

# We See Jesus (5): Why Don't You Grow Up?

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(Hebrews 5:11 - 6:3)

## I. Introduction

- A. The early eighteenth century was a period of spiritual lethargy in America.
1. The dominant state churches lost much of their influence over most Americans.
    - a. We believed, but our faith was buried under layers of comfortable traditionalism.
    - b. Our faith was focused in the new country, not in Old World religious institutions.
  2. But that changed in 1740's in a series of revivals known as "*The Great Awakening.*"
    - a. The "*hell-fire*" sermon that would characterize Protestant preaching was born
    - b. Revival meetings sprang up across the countryside; religious frenzy swept the land
  3. People would travel for miles to hear Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield
    - a. Whitfield was so eloquent that ladies would faint to hear him say "Mesopotamia!"
    - b. Preached at impromptu revival of 6000 people on Philadelphia street (*Ben Franklin*)
    - c. Throngs pressed to hear him so that on one occasion several were crushed to death
  4. Whitfield was Elvis/Beatles in era when preachers were rock stars! *Good old days!*
- B. **Question:** What did the revivals of the Great Awakening accomplish? Probably not much
1. Historian Clyde Manschreck suggests main result—they shot denominations in foot!
    - a. During the revivals, Presbyterians and Baptist would go listen to a Methodist preach.
    - b. Normally, they'd need a heavy coat, because it'd be a cold day! Revivals promoted unity.
  2. What about the people weeping and writhing in the tents at the Great Awakening?
    - a. Well, the revivals seemed to have little lasting impact on the lives of those revived
    - b. There was no great church growth movement or missionary movement that followed
    - c. After folks went home from the tent meetings, life returned to normal. Usually does
  3. A study was done in England years ago of the impact of a Billy Graham crusade.
    - a. Surveys were made of "*religiosity*" (*attendance/prayer/reading*) before the crusade
    - b. Same surveys were done a few weeks after the crusade. And then six months later.
    - c. **Results:** Very few people made lasting changes in their lives as result of revival!
  4. So how to revive a church? High-power speaker whipping us into a frenzy doesn't.
    - a. We absolutely need our batteries charged! *How do we get them to stay charged?*
      - 1) Mark Hall captures our frustration with this in his song "*Altar and the Door.*"
      - 2) Our pledge to change and revival doesn't last from the altar to the back door
    - b. What will address the underlying causes of our spiritual malaise and bring revival

## II. Oh, Grow Up: Beyond Baby Food

- A. Hebrews is a book of revival; it's readers are tired and bored (*feeble arms & weak knees*)
1. Writer seeks a revival. *How will he do it?* With a deep discussion of Melchizedek!
    - a. In **Hebrews 5**, he wants to show Jesus as better than the Old Testament priests
    - b. That's what he wants. Doesn't get there because readers aren't ready for argument
      - 1) Remember what I said last week about pat on the back vs a kick a little lower?
      - 2) Well, he's kicking, "*I have this great argument, but you're too slow to get it*"
  2. Sound a bit harsh? Well, that's what he says! (**Reading: Hebrews 5:11-12**)
    - a. They should be down the road enough maturity-wise to understand... they aren't!
    - b. They're "*sluggish in hearing*" (NET) or "*don't seem to listen*" (NLT) They're slow!
      - 1) If developmentally challenged, we make accommodations (*wife is sp-ed teacher*)
      - 2) But she doesn't write IEP or accommodations for me; if I'm slow, it's my fault!
    - c. They were slow to learn because they chose to be; he is holding them accountable!
      - 1) Their failure to thrive spiritually was, in part at least, due to a failure to learn
      - 2) They should be teaching others, but they needed to be spoon fed all over again
  3. His secret to a lasting revival is a spiritual maturity based upon knowing God's word
    - a. He seems to think that if they'd had grown in knowledge, they would not be in crisis
      - 1) Hebrews is longest sustained argument in NT— Jesus is better than OT system
      - 2) He interrupts his argument only to encourage and to warn them (**Heb 3:12-13**)
    - b. This is his encouragement! No happy-clappy. No pep rally. No massaging egos!
      - 1) *Just Bible study!* Writer thinks getting back to scripture has power! (**Heb 4:12**)
      - 2) Renewing enthusiasm isn't enough; they must renew a commitment to truth
- B. The writer uses the familiar analogy of an infant growing up to maturity (**Heb 5:13-14a**)
1. **Point:** His readers should be spiritually grown up by now, but they're still babies.
    - a. Baby needs mother's milk. It can have quarter-pounder, mom has to process it!
      - 1) As the baby mature, solid food is introduced (*crushed carrots & puréed peas?*)
      - 2) OK child is still not mature enough for the quarter-pounder... mashed-up fries?
    - b. Later the child grows and is ready for ¼ pounder; only milk = malnourished.
  2. Hebrews were discouraged and giving up largely because spiritual malnourishment.
    - a. The writer thinks they're acting like babies; he refuses to baby them any further
    - b. He tells them, "*Why don't you grow up.*" Two points follow from growth analogy.

