

Hebrews — A Study Into the "Meat" of the Gospel

Introduction

This study of Hebrews came about from our study of the "Elementary Teachings" about Christ that the book of Hebrews identifies. These teachings called "milk" is for a child (ESV), a babe (KJV, NKJV), an infant (NASB, NIV), who is "unskilled" (ESV, NKJV), "unskillful" (KJV), "not accustomed" (NASB), "not acquainted" (NIV), "in the word/teaching of righteousness."

The Hebrew writer then contrasts the diet of milk for infants to "solid food" (ESV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, WEB), "strong meat" (KJV) which is for the "mature", "of full age" (KJV).

There are two other passages in the New Testament that use this language of milk & solid food for elementary & advanced teachings of Christianity. They are:

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (ESV)

1 But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, **as infants** in Christ. 2 I fed you with **milk**, not **solid food**, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

Notice: the Corinthians were "not ready" for solid food. They were still fleshly & not spiritual, so Paul fed them milk.

1 Peter 2:1-3 (ESV) 1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 2 Like **newborn infants**, long for **the pure spiritual milk**, that by it you may grow up into salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

This is a more positive statement than 1 Corinthians or Hebrews toward those who feed on milk.

These two passages also let us know that milk is for new infants and solid food is for those who can handle it (1 Cor 3:1-3), but neither enlightens us as to what IS milk or solid food.

Now let's take a brief look at our passage in Hebrews

Hebrews 5:11 - 14 (ESV)

11 About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. 14 But solid food is for **the mature**, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Hebrews 6:1,2

1 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 and of instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

Hebrews not only reiterates that milk is for infants and solid food for the mature, but in addition, Hebrews identifies the "elementary", "milk", topics that are the "foundation" of the gospel and implies the other material in Hebrews is "solid food."

Our study centering on the book of Hebrews won't be a book study in and of itself. We will be looking at Hebrews to discover what the Bible considers "strong meat" (KJV), "solid food" (all other translations).

Our Plan of Action

1. We will start by looking at the passage where we first learned not only that milk is for infants & solid food for the mature, but also what is the milk.
 - a. Then we will expand the context of this passage to see if we can discern the existence of "solid food."
 - We will want to know what differentiates milk from solid food?
 - what makes something solid food or milk
 - Is solid food just a more detailed version of milk?
 - Are they different topics,
 - different perspectives (the way you look at the topic)?
 - b. After we have studied this passage we will move from that point in both directions, to the preceding and following passages, to see if the rest of the book gives us any more solid food or if our initial passage is a unique lone reference of solid food.
 - c. We will also be looking for clues as to *why* the writer was making these arguments
 - What can we learn about the audience of the book
 - What is going on in the world at this time?

2. Once we have analyzed our opening passage we will use our analysis to look for similar patterns of discussion throughout the book.
 - a. At this stage we will want to lightly scan the book to construct an outline of similar discussions that we can later study in depth.

We will revise our plan as we go along and learn more about the Hebrew letter. But right now...

Let's Begin Our Study with

The Passage that identifies that there is "milk" and "solid food"

I don't want to spend a lot of time right now talking about the "milk" in this passage or in this study for that matter. We have already discussed this part of the passage, Heb 5:11-6:3 considerably in our past studies on the "Elementary Teachings About Christ."

Right now I want to concentrate on the ideas that are being contrasted with it that the writer calls "solid food"

Notice in vs 11 of chapter five the writer says:

Hebrews 5:11-6:3

Hebrews 5:11 - 6:3 (ESV) 11 About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

5:11 - About this we have much to say...

- What is THIS? (We will identify "this" later, but notice)
 - The writer was in the middle of a discussion (literally) about something
 - He chastises his audience for being unable to follow his discussion
 - The reason he gives is that they are only acquainted with milk
 - SO THE DISCUSSION HE WAS PRESENTING, THE WRITER CONSIDERS "SOLID FOOD"

After he informs his audience what the elementary teachings are & the need to progress beyond them in our Christian development he says in Hebrew 6:1,3

6:1 Hebrews 6:1 (ESV)

1 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, ...

Hebrews 6:3 (ESV)

3 And this we will do if God permits.

So the writer

- precedes his chastisement with a discussion of solid food
- chastises his audience for being slow to grasp his argument
- and then indicates that he is going to continue his discussion in solid food.

