

What Exactly Is “The Milk Of The Word”?

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Hebrews 5:11 - 6:3

“Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, **ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk**, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (CHAPTER 6) Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; **not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment**. And this will we do, if God permit.”

The King James Version, 1769.

In the Book of Hebrews, Paul lists several teachings that he refers to as the "milk" of the Word. These teachings are basic, and are suitable for "babes" in Christ. However, in many of today's churches, these "milk" doctrines are not taught in depth. This results in a shaky foundation upon which to build our knowledge and understanding of Scripture. As we go through this condensed study, we will examine these "milk" doctrines in detail.

MILK BOTTLE #1: REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS

"REPENTANCE — a turning away from sin, disobedience, or rebellion and a turning back to God (Matt. 9:13; Luke 5:32). **True repentance is a “godly sorrow” for sin, an act of turning around and going in the opposite direction. This type of repentance leads to a fundamental change in a person’s relationship to God.** In the Old Testament the classic case of repentance is that of King David, after Nathan the prophet accused him of killing Uriah the Hittite and committing adultery with Uriah’s wife,

Bathsheba. David's prayer of repentance for this sin is found in Psalm 51. In the New Testament the keynote of John the Baptist's preaching was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). To the multitudes he declared, "Bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:8). When Jesus began His ministry, He took up John's preaching of the message of repentance, expanding the message to include the good news of salvation: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel" (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15). **In Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God is seen the truth that repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin: by repentance, one turns away from sin; by faith, one turns toward God in accepting the Lord Jesus Christ. Such a twofold turning, or conversion, is necessary for entrance into the kingdom (Matt. 18:3).** "Unless you repent," said Jesus, "you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). This is the negative, or judgmental, side of Jesus' message. The positive, or merciful, side is seen in these words: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10)." *"Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary"*

As fallen human beings, born with a "sin nature" as a result of Adam and Eve's fall, we begin life moving in a certain spiritual direction. Unfortunately, that direction is AWAY from God. Although we were created to be in fellowship with God, our back is turned on Him, and we are chasing the attractions of this world, "the lusts of the flesh". In order to begin a relationship with God, we must CHANGE DIRECTION. Becoming a Christian is not just an emotional "sorrow" that occurs while the choir sings "There Is Room At The Cross For You", but is forgotten in the rush of the work week as we deal with "the real world". We have to TURN AWAY from our sinful behaviors and attitudes, and TURN TOWARD GOD.

See:

Ezekiel 14:6

Ezekiel 18:30-32

Luke 13:2-5

Matthew 9:13

Luke 24:46-47

2nd Corinthians 7:9-11

2nd Peter 3:9

What happens if this "milk" doctrine is not taught thoroughly?

If a proper knowledge of repentance is not taught, you mislead people into thinking that they can be saved

without turning away from their sin. You wind up with people whose "salvation experience" is nothing more than a temporary emotional moment. They believe that because they cried a little, and said a rote prayer, that they are "born again". Nothing could be further from the truth. BIBLICAL salvation ALWAYS comes with a change of direction, not just the emotion of the moment. Many "professing" Christians have never had a REAL Born Again experience, and it shows in their lives. When the divorce rate, teen pregnancy rate, use of Internet pornography, and so on are the same INSIDE the church as they are OUTSIDE the church, are the so-called Christians really Christian?

QUOTES ON THIS SUBJECT:

"Among evangelical churches probably no more than one out of ten know anything **experientially** about the new birth" (emphasis added) Dr. A.W. Tozer

"Anyone with any spiritual maturity and discernment, who knows the religious climate in America today, knows most church members are not saved." Dale Burden, editor of a Baptist publication called "The Gist"

"I will be surprised to meet 25% of my members in heaven." Dr. W.A. Criswell

"85% of our church members have never been born again" Billy Graham (1940's)

"If we could get half the church members saved, we would see a great revival. In fact, I think if we could get half the preachers in America converted, we would see a mighty revival" Dr. Monroe Parker

MILK BOTTLE #2: FAITH TOWARD GOD

"FAITH - a belief in or confident attitude toward God, involving commitment to His will for one's life. In the New Testament, "faith" covers various levels of personal commitment. Mere intellectual agreement to a truth is illustrated in James 2:19, where even demons are said to believe that there is one God. **Obviously, however, they are not saved by this type of belief.** Genuine saving faith is a personal attachment to Christ, best thought of as a combination of two ideas-reliance on Christ and commitment to Him. **Saving**

faith involves personally depending on the finished work of Christ's sacrifice as the only basis for forgiveness of sin and entrance into heaven. But saving faith is also a personal commitment of one's life to following Christ in obedience to His commands: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim. 1:12). Faith is part of the Christian life from beginning to end. As the instrument by which the gift of salvation is received (Eph. 2:8-9), faith is thus distinct from the basis of salvation, which is grace, and from the outworking of salvation, which is good works." *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary*

The second "milk bottle doctrine" goes along with the first, that is, repentance FROM dead works must be coupled with faith TOWARD **God** in order to be effective to salvation. Turning away from your sinful ways and following Buddha may result in a life that is better in terms of behavior, but will not bring you one step closer to being saved. When you turn away from going in the wrong direction, you must go in the right direction, not just another equally wrong direction. Nor is it enough to simply stop doing "bad" things. You must move toward God in faith, trusting in His gift of life in Jesus Christ. Intellectual agreement is not enough. Faith toward God is giving Him control of your life, and following Him instead of trying to get Him to conform to your agenda. God is LORD, not a "genie" you rub to get goodies.

