

# Eucharist Epilogue

*Nihil Obstat:* After review, I have concluded that the materials presented in this work are free of doctrinal or moral errors.

Reverend Charles N. Rowe, STD, *censor librorum*  
September 23, 2024

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Most Reverend James V. Johnston, Jr, DD, JCL  
Kansas City – St. Joseph  
September 23, 2024

“Belief in the Eucharist” stands alone as a single page uniquely explaining **what** the Eucharist is, **how** it comes into existence, and **why**. Therefore, this epilogue is not needed to further explain the belief, but can be useful if questions or doubts still exist after reading the belief. The source for all referenced Bible verses is the New International Version (NIV) Bible. The Roman Missal is the source for Jesus’ Words at the Last Supper, which are consistent with Jesus’ Words at the Last Supper from Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24 and Luke 22:19-20.

The only documented Eucharistic belief during early Christianity was that the Eucharist is Jesus’ Body and Blood, however, as of 2019 only about 20% of all Western Christians (including Roman Catholics) still believe this. Due to this reality, this epilogue combines comments on opposing views with additional biblical support for “Belief in the Eucharist” so that anyone seeking the real biblical truth about the Eucharist will have the information necessary to fully understand and defend it.

## Comments on Opposing Views

Many people support the view that the Eucharist only symbolically represents Jesus. To address this, John 6:25-69 must be examined. Note that **religions with the symbolic view often avoid these verses**, which contain substantial biblical support for “Belief in the Eucharist”.

### **Jesus the Bread of Life**

<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

<sup>28</sup> Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

<sup>30</sup> So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? <sup>31</sup> Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

<sup>32</sup> Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup> “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

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<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. <sup>36</sup> But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. <sup>37</sup> All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

<sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

<sup>40</sup> For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

<sup>41</sup> At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." <sup>42</sup> They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

<sup>43</sup> "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. <sup>44</sup> "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. <sup>45</sup> It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. <sup>46</sup> No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup> Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. <sup>50</sup> But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

<sup>52</sup> Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

<sup>53</sup> Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. <sup>56</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. <sup>57</sup> Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." <sup>59</sup> He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

### Many Disciples Desert Jesus

<sup>60</sup> On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

<sup>61</sup> Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup> Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! <sup>63</sup> The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. <sup>64</sup> Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. <sup>65</sup> He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them."

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<sup>66</sup> From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.<sup>67</sup> "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

According to numerous sources, the Book of John was written after Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John wrote comprehensively about Jesus' teaching that He is "The Bread of life". Some people argue that Jesus used the term "Bread of Life" as a metaphor but in verse 51, Jesus said "...***This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world***". So, in addition to Jesus literally saying that when He had earlier referred to "bread" He meant His flesh, His language was direct, concise and unlike the language that Jesus used in other instances when He spoke metaphorically.

Note the response to Jesus' words in John 6:48-58. Specifically in John 6:60 - On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" Soon after this many of Jesus' disciples no longer followed Him - and we are supposed to believe they left because of a symbolic meaning? If so, that would not have been a hard teaching at all because they already had been following and believed in Jesus. There is a complete mismatch between the argument that Jesus' intention was symbolic and John's account of the responses and actions of the disciples that deserted Jesus as shown in John 6:52-66.

Some people claim that because John did not mention the Last Supper that Jesus' teaching about the "Bread of Life" is not related to His Words at the Last Supper. One opposing view even said because it was missing, that made it ***likely*** that John did not even believe the Eucharist was important. I believe what is most ***likely*** is that John never imagined that hundreds of years later anyone would read John 6:51 and not grasp its clear relationship to the Last Supper just because he (John) didn't include a fourth rendition of the Last Supper in his book or he would have ***likely*** included it.

It should be intuitively obvious that at the Last Supper, when Jesus breaks bread, offers it to the apostles and says "This is My Body", it is the culmination of Jesus' teaching that He is "The Bread of Life" and answers the question asked in John 6:52 "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Months of research was performed in writing "Belief in the Eucharist" and this epilogue. No evidence was found that anyone believed that the Eucharist only symbolically represented Jesus either during John's lifetime or in the subsequent several centuries afterwards. However, significant biblical support of the belief that the Eucharist is Jesus' Body and Blood can be found in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians, which was written in 53 AD. In 1 Corinthians 10:16 Paul writes "***Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?***" And in 1 Corinthians 11:27 Paul writes "So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord." Note that ***religions with the symbolic view often avoid these verses*** from Paul's letter.

Paul is considered to be the second most important person in the history of Christianity (of course Jesus Christ is the most important). Paul's prominence was due to his extensive theological influence in the New Testament and for his missions where he spread Christianity to the Gentiles. Therefore, Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 11:27 profess more than "a" Eucharistic belief - they provide a clear definition of "***The***" Eucharistic belief during early Christianity.

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## Conclusion

So why did many disciples stop following Jesus because of His “hard teaching”? Probably because to their (and our) human minds, it seems unnatural to “Eat Jesus’ Body and Drink His Blood”. In Jesus’ Infinite Wisdom, He knows human nature and so His Sacrificed Body and Blood is made present ***under the appearances of bread and wine*** so that we can receive it in a manner that is respectful to His Sacrifice and does not seem unnatural to us.

The disciples that stopped following Jesus also ***did not truly trust in Jesus***. John 6:67-69 shows the stark difference between the disciples that stopped following Jesus and those who stayed – “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. In response, Peter did not say “we fully understand your teaching” he just said “where else would we go?”. So, eleven of the twelve the apostles fully trusted in Jesus and chose to believe His Words and follow His Instructions no matter what.

So, I pose this question: Do you believe that Jesus Christ is God’s son, He was conceived by the Power of the Holy Spirit, He was born of a virgin, He was crucified, He died for the forgiveness of our sins including the abolishment of the original sin of Adam and Eve, He was resurrected and rose from the dead on the third day, His Body ascended into Heaven, He opened the door for us to eternal life, and He sits at the right hand of God the Father? If you are a Christian and answered “yes” to that very long question, then have you ever thought about why you believe all of that? My guess is that you believe it because it is written in the Bible.

The key to “Belief in the Eucharist” is the belief that the Eucharist is Jesus’ Body and Blood, which is biblically supported by Jesus Words from John 6:25-69, His Words at the Last Supper from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. Shouldn’t ***a consistent message across five books in the Bible*** be enough? In the same way we trust the biblical support for the very long sentence in the above paragraph, the collective biblical support that the Eucharist is Jesus’ Body and Blood is ***clear and compelling*** and should be equally trusted. And shouldn’t the Bible be the true foundation of all of our Christian religious beliefs rather than professing to other beliefs that we have been led by others to believe or that just seem more believable to us?

While it is absolutely a “hard teaching”, we can learn from the apostles because what is really needed to believe that the Eucharist is Jesus’ Body and Blood is to fully ***trust in Jesus*** and ***believe Jesus’ Words*** even if they seem unbelievable or are difficult to comprehend. And if the apostles’ example is not enough, then Proverbs 3:5 also gives guidance – “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding”.