Let's expand the context beginning with the verses following

However, He doesn't pick up with his "meaty" discussion yet

The writer follows his chastening with a warning He's not ready yet to return to the "meaty" discussion. He evidently wants to drive home the point that it is necessary to grow in our Christian development

Hebrews 6:4-6 (ESV)

4 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

The writer develops his warning in 6:7,8 and connects it to his audience using phrases like, "your work," "...you have shown," "you still do." Meaning: this message is meant for you, my audience.

Then the writer offers hope to his audience

Beginning in Hebrews 6:13

Hebrews 6:13 (ESV)

The Certainty of God's Promise

13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself,...

He finishes his message of hope with 6:19,20

Hebrews 6:19-20 (ESV)

19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

So, the writer finishes his message of hope with Jesus, and not only that, with the idea that: _Jesus, our forerunner, enters the inner place (what is that?) on our behalf, because he has become a **high priest FOREVER after the order of Melchizedek**.

And if we are having difficulty understanding what the writer is saying, then maybe we ARE JUST LIKE the audience this message was directed at. Let that sink in a little. This passage applies to us today also.

So far we have seen

1. The writer interrupts his "meaty" discussion to chastise his audience for their slowness
2. He identifies that there are two kinds of food that Christians can feed on
 - a. Milk, for infants
 - b. Solid Food, for the mature
3. He warns them about not progressing leading to turning away from God
4. And he offers hope that Jesus can help us since he has already led the way
5. Then the writer turns to a discussion about Melchizedek

We didn't investigate the discussion preceding the chastisement, let's do so now.

Let's look now at the discussion that was interrupted

Beginning with the verses preceding the chastisement

Let's try and find where this particular discussion begins working backwards from the interruption.

The two immediate previous verses

Hebrews 5:9-10 (ESV)

9 And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, 10 being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

tells us that:

- Someone was perfected
- And in doing so he became the source of eternal salvation
- To all who OBEY him, (did you expect that word: obey?)
- It is God that designates him a high priest
- After the order of Melchizedek (What is the "order of Melchizedek?")

NOTE

Right now we're trying to identify and map out the discussion, so we'll ask questions to write down to save for later when we can go back and study the discussion.

Now go back two more verses to 5:7,8, which tell us

- "He" is Jesus
- He offered prayers & supplications
- He was reverent to God and that's why he was heard
- He was a son who learned obedience by what he suffered

Back three more verses 5:4-6

- God called Jesus
- To be a high priest
- God declares him to be his son
- And a priest FOREVER in the order of Melchizedek

5:1-3 (We are still in the discussion which is about Priests, High Priests, Melchizedek, and the order of Melchizedek)

- Every high priest chosen from among men
- He is appointed to act on behalf of men to God

Let's continue back to look for the beginning of this discussion

We are now in Chapter 4 of Hebrews and it appears that this discussion begins with the last three verses of chapter four.

Hebrews 4:14-16 (ESV)

14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. **15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. **16** Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The "Since then" (ESV), "Therefore, since" (NASB, NIV), "Seeing then" (NKJV, KJV), "Having then" (WEB) indicates that this discussion is based on a previous discussion. Now we know that there is, indeed, at least one more discussion, if not more, preceding the one we are mapping.

So our "meaty" discussion preceding the chastisement is from: Hebrews 4:14 - 5:10

The writer interrupts the discussion just as he is emphasizing that Jesus is a high priest in the order of Melchizedek

Following the verses of the chastisement, warning, and message of hope

The last two verses of the interruption ending with the message of hope, the Hebrew writer brings us back to the idea of Jesus, our high priest, in the order of Melchizedek:

Hebrews 6:19-20 (ESV)

19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

The "meaty" discussion returns...

Hebrews 7:1-10, tells us about Melchizedek

- He was the king of Salem (later to become the city of Jerusalem)
- He was a priest of God
- Abraham gave him a tenth of all he had
- His name translated means: king of *righteousness*
- He is king of Salem, that is: king of peace

Hebrews 7:11-28, Jesus compared to Melchizedek

You might ask here, what makes this discussion on priests, hight priests, Melchizedek, and the order of Melchizedek "meaty" in comparison to discussion on repentance, faith, instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection from the dead, and eternal judgement? Those things that the writer identified as "milk"?

