57) **Jesus explained what he meant by eating his flesh and drinking his blood. He meant that his disciples were to partake of his word. He said, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."**(John 6:63) -Ellen White, RH January 14, 1896, par. 2

**The word of Christ is the bread of life** that is furnished for every soul that liveth. To refuse to eat this bread is death. He that neglects to partake of the word of God shall not see life. **Receiving the word is believing the word, and this is eating Christ's flesh, drinking his blood. To dwell and abide in Christ, is to dwell and abide in his word; it is to bring heart and character into conformity to his commands.** In the parable of the vine and the branches, Jesus shows the vital connection that must exist between himself and his followers. He says: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." -Ellen White, RH January 14, 1896, par. 3

**The branches represent the believers in Jesus Christ.** Those who truly believe, will do the same works that he did. **They are united to Christ by the faith that works by love and purifies the soul.** As the branch is nourished by the sap which flows from the parent stock, so the believer in Christ is **sustained by the life of Christ.** The branches represent the very youngest of the followers of Christ, as the branch includes all the tiny tendrils that belong to it. **Jesus is our center. He is the parent stock** that bears the branches. **In him our eternal life is centered.** **The words that he has spoken unto us are spirit and life,** and those who feed upon his word, and are doers of his word, represent him in character. His patience, meekness, humility, and love pervade their hearts. Jesus said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." If we are indeed grafted into the True Vine, we shall bear fruit similar to that of the parent stock. - Ellen White, RH January 14, 1896, par. 4

Those who love Christ will do the works of Christ. They will go forth to seek and to save that which was lost. -Ellen White, RH January 14, 1896, par. 5

**"To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ is to receive Him as a personal Saviour,** believing that He forgives our sins, and that we are complete in Him. **It is by beholding His love, by dwelling upon it, by drinking it in, that we are to become partakers of His nature[Christ in us]. What food is to the body, Christ must be to the soul.** Food cannot benefit us unless we eat it, unless it becomes a part of our being. **So Christ is of no value to us if we do not know Him as a personal Saviour.** A theoretical knowledge will do us no good. **We must feed upon Him, receive Him into the heart[mind], so that His life becomes our life[Christ in us]. His love, His grace, must be assimilated."** [DA 389.3](#)

But even these figures fail to present the privilege of the believer's relation to Christ. Jesus said, **"As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father:** so he that eateth Me, even **he shall live by Me."**(John 6:57) **As the Son of God lived by faith in the Father, so are we to live by faith in Christ. So fully was Jesus surrendered to the will of God that the Father alone appeared in His life[Jehovah in Christ].** Although tempted in all points like as we are, He stood before the world untainted by the evil that surrounded Him. **Thus we also are to overcome as Christ overcame.** [DA 389.4](#)

Are you a follower of Christ? Then all that is written concerning the spiritual life is written for you, and may be attained through uniting yourself to Jesus. Is your zeal languishing? has your first love grown cold? Accept again of the proffered love of Christ. **Eat of His flesh, drink of His blood, and you will become one with the Father and with the Son.** [DA 389.5](#) (So, how is Jn17:21 fulfilled?)

[John 17:17](#) Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. [18](#) As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. [19](#) And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. [20](#) Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; [21](#) **That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me** {"So fully was Jesus surrendered to the will of God that the Father alone appeared in His life"}, **and I in thee, that they also may be one in us:** that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. [22](#) And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; **that they may be one, even as we are one:** [23](#) **I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;** and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

#### Ellen Speaking:

If we will take God at His word, we shall see of His salvation. The gospel that we present to save perishing souls must be the very gospel that saves our own souls. **We must receive the word of God. We must eat the word, live the word; it is the flesh and blood of the Son of God. We must eat His flesh and drink His blood—receive by faith His spiritual attributes[Christ in us].** [6T 51.4](#)

**We must receive light and blessing**, that we may have something to impart. It is the privilege of every worker first to **talk with God in the secret place of prayer** and then to talk with the people as God's mouthpiece. Men and women who commune with God, **who have an abiding Christ**, make the very atmosphere holy, because **they are co-operating with holy angels**. Such witness is needed for this time. We need the melting power of God, the power to draw with Christ. -Ellen White, 6T 52.1

How many of those who are laboring in word and doctrine **are eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood? How many can comprehend this mystery? The Saviour Himself explains this matter: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."** The word of God must be interwoven with the living character of those who believe it. The only vital faith is that faith which receives and **assimilates the truth** till it is a part of the being and the motive power of the life and action[How we eat Christ (Christ in us)]. Jesus is called the Word of God. He accepted His Father's law, wrought out its principles in His life, manifested its spirit, and showed its beneficent power in the heart. Says John: "**The Word was made flesh**, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." **The followers of Christ must be partakers of His experience. They must assimilate the word of God. They must be changed into its likeness[Christ in us] by the power of Christ and reflect the divine attributes. They must eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God, or there is no life in them. The spirit and work of Christ must become the spirit and work of His disciples. 5T 575.2**

My #2 objection above also applies to **"ye in me, and I in you"** below. Gratefully, Jesus explains the "spiritual meaning" in **red**, similar to what Ellen said above:

**John 14:10** Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the **words that I speak** unto you I speak not of myself: but the **Father** that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.... **20** At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and **ye in me, and I in you. 21** He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will **manifest myself** to him. **22** Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt **manifest thyself** unto us, and not unto the world? **23** Jesus answered and said unto him, **If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him,**

**Notice above the change** from the **spiritual words** "in me/you" to the **spiritual meaning** "unto/with him", in response to His disciple's request for clarity.