### III. Oh, Grow Up: Two Points

A. **First**, growing up means we must move beyond the milk to meat.

1. Milk is great. You can drink it with steak, tuna casserole or pizza (*Maybe not pizza*)
  - a. But if you only drink milk, then you won't get everything that you need.
  - b. Must move beyond "*basic teachings*" or "*first principles*" (ASV) (**Heb 6:1-3**, NLT)
2. There was a time when the ideal held up was to be a "*first principles preacher*."
  - a. Didn't hear a lot on "*laying on of hands*." But repentance, baptism and judgement...
  - b. That was sometimes the titles for sermons on the placards for gospel meetings
  - c. We didn't hear that "*going on to maturity*" (KJV) is leaving these and moving on
3. If these are the milk, what is the meat? What are the deeper things we move onto?
  - a. He isn't talking about **NEW** things, **SPECULATIVE** things, or **OBTUSE** things
  - b. Sometimes someone comes up after a lesson and says, "*That was really deep*"
    - 1) It usually wasn't; it was just new to them... or I just didn't explain myself well
    - 2) The trinity and the incarnation of Christ are the deep things of God to be sure.
      - a) We will never plunge the depths of the community of the nature of God
      - b) Those are deep things, but those aren't the deep things he has in mind here
  - c. Writer has told what he means by solid food; that the part we skipped (**Heb 5:14**)
    - 1) Solid food we move onto are the things which lead us to righteousness.
    - 2) We apply the first principles in such a way that we live holy lives for God
4. The "*fundamentals of the faith*" are meant to prepare us for the more complex things.
  - a. When I played tennis in college, we "hit drills" at the beginning of every practice.
    - 1) We hit 100 forehands, 100 backhands and 100 volleys; then we did it again
    - 2) The coach was Mr. Miyagi; this was his version of "wax-on and wax-off"
  - b. The drills were not an end in themselves; they were simply a means to an end.
    - 1) Point wasn't to become the best at drills— but to make us better tennis players
    - 2) If I'd have taken drills more seriously, I'd have picked more... like a backhand!
5. The first principle doctrines are the same in a spiritual context; building blocks
  - a. Paul's point on baptism in **Romans 6** isn't being right on baptism (**Rom 6:2-3**)
  - b. We don't baptize or repentance so we prove ourselves right (*what we have done*)
  - c. Those fundamental things get us ready for the deep stuff—living holy before God

- B. **Second**, we must grow to where we can feed ourselves and others (**Heb 5:12**, NLT)
1. They should be feeding others, which means they should be feeding themselves
    - a. If you look ahead at the end of **Heb 6**, you may be surprised at his transition
      - 1) He has scolded his readers because they are too immature to get Melchizedek.
      - 2) So what does he do? He goes on to his point from Melchizedek! (**Heb 6:20**)
    - b. Then he spends all of **Hebrews 7** making a detailed, deep point from Melchizedek.
      - 1) Wait a minute! I thought they were too slow to get the point he would make!
      - 2) You only get to be babied if you're a baby; then it's meat even if it chokes you!
  2. It's time to quit preaching and meddle; only defense is that Mr. Hebrews started it!
    - a. Baby Christians can act like babies— be spoon fed, throw tantrums, stuff like that.
      - 1) But why must we plead with “mature” Christians to read their Bibles regularly?
      - 2) Why do I feel I must apologize before I ask, “*How many read your Bibles?*”
    - b. Part of growing up is learning to feed themselves! Messy? Yes, but necessary!
    - c. If the only Bible you get is listening to me preach, then you need to grow up!

#### IV. Conclusion

- A. Like the church in Hebrews, we need revival—we need someone to light our fire
1. What will revitalize our church, revive our spirits and restore our souls?
    - a. According to Mr. Hebrews, the key to church renewal is the word of God.
    - b. You will never grow a healthy Christian nor a mature church on baby food.
  2. At the very center of our church and our lives must be a dedication to scripture.
- B. Several years ago, a little old lady named Clara Puller claimed our national attention.
1. In the classic Wendy's hamburger commercial, she asked, “*Where's the Beef?*”
    - a. That slogan that appeared on bumper stickers, tee-shirts and coffee mugs.
    - b. It even became the campaign slogan of Walter Mondale in the Democratic primary.
  2. Well, Hebrews anticipates this slogan 2000 years as he deals with a tired church
    - a. Feeble arms & weak knees suffer from malnourishment. “*Where's the beef?*”
    - b. It was time for them to move on from milk to meat of a dedication to scripture.
  3. When you think about it, that makes sense. Scripture is the word of God, right?
    - a. Nothing that I can do can “*renew my love, rebuild my faith, or restore my soul*”
    - b. That must all come from God! Only God bring revival! It starts with His word!