Verse 11 hints at the answer, I believe. It is instruction of **more than just facts, but also of reasoning**. Not just the who, what, where, & when of Christianity, but the HOW & WHY. And notice that **it is THE BIBLE that is presenting a reasoning, a rationale**, not us offering our own unsubstantiated reasons based on our limited and imperfect imaginations.

Hebrews 7:11-12 (ESV)

11 Now ***if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood*** (for under it the people received the law), ***what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek***, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? 12 **For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.**

We are NOT doing an analysis right now. We will later. But right now I want to preview with these two verses what differentiates the Old law from the New law.

The Old law is stated as a series of **FACTS** which can be learned mindlessly by rote memorization &

repetition with no understanding about WHY God made these facts law, commands to be followed. Such is also the elementary teachings of the New law. However, laid on top of the foundational teachings in the new law is unfolded for us some of the motivation (love), reasons of why & how behind not only the new law but also the old law. Hebrews 7:11,12 is one example.

- The Levitical Priesthood could not make anything perfect, otherwise
- Another Priesthood would NOT have been NECESSARY.
- IMPLICATION: the Levitical Priesthood was INTENDED TO BE TEMPORARY & REPLACED
- And when the change in Priesthood would come NECESSARILY the law HAD to change

The writer's supporting statements follow throughout the rest of chapters 7, 8, 9, & 10.

Right now we will just map to the end of the immediate discussion given by the writer, which is to the end of chapter 7.

Hebrews 7:13-16 (ESV)

13 For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

15 This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, 16 who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.

NOTE The writer begins reasoning with his audience. Asking questions of "if," and not just presenting us with a load of facts. The "meat" of the gospel requires thinking and not a reciting of facts.

Hebrews 7:17-22 (ESV)

17 For it is witnessed of him,
“You are a priest forever,
after the order of Melchizedek.”

18 For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness 19 (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

20 And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, 21 but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him:

“The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind,
‘You are a priest forever.’”

22 This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

Hebrews 7:23-25 (ESV)

23 The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. 25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 7:26-28 (ESV)

26 For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. 28 For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

the immediate discussion finishes out at the end of chapter 7

So the Map of Hebrews 4:14 - 7:28 Discussion

Hebrews 4:14-5:10, Discussion

1. Hebrews 4:14-16 - Jesus Our Great High Priest
2. Hebrews 5:1-4 - Every high priest is called by God
3. Hebrews 5:5-10 - Jesus called by God in order of Melchizedek

Hebrews 5:11-6:20, Interruption

1. Hebrews 5:11-14, You are infants, slow to learn, fed on milk, you need meat
2. Hebrews 6:1-3, Move beyond the elementary teachings
3. Hebrews 6:4-12, Warning about not progressing and in turning away

4. Hebrews 6:13-20, Hope extended through a promise brought about, on our behalf, by Jesus, a high priest in the order of Melchizedek

Hebrews 7:1-7:28, Discussion continues with Melchizedek

1. Hebrews 7:1-3, Melchizedek history
2. Hebrews 7:4-10, Melchizedek superior to Abraham, superior to Levi
3. Hebrews 7:11-12,
 - a. If perfection could be attained through the Levitical Priesthood what need would there be for another priest in the order of Melchizedek.
 - b. And a change in Priests requires a change in law.
4. Hebrews 7:13-14, Jesus belonged to another tribe
5. Hebrews 7:15-16, Jesus has become a priest by the power of an indestructible life
6. Hebrews 7:17-22,
 - a. a priesthood without and oath
 - b. a priesthood with an oath
 - c. Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant (law).
7. Hebrews 7:23-25
 - a. former priesthood many mortal priests
 - b. but he holds the priesthood permanently because he continues forever
8. Hebrews 7:26-28
 - a. he is unstained, etc has no need to offer daily sacrifices, unlike the former, since he did once for all when he sacrificed himself
 - b. the law appoints weak priests
 - c. but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

So the pattern here is:

1. discussion
2. interruption
3. warning
4. message of hope
5. discussion continued.

Is the a one time occurrence in the book from Hebrews 4:11-7:28?

Or is it repeated?