

“Watch Out! Wake Up! & Worship!

(...before it's too late)

Hebrews 6:1-8

September 7, 2019

INTRO: Let me ask you a couple of questions...

- What 3 things do you look for in a sermon?
- What 3 things does God look for in a servant?

The 3 primary pillars & responsibilities embedded in a God-honoring sermon AND servant-leader are 1). they define reality, 2). they describe restoration & 3). develop reproducers.

Woulda, coulda, & shoulda only serve to distract & deceive...

(they tend to stroke the ego and give pride, fear, laziness, & irresponsibility a place to hide & hold out). - JDP

T/S: You've got to come to grips with some of God's absolutes and applications if you have any hope of rightly understanding and applying today's Bible passage.

BIG IDEA: *Don't confuse blessing w/ believing!*
(nor Bible interpretation w/ biblical truth)

Never forget that interpretation does not determine truth. Truth, by definition, determines truth.

*One's Interpretation is only as trustworthy
as it is aligned with the truth
it claims to interpret.* - JDP

“Luther, Calvin, and the other Reformers reflected on how the Spirit was involved in the interpretation of Scripture, they spoke of the inward work of illumination & conviction of the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Spirit, we cannot fully or truly understand the Bible. The Spirit of God helps the godly reader understand the pattern of meaning... and convinces the reader as to the truth of the biblical teaching.” – Robert Stein

Interpretation is the intellectual map and path one uses on their journey in pursuit of truth. To that end, interpretations are like treasure maps... they're only as good as their ability to take you to the treasure of truth... Thus, many, if not most, are totally useless. - JDP

Interpretation is just a fancy word for opinion. - JDP

Interpretation can be used as both an action verb and a noun... Having said that, one's means & methods of interpretation (the verb) will typically determine how that person “makes up their mind” and ends up with their noun.

- JDP

Let me tell you why this issue is important and what's really at stake... When you connect the dots of biblical logic & consequence, what you'll find is... *If you accept the devil's premise, you'll end up with the devil's conclusions.* But, if you hold to the Bible's full-context premise, you'll end up with the Bible's full-context & faithful conclusions :-)

PREVIEW:

1. Combinations
2. Contamination
3. Corruption
4. Congregations
5. Certification

I. COMBINATIONS

- a. Childish
- b. Counterfeits
- c. Cherished

NOTE the pattern & principle of principled patterns!

- JDP

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 washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*

- *“Therefore,”* = **CONTEXT**
 - *Bible*
 - *New Testament*
 - *Hebrews*
 - *Warning #3*
- *“leave elementary doctrine & go on to maturity”*

*What you don't commit to... you will drift from.
If it's not biblical love... it's a lie!* - JDP

- *GROW Up!*
- *Move on to maturity... no more foundations:*
 - *Justification issues*
 - *Sanctification issues*
 - *Glorification issues*

T/S: *Now watch this... v.3 = spiritual sorbet!*

³ *And this we will do if God permits.*

**Hebrews 3:14 unlocks Hebrews 6:4-8
1 Cor. 1:8 = How?**

Christian growth is not a game of chance! - JDP

- See God's sovereign grace & providential plan!
- See God's power, purpose, & people on display!
- **NOTE** the reverence & respect of v.3...

T/S: In vv.4-6 look for 3 things: **WHAT, WHO, WHY?**

A. *The WHAT...*

1. This is an ***ETERNAL WARNING!!!***
2. *"It is impossible"*
 - a. Is anything impossible with God?
 - b. 4X impossibilities in Hebrews!
3. *"to restore them again to repentance"*
 - a. Wake up before it's too late...
 - b. See Esau...
 - c. Like what we see in Judges...

T/S: There's always been LOST blessed people in the Bible...

II. **CONTAMINATION**

- a. From the beginning.... (see Judges)
- b. Up to the present...
- c. Until the end...

VIDEO: *"Judges Wake-Up!"*

T/S: *Like Paul on the Damascus road...*

Let's play a little game to see if we can't enhance our ability to understand and apply these verses...