**John 6:63** It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the **words that I speak** unto you, **they are spirit, and they are life.**

**John 17:14** I have given them **thy word...**(Jesus praying to His Father)

**Highlighted in yellow**, notice what Jesus said about His words being His Father's and that they are spirit and life. Also, in agreement with Jesus, Ellen said, "They must **assimilate** the **word of God**" and Jesus said, "he will **keep** my words"

By looking constantly to Jesus with the eye of faith, we shall be strengthened. God will make the most precious revelations to His hungering, thirsting people. They will find that Christ is a personal Saviour. **As they feed upon His word, they find that it is spirit and life[Jn 6:63].** The word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus. **The Holy Spirit comes to the soul as a Comforter. By the transforming agency of His grace**, the image of God is reproduced in the disciple; he becomes a new creature. **Love takes the place of hatred, and the heart receives the divine similitude[Christ in us]. This is what it means to live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."** **This is eating the Bread that comes down from heaven. DA 391.1**

Regarding **"the transforming agency of His grace"**, in the above quote, please consider the following quote from the book, "Steps to Christ":

"... They must have **His grace, the Spirit of Christ**, to help their infirmities, or they cannot resist evil... Strength and **grace** have been provided **through Christ** to be **brought by ministering angels** to every believing soul..." SC 52.2-3

**John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you.** As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.... **7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you,** ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Notice where Jesus said "Abide in me, and I in you". If Christ abiding in us means that His disembodied spirit is literally inside our bodies, that means that when Jesus says, "Abide in me", that my disembodied spirit is literally inside of Jesus. Does this make sense? I don't think so. Rather, I think Ellen gave us a correct understanding in the quotes above. And, I think Jesus gave us a correct understanding in John 6:63 and 14:23 and John 15:4&7, as shown above. -Sid

### Ellen Speaking:

For a few weeks past I have had a deep sense of the promises of God and the hope of the Christian. The Bible never seemed to me so full of rich gems of promises as within the last few weeks. It seems that the dews of heaven are ready to fall upon us and refresh us, if we will only take the promises to ourselves. We can never overcome our own natural tendencies without the help of Heaven, and the precious Jesus places Himself right by our side to help us in this work. He says, "Lo, **I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.**" [Matthew 28:20.] Well now, we want to believe just what Christ has said. We want that our faith shall compass the promises. We want to throw it wide open, the door of our hearts, that Jesus can come in and dwell with us. He says, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." [John 15:7.] -Ellen White, 4LTMs, Ms 5, 1886, par. 5

...

I can trust my Saviour; He saves me today; and while I am struggling to overcome the temptations of the enemy, He will give me grace to conquer. We will have no excuse to offer in the day of God because we did not serve Christ. We are to be partakers of the divine nature; we are to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust; and this is what Christ means when He says, "Ye must eat My flesh and drink My blood, or ye have no life in you," "for My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed." [John 6:53-55.] And this Christ is the Word of God; and we must take this Word and bring it into our nature, and thus we are receiving nourishment from Jesus Christ as the natural stalk receives nourishment from nature. So we are to connect with Christ if we would have a part with Him. We must live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. -Ellen White, 4LTMs, Ms 5, 1886, par. 15

God help us that we may strive with all the powers He has given us to enter in at the strait gate. But if you fail, it will be yourselves alone that must bear the failure. Jesus has made provision for every one of you, that you may enter into the city. But you must advance, brethren and sisters, more than you have done... -Ellen White, 4LTMs, Ms 5, 1886, par. 16

"Herein is My Father glorified," said Jesus, "that ye bear much fruit." God desires to manifest through you the holiness, the benevolence, the compassion, of His own character. Yet the Saviour does not bid the disciples labor to bear fruit. He tells them to abide in Him. "**If ye abide in Me,**" He says, "**and My words abide in you,** ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." **It is through the word that Christ abides in His followers. This is the same vital union that is represented by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. The words of Christ are spirit and life (Jn6:63). Receiving them, you receive the life of the Vine. You live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."** Matthew 4:4. **The life of Christ in you produces the same fruits as in Him. Living in Christ, adhering to Christ, supported by Christ, drawing nourishment from Christ, you bear fruit after the similitude of Christ.** -Ellen White, DA 677.1

In this last meeting with His disciples, the great desire which Christ expressed for them was that they might love one another as He had loved them. Again and again He spoke of this. "These things I command you," He said repeatedly, "that ye love one another." His very first injunction when alone with them in the upper chamber was, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.**" To the disciples this commandment was new; for they had not loved one another as Christ had loved them. He saw that new ideas and impulses must control them; that new principles must be practiced by them; through His life and death they were to receive a new conception of love. The command to love one another had a new meaning in the light of His self-sacrifice. **The whole work of grace is one continual service of love, of self-denying, self-sacrificing effort. During every hour of Christ's sojourn upon the earth, the love of God was flowing from Him in irrepressible streams. All who are imbued with His Spirit will love as He loved.** The very principle that actuated Christ will actuate them in all their dealing one with another. DA 677.2