

Protestant Objections to the Real Presence



Protestant Objection: There is no biblical reason that we need to eat the real flesh and blood of Jesus.

Catholic Answer: Jesus promised that those who eat His flesh and blood will have eternal life. We also need to eat the Eucharist to be in Covenant with God. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul says, "For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed."

What is the Passover lamb and how does that relate to Christ? In Exodus 12 God tells Moses to sacrifice an unblemished male lamb, kill it in the evening and eat its flesh and only those who were circumcised could eat the lamb. The Passover lamb was a sign of being in a covenant with God.

Like the Passover lamb, Christ was unblemished and sacrificed in the evening. Christ is the new Passover Lamb and to be in Covenant with God one must eat the Lamb of God and only those who are baptized can consume the Eucharist which is a sign that one is in God's New Covenant.

Protestant Objection: In John 6:63-64 Jesus clearly says He was speaking in spiritual, that is, symbolic terms: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are **spirit** and life"

Catholic Answer: The word "spirit" is never used in a symbolic sense anywhere in scripture.

Protestant Objection: Jesus said that "the flesh" is of no avail. That means eating His body is of no value.

Catholic Answer: Jesus did not say **MY** flesh is of no avail. He said **THE** flesh is of no avail. It is the flesh of Jesus that suffered and died for our sins. His flesh is of the utmost avail. Jesus is contrasting the natural man (the flesh) with the spiritual faith filled man.

Paul makes this clear echoing Jesus' words in John 6:63: "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of **the flesh**, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of **the Spirit**...for the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God....those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Romans 8:5-8

We also need to remember that it is in verse 66 when the disciples walk away. This is after they heard the supposed symbolic explanation of eating Christ's flesh and blood with the words, "The spirit gives life the flesh is of no avail."

Protestant Objection: Jesus calls himself a “vine” (John 15:1) and a “door” (John 10:9). But He isn’t literally a vine or a door. That proves that Jesus is speaking figuratively when He said, “This is my body; This is my blood.” This also proves that Jesus was speaking figuratively when he said to eat His flesh and blood.

Catholic Answer: When Jesus calls Himself the vine or the door, the context clearly shows that He was speaking figuratively. No one that heard Jesus speak those words said, “How can this man be a door; how can this man be a vine”? No one walked away. In other words everyone listening knew Jesus was speaking figuratively.

In the Greek text of John 6 when Jesus says we must “eat” His flesh He uses the word *trogo* which means to crunch, to gnaw. Why would Jesus use that word that if he wanted to be taken figuratively?

What words could Jesus have used to convince you that in John 6 He was speaking literally? Could you please fill in the blanks? If Jesus said _____ then I would believe he was speaking literally.

Protestant Objection: I would believe Him if He would have said “I want you to remember me, as the Lamb of God, who takes away your sins. So take this Bread and eat it and take this wine and drink it to remember me in spirit, worship me in spirit and in truth” (That is the actual answer that I got from an ex-Catholic when I asked her that question)

Protestant Objection: It is impossible for Christ to be bodily present in thousands of Catholic Churches around the world at the same time.

Catholic Answer: With God nothing is impossible. Jesus was present at the Last Supper in a natural way and under the appearance of bread and wine He was present in a sacramental way. How can there be three, distinct Persons in only One God? How can God be present everywhere in the universe at one time? All Christians accept those mysteries. We should have no trouble accepting that Christ can be sacramentally present throughout the world at the same time.

Objection: The Catholic teaching of the Real Presence violates the Levitical law forbidding drinking of blood.

Catholic Answer: Leviticus 17:14 forbids the drinking of blood because the life of the animal is in the blood. To drink the blood was to receive the life of the animal and be lowered to animal level. In Mark 7:19 Jesus declared all foods clean which means that the Levitical Law was no longer binding on Christians.

It was Christ who commanded us to drink His blood. Not the blood of a creature but the glorified flesh and blood of God so that we may have His life within us.

Protestant Objection: If the apostles were literally eating the flesh and blood of Christ they were committing cannibalism and Catholics today are also committing cannibalism.