- Let's look at the beginning AND the end of the passage... and from there, applying what we know about (and from) God's Word, let's see if we can determine & affirm who is being addressed... in the descriptions of vv.4-7...
 - Start: ***"It is impossible..."***
 - End: ***"...to restore them..."***
- NOTE: both sides agree that the people in focus are "lost," the only question is, have they always been lost, or were they saved... and then lost their salvation... Okay... Here we go:

B. *The WHO...*

- a. This is the sad cultural-church controversy...
 - i. We're going to hear from **Judges**
 - ii. We're going to hear from **1st John**
 - iii. We're going to hear from **JESUS (in Revelation)**
- b. You'll need to decide who's who...
 - 1. ***Grace-Fakers*** (Lord never saved)
 - 2. ***Grace-Breakers*** (lost their salvation)

III. **CORRUPTION**

- Wolves & goats...
- Shepherds & sheep
- Antichrists vs. the always-Christ's

- Here are their biblical descriptions: *those who:*
 - *"have been enlightened"*
 - *"have tasted the heavenly gift"*
 - *"have shared in/ partakers of the Holy Spirit"*
 - *"tasted the goodness of God's Word"*
 - *"tasted the powers of the age to come"*

Partakers has to do with association, not possession.

*The Bible never speaks of Christians being associated with the Holy Spirit. It speaks of the Holy Spirit being **within** them.*

VIDEO: *"1st John Explains Apostasy"*

C. *The WHY...*

1. *"they have fallen away"*
 2. *"they are crucifying again... Son of God"*
 3. *"they are holding Him up to contempt"*
-
- Contempt = the feeling with which a person regards anything or anyone as mean, vile, worthless... the state of disdain, dishonor, disgrace... having scorn for another

IV. CONGREGATIONS

- True for Christians = true for churches...
- Micro Christian truths = macro church truths...
- Christ warned us...

One of the pre-salvation ministries of the Holy Spirit is that of giving the unsaved a taste of the blessings of salvation. This is part of His ministry of drawing men to Christ. But tasting is not eating.

VIDEO: “Normal Church...” (Revelation 2 &3)

T/S: This is a warning to the religious who remain unredeemed, the ritualistic who have no saving relationship with Christ. This is a warning to the “churchy” that they better “Wake Up!” and surrender to victory in Christ.

- See Romans 1
- See Esau
- See multiple parables
- See John 6
- See Demas
- See OT Israelites
- See Billy Graham’s friend
- See our ministry experience
- See Judas!

T/S: Let’s finish with... “The HOW”

V. CERTIFICATION

D. The *HOW* do you *KNOW*?

⁷ *For, land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God.*

What you bear reveals what you believes. - JDP

➤ *“You will know them by their fruit...”* – Jesus

⁸ *BUT if the land bears thorns & thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.*

➤ **See role of time/perseverance & obedience!**

➤ **Two options:**

○ **The faithful, fruitful, & blessed by God**

▪ Here we have a reference to vv.1-2

▪ *His babies grow up to blessed believers!*

○ **The weeds, worthless, cursed & burned**

▪ Here we have a reference to vv.4-6

▪ *Stubborn sinners will burn with Satan.*

➤ **Double check... *BLESSED or BURNED?***

VIDEO: *“Can A Christian Lose Salvation?”*

CLOSE: *The longer one stays on (or flirts with) the edge, the more he leans toward the old life. Staying there too long results in falling away from the gospel forever.*

[*“If you hang around the barber shop long enough... eventually, you end up getting a haircut.” – Anonymous]*

- Ever since sin entered the world... our pattern...
- Sheep & goats, wheat & weeds, light & dark...
- The first family had Cain & Able...
- The chosen people had a corrupted pattern...
- The early church had false/faithful converts...

"For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away... " ([2 Pet. 2:20-21](#)).

Because of their unbelief, the light that was given to save them became a judgment against them.

***** Matthew 7:13ff *****

Today, I pray, you heard Him say:

Watch Out! Wake Up & Worship!

(...before it's too late)

Let's Pray!

Hebrews 6:1-8 (ESV)

1 Therefore

Context...

