



Dixie-ese—Part 2

by Joe Sixpack

As you'll recall, last week I'd begun relating a story about a discussion between my Souther friend Len and myself. It's in Dixie-ese, so you sort of have to get a hang of the dialect to get this, but I want to finish what he and I talked about. I'll begin this week by restating the last thing we said in our conversation last week.

Joe: Oh, but He did. Let's look at I Corinthians 11:27-29. Paul writes: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself." If, as you say, the Eucharist is just a symbol, why does Paul say an unworthy man (that is, a man in mortal sin) will be profaning the body and blood of Christ? Why does he say that such a man will be drinking judgment on himself? That's pretty strong for a symbol.

Len: Ah'll admit ya gotta point, Joe, but ain't there somethin' more'n jus' a little tawkin' at the Last Supper?

Joe: Indeed there is! Much earlier in His ministry Jesus promised us the Eucharist.

Len: Whar?

Joe: Let's turn to John's Gospel to find out. The sixth chapter of John begins with Jesus working a miracle in preparation for the Eucharistic promise He will make the next day. In verses 1 through 14 we see that a multitude of people had followed Jesus into the hills, and that they became hungry. Jesus fed five thousand men with five loaves of bread and two fish. There was so much left over that the remnants filled twelve baskets. That evening Jesus worked yet another preparatory miracle. Jesus told the apostles to get in their boat at Tiberius and sail to Capernaum without Him. In the night, the sea became rough because of a high wind. Suddenly, the apostles saw Jesus walking on the water toward the boat.

Then, once Jesus was in the boat, it miraculously landed at the shore of Capernaum. So twice in a span of about twelve hours Jesus proved His supernatural mastery over the elements of bread, fish, and water, as well as the dimensions of time and space.

Len: Then what?

Joe: The next morning, the people who had eaten the loaves at Tiberius couldn't find Jesus. They'd seen the apostles sail away from Him, and they couldn't understand why they couldn't find Him. So the people went to Capernaum to find Him because they knew He'd eventually show up with the apostles. When they found Jesus at Capernaum, they asked Him how He got there. Jesus cut to the heart of the matter when He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw things, but because you ate your fill

of the loaves." Jesus went on to tell them to work for the spiritual food that will get them to heaven, instead of the temporal food that spoils. He told them to do this by believing in Him. These hard-headed disciples who ate the miraculous bread the day before now wanted a sign from Him to prove He was worthy of their belief. They told Jesus that Moses had given their fathers manna from heaven to eat. They had the gall to ask if He could top that!

In verse 35 it says: "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.'" He went on to explain through verse 40 that He was the bread sent from heaven by the Father. Up to that point, like you, Jesus' followers understood Him to be speaking symbolically. Jesus took this misconception away from them. He went on to tell them that He was the bread that they'd have to eat to inherit eternal life.

Len: Uh-huh.

Joe: Let's read verses 52-57: "The Jews disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.'" No longer did Jesus' followers believe He was being symbolic. They now understood Him to be speaking literally. He said, "my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" the word "indeed" made His statement hold the force of an oath. He prefaced His entire statement with the phrase "truly, truly," which He always used to emphasize the importance of what He was about to teach.

Len: And then?

Joe: The followers' literal understanding of what Jesus said repulsed them. In verse 66 it says, "After this many of His disciples drew back and no longer went about with him." If they misunderstood by taking Jesus' words literally, why didn't He stop them and explain what He meant? He didn't go after them because He intended for them to take Him literally. In verses 67-69 we read, "Jesus said to the twelve, 'Will you also go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.'" The apostles had been with Him from the beginning. They also understood what He said, but they believed He'd eventually show them. It was at the Last Supper, Len, that He explained how. They and Paul believed so firmly He is truly present in the Eucharist that Paul could write about a man condemning himself to receive Christ in mortal sin.

Len: [Voice cracking.] That'd mean it's real special to eat Him.

Joe: [Softly.] That's right, Len. Jesus, our perfect Lover, has arranged so we can be so intimate that we can take His entire Person-Body, Blood, soul, and divinity-into our entire selves. That is love to the extreme!

Len: [Lower lip quivering.] What yore sayin' is He can be really present with us.

I've run out of space again! I promise that next week I'll finish this real exchange. In the mean time, visit me at JoeSixpackAnswers.com to ask all your questions. And be sure to sign up for my free email course and weekly free webinars. That's how you'll better learn What We Believe... Why We Believe It.