

The Bible Has Layers

What is God saying? The Bible has 'layers'. The layers of the Bible are water, milk and meat, topped with oil. If we slowly peel off the layers, we see that God is building His church, layer by layer. The first layer, water, is for washing. Christ Himself is the Saviour and the Head of His body, the church, because He gave Himself up for the church, so that He might cleanse the church, by the washing of water with the Word, that He might present the church to Himself in glorious splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such things. This mystery is very great. Paul was speaking about the relationship of Christ and the church. He was comparing it with marriage (Ephesians 5:22 to 27 then 32).

Verse 22: Wives need to be submissive; the church needs to submit to the authority of Jesus.

Verse 23: Husbands are the head in a household; Christ is the Head of the church.

Verse 24: Wives are to subject themselves in everything to their husbands; so too the church is subject to Christ.

Verse 25: Husbands are told to love their wives; Christ loved the church so much He gave Himself up for her.

Verse 26: Christ sanctified the church by washing her with the water of the Word.

Verse 29: Christ nourishes the church as a husband provides nourishment for his wife.

Verse 32: The God-given sanctity of marriage was given as an example of the church as being the Bride of Christ.

The first 'layer' is water, for both drinking and washing. 'Listen, everyone who is thirsty! Come to the waters ...' (Isaiah 55:1).

'To the thirsty, I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of Life' (Revelation 21:6).

'The Holy Spirit and the bride (the true Christians) say, "Come!" And let him who is listening say, "Come!" And let everyone come who is thirsty and whoever will, let him come, take of the Water of Life without cost' (Revelation 22:17).

'He is dressed in a robe, dyed by dipping in blood, and the title by which He is called is "The Word Of God'." (Revelation 19:13).

Consistently reading the Bible, washes us spiritually. The Bible is the cleansing water of the Word (Ephesians 5:26), Jesus is the Word (John 1:14), He came with water and blood (1 John 5:6), He gave His blood (Ephesians 2:13; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19), we are washed by His blood (Revelation 1:5), the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7) and the water quenches our thirst for God (Isaiah 55:1; Revelation 21:6; 22:17). This 'water' is figurative or spiritual. The first layer of water washes us clean from sin when we give our lives to Jesus. After our salvation, we must then be baptised in real water, so we see that water is very significant in our salvation.

Moving on from the watery layer, we come to the 'milk'. 'You have come to need milk, not meat, for everyone who continues to feed on milk is obviously unskilled in the doctrine of righteousness, for he is a mere infant' (Hebrews 5:12 & 13). 'Like newborn babies, you should crave the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may be nurtured and grow into salvation, since you have already tasted the goodness of the Lord' (1 Peter 2:2 & 3). 'I fed you with milk, not meat for you were not yet strong enough for it' (1 Corinthians 3:2).

As brand new baby Christians, we began our walk by listening to preachers tell us all about the Word of God. Most of it went right over our heads, but we persevered. When we first begin to read the Bible, it too leaves us wondering. As babes in Christ, we are not

expected to know more than the basic doctrine of salvation. New Christians are called babes or infants. Jesus called His disciples babies, yet they were all strong, adult men, but they were babes in Christ (Matthew 11:25). In another place, Jesus called young Christians, lambs (John 21:15). Then John calls them little children (1 John 2:1, 12 & 28). As a new Christian, we need a long time to grow, just human babies do. The milk of the Word nourishes us until we learn to 'walk' in the Lord, unaided. So the first step is as a baby in Christ, then a little child. After we learn to walk in the Lord, we are called 'boys' or 'lads' or young men (1 John 2:18). As we grow in Christ and learn more, so the layers of the Bible become deeper, more interesting, more exciting and we begin to get to know more about God's personality. Once we become 'children' rather than 'babes', God begins His discipline and we grow faster, spiritually. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:1 to 23 that he couldn't talk to the people as spiritual men, but he had to speak to them as though they were spiritual infants because they were too carnal and unspiritual, behaving like unchanged people. They were arguing amongst one another and Paul told them off. We need to grow up in God, mature and see things through spiritual 'eyes', not through worldly eyes. God will tolerate carnality in a new Christian for a while, but eventually He will start to deal with us as sons and purge the sinfulness out of us. Jesus said His words and teaching cleansed and pruned the disciples (John 15:3). Then later on He said He couldn't tell them everything He wanted to because they weren't ready for it (John 16:12).

After a few years, we come to the next layer. The next layer is the need to go on to meat or more solid spiritual food. 'Meat is for full-grown men; for those whose senses are trained to distinguish between what is good and what is evil' (Hebrews 5:14). This layer is the deeper oracles in the Bible that we need to seek out for ourselves. We should be past the stage where we believe everything the pastor says, just because he says it. We should be able to search both Old and New Testaments and cross-reference scriptures. We should be able to line up the latest sermon from church with the scriptures. The Bible should be making a lot more sense than before because the more we read, the more the Lord opens our spiritual eyes, and so the more we can see. Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes because they do see, and blessed are your ears because they do hear" (Matthew 13:16). Jesus was speaking about spiritual eyes and ears. The things of God are foolish to the natural, nonspiritual man, and it takes time to learn and discern the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The next layer is also 'meaty'. It is when we get to the point where we can teach others. The Bible calls mature Christians, fathers (1 John 2:13 & 14). It is a time when the Lord expects mature Christian behaviour and He will no longer tolerate immaturity or bad conduct. We are to be examples of Christianity to the outside world, our families and especially, to new Christians in the church. This is the time where we are aware that God is watching every move. He always has been, but we are more aware of it. We become more aware of the sin nature that lurks in our bodies. We strive to become as holy as a mere human can be, because we know our purity brings us closer to God. We are also aware of the greatness of our Creator and are able to have long, involved conversations with Him. He tells us secrets. He becomes more real than ever before. We can experience His kiss on our cheek, His wonderful perfume filling the room, we can see the warmth and love in His eyes. He becomes a real Person. We are far more aware of what He expects of His people in the terms of holiness, honesty, kindness and other attributes He has, that we are to attain to. This is when He peels back the layers of our character that He disapproves of, and the new fresh clean layers are exposed. At the same time, we are able to peel back the layers of the scriptures and get to know God in a deeper, more mature way. He becomes our whole life, our breath, our constant companion and our lifeblood.

Another layer is the topping of the 'oil' of the Holy Spirit. This layer can come at any time in our lives, or any time in our walk with God. Some people receive the Holy Spirit the day they receive Jesus as their Saviour. Other people are not filled with the Spirit for many years afterwards. Some are baptised in water before being baptised in the Holy Spirit, others receive the Holy Spirit before baptism in water. Every person is different and there is no set sequence for receiving the Holy Spirit, but once we do, we receive power to do God's will. We receive the 'fire' to get out there and preach. We receive the guidance we need (John 16:13). Praying in tongues, or praying in the Spirit gives us the strength to live in this sinful world without being tainted by sin (Jude 1:20, 24 & 25). We receive answers to problems and questions we often want to ask God. We receive the power to walk by faith, walk in the Spirit and walk in a totally new way of life. All we have to do is ask, receive by faith and learn to listen to His still, small voice.

If you are a new Christian and are wondering why the Bible is so hard to understand, hang in there because God will show you new things in His time. Just as we wouldn't overload a young child with information they are too young to understand, so God also doesn't overload us with information we can't yet absorb. Be patient with yourself, and allow God to peel back the layers for you, slowly, as you are able to deal with each new piece of information. It gets better, more interesting and more exciting as God slowly reveals things to you; things you would never have dreamed possible.

Amen and God bless you.

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