- Look back on:
 - Hebrews 5:14 – 6:20 (last week)
 - Listen Up
 - Grow Up
 - Wake Up
 - Stand Up
 - Show Up
 - Hebrews thus far...
 - Declaration & celebration via exhortation
 - Warnings wrapped in worship
 - Hold on! Jesus is G.O.D. & worth it all!
 - New Testament
 - ALL of the Bible...
- NOTE the pattern & principle of principled patterns
 - Creator God... Crucified King & risen Christ!
 - His Plan, Power, Promise, Purpose & Person(s)
 - Creation... Corruption... Completion...
 - God's Word, will, ways...
 - Our worship, warfare, walk, work, & witness
 - His Plan, Power, Promise, Purpose, Person(s)
 - God's glory, grace and gospel...

- Divine design patterns & plots are the point!

VIDEO:

T/S: You've got to come to grips with some of God's absolutes and applications if you have any hope of rightly (and righteously) understanding and applying today's Bible passage.

- God ALWAYS
- God NEVER
 - Lies
 - Lacks love (God IS love)
 - Loses
 - Battles
 - Believers
- See 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- See Proverbs 26:4-5
- See Hebrews 4:12ff

let us leave

ACTION:

- Stop doing what is being done...
- Change of behavior...

the elementary doctrine of Christ

SPECIFICS:

- The biblical basics on 3 different topics
 - Justification
 - Sanctification
 - Glorification
- The biblical basics on BEing a Christian...
 - Understanding Christ
 - Understanding Christ-following
 - Understanding Church

and go on to maturity,

CORRECTION:

- Move on... take the NEXT step of faith
- Growth requires the prerequisite of LIFE...
- More maturity requires “some” maturity/life
- These are dull & immature, but living disciples

not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Issues of JUSTIFICATION:

- To whom do you STOP going over the basics?
- When do you stop building a foundation?
 - Repentance
 - Justification is not by YOUR works
 - Justifications is by CHRIST’s work
 - Faith

- By grace alone
- Thru faith alone
- In Christ alone
- For God's glory alone
- Per the Word of God alone

2 and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands,

Issues of SANCTIFICATION:

the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

Issues of GLORIFICATION:

T/S: NOTE this critical transition...

- This is like spiritual sorbet...
- Watch how the text transitions here...

3 And this we will do if God permits.

- A. Plan ("and")
- B. Growth ("this")
- C. Discipleship ("WE will")
- D. Koinonia ("we-will")

- E. Responsibility (“we will do”)
- F. Works (“do”)
- G. Providence (“if God”)
- H. Sovereignty (“God”)
- I. Power (“if God permits”)
- J. Mission (“God permits” – mission = plan + purpose)
 - **Christian growth is not a game of chance!** – JDP
 - Remember... our Jesus is G.O.D. & more...
 - See both CREATOR & CHRIST in v.3
 - God providentially appoints His people...

- T/S:** Here comes another monumental shift in the text...
- Remember our context... from micro to macro!
 - Last sentence, last verse, chapter...
 - Last book, covenant, and the entire Bible
 - Remember the principles AND the points

4 For it is impossible,

ABRUPT & SHOCKING DRAMA:

- See the dramatic CONTRAST...
 - Sovereign & all-controlling God
 - Now “something” is deemed impossible...
 - The context reveals the contrast on purpose
 - In short, the focus is now shifting & changing
 - Focus now shifts to the faithless for whom a healthy relationship with God is impossible.

T/S: Let's play a little game to see if we can't enhance our ability to understand and apply this verse and the next few that follow it...

- Let's look at the beginning AND the end of the passage... and from there, applying what we know about (and from) God's Word, let's see if we can determine & affirm who is being addressed... in the 8 descriptions embedded in vv.4-7...
 - Start: ***"It is impossible..."***
 - End: ***"...to restore them..."***
- I'm going to read you two verses and then I'm going to give you two possible "interpretations" of the second verse...
 - Keep in mind... that what's in your mind doesn't really matter if your opinion & perspective are not permanently positioned in line with God's principles (see "One Size Fits All" sermon from John 3:1-21)
- Your job is going to be (in playing the game), to take what we have learned from the FULL context of God's Word and the universally unchangeable principles of His truth in love,
- Just to make things interesting, we're going to have two sides... two teams... to camps competing against each other here today...