Acts 4:10-12

"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. **Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.**" *The King James Version, 1769.*

Acts 16:27-34

"And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be

saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, **believing in God** with all his house." *The King James Version*, 1769.

1st Peter 1:18-21

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, **Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.**"

The King James Version, 1769.

Acts 5:27-32

"And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, **We ought to obey God rather than men.** The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. **And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.**" *The King*

James Version, 1769.

Romans 16:25-27

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, **and the preaching of Jesus Christ**, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made

manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, **made known to all nations for the obedience of faith**: To God only wise, *be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.*" *The King James Version, 1769.*

MILK BOTTLE #3: The Doctrine of Baptisms

Paul's use of the word **baptisms** (Greek *baptismoi*) is a definite reference to more than one baptism, since it is a clearly plural word. There are several baptisms to which he could be referring:

- A) The baptism of John the Baptist
- B) The baptism of the Holy Spirit
- C) The baptism in water in obedience to Christ's command.

Before we examine these, let's look at what the word baptism itself means.

baptizo { bap-tid'-zo}(Strong's number 907)

- 1) to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk)
- 2) to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe
- 3) to overwhelm

"The clearest example that shows the meaning of baptizo is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be 'dipped' (bapto) into boiling water and then 'baptised' (baptizo) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptising the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism. e.g. Mark 16:16. 'He that believes and is baptised shall be saved'. Christ is saying that mere intellectual assent is not enough. There must be a union with him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle!"

Bible Study Magazine, James Montgomery Boice, May 1989.

baptisma { bap'-tis-mah} (Strong's Number 908)

1) immersion, submersion

1 a) of calamities and afflictions with which one is quite overwhelmed

1 b) of John's baptism, that purification rite by which men on confessing their sins were bound to spiritual reformation, obtained the pardon of their past sins and became qualified for the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom soon to be set up. This was valid Christian baptism, as this was the only baptism the apostles received and it is not recorded anywhere that they were ever re-baptized after Pentecost.

1 c) of Christian baptism; a rite of immersion in water as commanded by Christ, by which one after confessing his sins and professing his faith in Christ, having been born again by the Holy Spirit unto a new life, identifies publicly with the fellowship of Christ and the church.

Thus the plural "baptisms" referred to by Paul as "doctrine" or teaching would refer to those baptisms that are appropriate for a Christian; that is:

1) The baptism of the Holy Spirit which is received at salvation (Matthew 3:11, John 3:5-8)

2) The baptism in water in obedience to Christ's command (Matthew 28:18-20)

It is also possible that he is including the baptism of John (Acts 18:24-28) since there were people who had been baptized this way who had not yet been baptized into Christ.

It is important to note that the baptism of the Holy Spirit must come first, as it is the only one of the two that changes the heart and is the "true" baptism (Ephesians 4:4-6). It is also important to remember that the word "baptize" includes the meaning of a fundamental change in the nature of the item baptized (in cloth, from one color to another; in vegetables, from fresh to pickled).

What does this mean if it is not taught correctly?

Water baptism is seen as having salvation, rather than being mere formalism if the Holy Spirit has not already baptized a person. This leads to people falsely believing that they are saved, and presenting a false

witness to the world as hypocrites. Also, the Holy Spirit is seen as something that comes to a believer later, and only for the "truly righteous", as a select group; thus denying the cleansing and power of every true Believer.

MILK BOTTLE #4: The Laying On Of Hands

Paul lists the "laying on of hands" as a basic "milk" doctrine because it is fundamental in several areas:

First, as an understanding of SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT. This is where the sins of one are transferred to another, as in the case of the High Priest laying his hands on the sacrifice for the Day of Atonement, transferring the sins of the people of Israel to the sacrificial animal. In the New Testament, our sins have been transferred to Jesus Christ, as our atonement. See Leviticus 4:13-15, Leviticus 16:20-22, 2nd Corinthians 5:21

Second, as an understanding of giving of authority, or ordination. Authority in the New Testament is given by the "laying on of hands" for specific work, commission to ministry, and so on. See Acts 6:1-6, Acts 13:2-3, 1st Timothy 5:22, 2nd Timothy 1:6.

Third, as a means of transfer of the Holy Spirit by the Apostles, which is important because it verifies the apostolic ministry of Paul. See Acts 8:14-23, Acts 19:1-7.