Catholic Answer: It is clear that the disciples that walked away in John 6 understood Jesus to be speaking of cannibalism. But their lack of faith caused them to walk away without fully understanding the words of Christ. The disciples that remained were rewarded for their faith at the Last Supper where Jesus revealed that they would receive His true body and blood sacramentally (present in a hidden way).

A cannibal is a human who eats human flesh and blood in its natural state. Catholics do not eat the flesh and blood of Christ in its natural state. We do not eat his bones, muscle tissue, hair etc. The Eucharist is the Divine Flesh and Blood, in its risen and glorified supernatural state of body, blood soul and divinity under the appearance of bread and wine.

Objection: Jesus said, "This is my blood," (Matt. 26:28), Then He said, "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Fathers kingdom." Why would Jesus speak of His blood as "the fruit of the vine" if the wine had been changed into His literal blood?

Catholic Answer: In Luke's account of the Last Supper (Luke 22:18) Jesus says, "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Fathers kingdom."

That occurs before the wine is changed into the blood of Christ. What we have are chronologically different accounts. In one Gospel account the statement is made after the consecration and in the other Gospel account the statement is made before the consecration.

Another possibility is that Jesus is speaking about the "fourth" cup. At the Passover meal the drinking of four cups of wine was required to complete the Passover meal. The Gospels reveal that only three cups were consumed at the Last Supper. In the garden before He was arrested Jesus asked His Father in heaven: "If possible let this cup pass from me..." What cup... the fourth cup that would complete the Passover!

Even though Jesus was beaten, scourged and crucified for hours, He refused anything to drink until He was on the cross and suddenly He said, "I thirst." The soldiers then held bitter wine to the mouth of Jesus and John 19:30 tells us: "When Jesus received the vinegar he said, "It is finished."

From the book *The Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*: "This means that Jesus did in fact drink the fourth cup of the Jewish Passover. It means that he did in fact finish the Last Supper. But he did not do it in the Upper Room. He did it on the cross. He did it at the very moment of his death....by waiting to drink the fourth cup of the Passover until the very moment of his death, Jesus united the Last Supper to his death on the cross.....by refusing to drink of the fruit of the vine until he gave up his final breath, he joined the offering of himself under the form of bread and wine to the offering of himself on Calvary....by means of the Last Supper, Jesus transformed the Cross into a Passover, and by means of the cross, he transformed the Last Supper into a sacrifice."

Objection: When we have the Lord's Supper the bread is in a plastic wrapper. How can that be Jesus?

Catholic Answer: Only the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church has the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Protestants do not a valid priesthood and therefore they do not have the Real Presence of Christ. You are only eating bread and drinking grape juice. It is only symbolic in Protestant churches.

Protestant Objection: The Eucharist is consecrated at the "sacrifice" of the Mass but the bible says in Hebrews 7:27 that Jesus offered Himself up "once for all." If the Eucharist is Christ then He is being sacrificed again and again and not "once for all."

Catholic Answer: The Mass is not another sacrifice but the "same" sacrifice being offered to the Father. Christ does not die again and again in the Mass. In the Book of Revelation 5:6 Jesus is seen as a "Lamb standing as though slain" and in Revelation 13:8 it says that Jesus was "slain from the foundation of the world." This means that His sacrifice is eternal and outside of time. The Mass re-presents the once for all sacrifice.

Protestant Objection: The bible knows nothing about such a sacrifice.

Catholic Answer: In Hebrews 13: 10 its states that Christians "have an altar" and altars are only for sacrifice. In 1 Corinthians 10:16-21 Paul compares the sacrifice of the Christians to the sacrifice of Israel and the sacrifice of the pagans. Paul says that the cup is a participation in the blood of Christ and the bread is a participation in the body of Christ and then warns his listeners that they "cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons." In other words they must decide which sacrifice they will partake in, the Christian sacrifice or the non-Christian sacrifice.

Catechism 1367 The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*: "The victim is one and 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." "And since 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. . . this sacrifice is truly propitiatory.

Catechism 1374 The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend." In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained*." "This presence is called 'real' - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a *substantial* presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present."

Recommended books on the Eucharist: *The Biblical Basis for the Eucharist* by John Salza

Great book! -- *The Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* by Brant Pitre

Deeper Study: *Not by Bread Alone* by Robert Sungenis

Next apologetic topic: The Sacrament of Confession in scripture.