- NOTE: both sides agree that the people in focus are “lost,” the only question is, have they always been lost, or were they saved... and then lost their salvation...
- We’ll refer to the teams/camps as:
 - A. The Grace-FAKERS
 - Ones who never had God’s promises
 - B. The Grace-BREAKERS
 - Ones to whom God broke His promises

Okay... Here we go:

John 3:16-21 (ESV)

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

1. *in the case of those who have once been enlightened,*

a. Grace-FAKERS? (Jews who witnessed BOTH the foretelling AND fulfillment of 10 plagues of Egypt?)

b. Grace-BREAKERS?

Psalm 34:8 (ESV)

⁸ Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

1 Peter 2:1-3 (ESV) 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.

2. *who have tasted the heavenly gift, and*

- a. Grace-FAKERS? (deceitful hypocrites, never tasted)
- b. Grace-BREAKERS? (grew into salvation & fell out)

Matthew 7:21-23 (ESV)

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’

²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

3. *have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and*

- a. Grace-FAKERS? (Did IN but not FOR God’s name!)
- b. Grace-BREAKERS? (Favored faithful now forgotten)

Luke 6:46 (ESV) “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

James 1:22-25 (ESV)

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.

²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

4. *have tasted the goodness of the word of God and*

a. Grace-FAKERS?

b. Grace-BREAKERS?

Mark 1:14-18 (ESV)

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,

¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

¹⁶ Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Matthew 4:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

5. *they (have tasted the) powers of the age to come,* ⁶

a. Grace-FAKERS?

b. Grace-BREAKERS?

T/S: Don't miss this subtle but important qualifier...

➤ Here comes God's contextual clues...

➤ Here comes God's way of assuring us...

...and then...

6. **have fallen away** (to restore them **again** to **repentance**, since)

*** DEFINE “fallen away”

- Stumble = Christ-following Christians
 - King David
 - Peter
 - Paul in Romans 7
 - ALL true Christians
- Apostacy =
 - NON-Christian, Grace-FAKERS.
 - NOT Christian Grace-BREAKERS!

VIDEO:

Hebrews 7:22-27 (ESV)

²² This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

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.

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.

Hebrews 9:23-28 (ESV)

²³ Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own,

²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,

²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Hebrews 10:11-14 (ESV)

¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

¹² **But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,**

¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

¹⁴ For **by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.**

7. they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and

Matthew 5:21-22; Romans 14:10;

2 Chronicles 36:16! 2 Peter 3:3 & 2:10

Proverbs 18:3

Matthew 7:29!!! Luke 18:9-11ff! (Pharisee/Tax-man)

8. holding him (the Son of God – Jesus) up to contempt.

- Contempt = the feeling with which a person regards anything or anyone as mean, vile, worthless...
- Contempt = the state of disdain, dishonor, disgrace
- Contempt = disdain & scorn for another

... to restore them again to repentance, since

T/S: Don't miss how close some seem to being Christian

- Remember Charles Templeton?
- Listen to the rest of his story (per Lee Strobel).

⁷ For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God.

- Don't miss the biblical pattern on display here...
 - Parable of the soils
 - Contrast between wheat & weeds
 - Obedience vs. disobedience
 - God's grace & God's glory at the core...
 - Sovereign grace & Human responsibility...
 - Plan, Power, Purpose, Promise, People

⁸ But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

- ***What one bears reveals what one believes.*** – JDP
- ***“You will know them by their fruit...”*** – Jesus
- ***“thorns & thistles” = weeds & death***

- Christians/God's children are never "worthless."
- Christians/God's children are not eternally cursed.
- Christians/God's children never burn in the end.

T/S: Like all good teaching, the author of Hebrews now gives us the ultimate answer.

- Notice how emphatic the answer is...
- Ask yourself, is the author in any way ambiguous?

CLOSE:

Make no mistake... this passage is NOT a warning to babies to "Grow Up." Nor is it a warning to Christians to "Stand Up." No. Instead, this is a warning to the religious who remain unredeemed, the ritualistic who have no saving relationship with Christ. This is a warning to the "churchy" that they better "Wake Up!" and surrender to victory in Christ.