"SUDDENLY". "Lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Timothy 5:22) seems to warn against attacking or arresting another person without warning. **But the laying on of hands here referred to was the gesture of ordination (see 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6), and "suddenly" is used in the obsolete sense of hastily. RSV translates: "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands."**

MILK BOTTLE #5: Resurrection of the Dead

Resurrection is a "milk bottle" doctrine for Christianity because it is the basis of our entire relationship with

God through Jesus Christ; and is our hope for the future. As Paul puts it in 1st Corinthians 15:12-23: "12Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 14And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain. 15Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 19If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 20But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. 22For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." *The King James Version, 1769.*

What exactly is meant by resurrection? Is what happened to Lazarus considered a resurrection? Let's see if we can answer those questions:

Resurrection has three primary meanings in the Bible.

1. Miraculous healings. In this usage, resurrection refers to individuals who have been brought back to life (resuscitated) in this present world. Such raisings were performed by Elijah on the Zarephath widow's son (1 Kin. 17:20–24), by Elisha on the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kin. 4:32–37) and the dead man who touched Elisha's bones (2 Kin. 13:21), by Jesus on Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:41–43) and Lazarus (John 11:43–44), by Peter on Dorcas (Acts 9:40–41), and by Paul on Eutychus (Acts 20:9–12). In these raisings there is no suggestion that the person will not again experience death.

2. Our Lord's resurrection. This resurrection is clearly linked with the overcoming of the powers of evil and death.

3. The hope of a general resurrection. In the Old Testament Sheol is the place of the *rephaim* (shades), the Hebrew term for a weakened existence (Is. 14:9–11). Therefore, the psalmist expected that

God would ransom his soul from Sheol (Ps. 49:15). It was Israel's firm belief in the goodness of God that led the Jewish people to believe that the righteous dead would yet see God (Job 19:26). This expectation was the foundation upon which the Jewish ideas concerning the resurrection were built.

By the time of Jesus, two positions were firmly entrenched within Judaism. The Sadducees, who were oriented to this world, rejected any belief in the resurrection. They believed that such an idea was irrelevant to this life and was not part of the revelation in the Law that God gave to Moses. When they encountered Jesus, the Sadducees sought to trap Him by their question concerning the seven brothers who married one woman. Jesus criticized their view of resurrection life by indicating that earthly marriage patterns are not repeated in heaven. He also condemned their understanding of Moses and the Scriptures (Mark 12:18–27). The Pharisees, in contrast, believed in resurrection. The Jewish historian Josephus reported that the Pharisees held that the good dead are transferred into other bodies. Although this report is not totally clear, it is certain that the Pharisees proclaimed a life after death that required a resurrection. It was from the ranks of these scholarly Pharisees that the apostle Paul came (Phil. 3:5). Luke records that in his defense before the Sanhedrin (Jewish Council), Paul stressed that he was a Pharisee of Pharisaic descent and that he was on trial for affirming the resurrection (Acts 23:6).

The New Testament consistently teaches hope in the resurrection of the believer based upon the resurrection of Christ as the "firstborn from the dead" (1 Cor. 15:12–58; Col. 1:18; 1 Thess. 4:14–18; 1 Pet. 1:3–5). This idea of resurrection is expressed in terms of such images as a transformed body (Phil. 3:21), a new dwelling (2 Cor. 5:2), and new clothing (2 Cor. 5:4; Rev. 6:11). The New Testament also contrasts resurrection to life with resurrection to judgment (John 5:29; Acts 24:15).

What happens if this doctrine is not taught correctly in the church?

There is no basis for the Gospel, since Jesus hasn't conquered death and the grave. There is no reason to control behavior if there is no resurrection to judgment. The "strength of sin" is not weakened, since fear of death is still in force. And finally, there is no reason for the Christian to hope for anything other than this physical life; therefore, the Christian virtues that set our lives at odds with the world are useless, and are of no benefit. Christianity becomes merely a "nice philosophy" that has no bearing upon the "real world".

MILK BOTTLE #6: Eternal Judgment

Our final "milk bottle" doctrine is the one that brings our earthly existence to a finish. Once we have finished life "in the flesh", we are judged. The basis for judgment is whether or not we have repented of our sins, and have believed upon Jesus Christ for our personal salvation. Those who ARE "written in the Lamb's Book of Life" will enter the Eternal Kingdom at the end of the 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom. Those who ARE NOT written there will go to the Lake of Fire, "which is the second death". Although many people feel that it is not right that God should judge us, His holiness and justice will not allow for anything else. Also, even though He will and must judge us, He has done EVERYTHING He can (even to the giving of His Own Son to pay for our sin) to keep from having to send ANYONE to the Lake of Fire.

SEE:

John 3:16-19

2nd Peter 3:9

Matthew 12:34-37

John 5:22-30

Romans 2:1-16

Romans 14:10-13

Hebrews 9:27

2nd Peter 2:9

1st John 4:17-18

Revelation 20:11-15

What happens if this is not taught correctly?

If there is no judgment, then sin is not punished, righteousness is not rewarded, the Bible is full of lies, and there is no perfect future eternity, and Jesus death was totally useless.

As we can see, what Paul taught as "the milk of the word" is not being taught correctly in most churches today! If we can't even get the "milk" right, what makes us think we will get the "meat" right? We need to make sure that we are growing in the Lord by having a CORRECT understanding of what HE wants us to know about these foundational subjects.