- See Romans 1
- See Esau
- See Hebrews 6 & 10
- Matthew 7:21-23
- See Revelation 2 & 3
- See multiple parables

- See Sermon on the Mount
- See John 6
- See Demas
- See OT Israelites
- See Billy Graham's friend
- See Gunger music/musicians
- See our ministry experience
- See Judas!

How much do you care about... How much does it matter... what the score is 2 min into the game? How about after the first qtr? Halftime? End of the 3rd qtr? 2 min left in the game???

*** The ONLY score that REALLY matters is the one at the end... IT tells the only story that history will record. The finish line tells the eternal story.

Hebrews 3:14 unlocks Hebrews 6:4-8

- 1 Cor. 1:8 = How?

What's it say?

What's it mean?

How does it apply?

We need to know: (context)

- Who (speaking & hearing)
- What (Definitions)
- Where
- When
- Why

- How

Judges = goats

1st John = wolves

Revelation 2 & 3 = family farms!

All 3 = love letters

Walk of God

- Why did God give us Judges?

A: Warning of Pitiful Pattern of Apostasy

6:15 - > 16 > 22:45 > 35

37 = PATTERN

41:15 = 3 applications (carnal means / men)

49:00 = PATTERN rewind

54:00 = my bad examples

*** 1:08:00 Closing remarks!!!

(links OT & Hebrews)

BE The Church 42

- Antichrists vs. Always-Christ's

Use T/S of Hebrews 4:12!!!

3:15... Word reveals moths vs roaches

*** antichrists = disguised as angels of light

12:30!!! = closer look at antichrists

*** Romans 16:17&18

23:30ff!!!

36:00 = illustration of pics of collective antichrists

MOST of message = discern church...
!!!v.20-24 = Who is who... starting @ 45:00
!!! Closing vv.25-27
*** 2 closing quotes!!! *** ~ 57:00
*** See Acts 20:21 AND Acts 9 :-)

Last words ref. Revelation 2&3
Closing prayer applies

What you don't commit to... you will drift from!

If it's not biblical love... it's a lie!

Heart... EKG = Empowering Kingdom Growth

Eventually the cream rises to the top... AND, eventually.... the
Christ-less will be separated from Christ.

****** There is a defining difference between
what something could be and what
something IS...***

***Never forget, interpretation does not
determine truth. Truth, by definition,
determines truth. One's Interpretation is***

only as trustworthy as it is aligned with the truth it claims to interpret. - JDP

The first responsibility of a leader/disciple is to define reality. Woulda, coulda, & shoulda only serve to distract & deceive (they stroke the ego and give pride, fear, laziness, & irresponsibility a place to hide). - JDP

See our 123abcDISCIPLESHIP:

- 1. Define Reality**
- 2. Describe Restoration**
- 3. Develop/Deploy Reproducers**

***** There are 2 issues today:**

- A. What author intended...**
- B. What church culture has done with it**

Beware the bad-math & wrong-way schools of interpretation.

Interpretation is NOT synonymous with truth.

Interpretation is the map and path one uses on their journey in pursuit of truth.

Interpretations are like treasure maps... they're only as good as their ability to take you to the treasure of truth.

Interpretation is just a fancy word for opinion.

Interpretation can be used as both an action verb and a noun... Having said that, one's means & methods of interpretation (the verb) will typically determine how someone "makes up their mind." That statement really says it all.... "how one makes up their (own) mind..."

Let me tell you why this issue is important and what's really at stake... When you connect the dots of biblical logic & consequence, what you'll find is... If you accept the devil's premise, you'll end up with the devil's conclusions. But, if you hold to the Bible's full-context premise, you'll end up with the Bible's full-context & faithful conclusions :-)

Some struggle with this issue as a result of bad or NO training in Bible truth & hermeneutics (a fancy word for the study of proper interpretation of God's Word). Others struggle because it contradicts their personal preferences... they don't like the reality of a sovereign Lord OR a governing & decisive King. Sadly, still others push back on the doctrines of election (aka predestination) AND what's called assurance or perseverance of the saints, purely out of pride...

See the seven churches of Rev 2&3 to validate the reality of false Christians & church's...

See Robert Stein's: "A Basic Guide To... Bible"

“Luther, Calvin, and the other Reformers reflected on how the Spirit was involved in the interpretation of Scripture, they spoke of the inward work of illumination & conviction of the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Spirit, we cannot fully or truly understand the Bible. The Spirit of God helps the godly reader understand the pattern of meaning... and convinces the reader as to the truth of the biblical teaching.”

– **Robert Stein** (*“A Basic Guide To Understanding The Bible”*)

RESEARCH Notes:

Warning against Apostasy

[Hebrews 6:1-8](#)

Main Idea: Ultimately, nonbelievers in the church will repudiate Christ and go back into the world. True believers, however, will be motivated to move forward in their faith and claim Christ as King until the end.

- I. **Leaving the Elementary Foundation (6:1-3)**
 - A. First couplet: A foundation of repentance from dead works and faith in God
 - B. Second couplet: Instructions about washing and the laying on of hands
 - C. Third couplet: Resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment
 - D. “If God permits”
- II. **The Danger of Irreversible Apostasy (6:4-8)**
 - A. A warning against apostasy
 - B. An illustration of apostasy

One of the most formative moments of my theological education occurred when I read a Jewish scholar defending the historicity of the resurrection of Christ. Sadly, the man was not a Christian. In that event, I learned that many people articulate right things about the gospel without truly being followers of Christ.

Fortunately, the Bible prepares us for these situations. **Throughout the history of the church, Hebrews 6:1-8 has been one of the most difficult passages to interpret. To whom does this warning belong? To Christians? To non-Christians? To both? We must understand that this passage comes in the context of a larger argument: we should not neglect so great a salvation. Instead of maturing in their understanding of the greater truths of God, many in this church were neglecting the great salvation offered in Christ. As a result, they were stalling out in their spiritual growth and abandoning the faith.**

Leaving the Elementary Foundation

Hebrews 6:1-3

Leaving the elementary teaching of Christ does not mean leaving Christ behind. On the basis of knowing the elementary things, Christians should mature rather than settle for infancy. These Christians needed to move beyond the foundational things and the old covenant of their former Judaism. Foundations are good and necessary for building, but once they have been laid, they do not need to be laid again. **The author exhorts his congregation to stop laying the same foundation repeatedly. Instead, they are encouraged to build on the foundation.**

The author uses three couplets to demonstrate these foundational truths about Christ:

- **A foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God**
- **Instructions about washing and the laying on of hands**
- **Resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment**

First Couplet: [A Foundation of Repentance from Dead Works and Faith in God](#)

The first couplet emphasizes repentance. Some forms of contemporary evangelical thought marginalize the necessity of repentance. However, Scripture teaches that there is no authentic faith without repentance from sin. In this text, repenting from dead works is in view. The author exhorts Christians to rest in Christ as their true Sabbath, which requires abandoning attempts at self-righteousness. Christians trust that Christ's righteousness, not their own, saves. The temptation to try to earn one's salvation is the author's central concern. He was afraid that many in the church were returning to Judaism and its emphasis on works.

This reinforces that justification by (grace along thru) faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9) is essential to the gospel.

Implied in this elementary truth is the necessity of leaving behind dead works and repenting of the fruitless attempt to establish our own righteousness before God.

Jesus Christ, the great high priest, establishes our righteousness for us through his atonement. The author charges his people to leave behind their dead works by resting in that atonement and the righteousness God has provided for them in Jesus Christ.

Second Couplet: [Washing and the Laying on of Hands](#)

Ceremonial washing and the laying on of hands were both integral to Judaism. In order to move on to maturity, these Jewish believers needed to leave behind their confidence in ritualistic practices. Washing refers both to the washing of Israel in the past and to the once-for-all character of baptism.

The washing of Israel under the law represented the purification of God's people, while Christian baptism symbolizes unity with Christ and identification with him in his life, death, and resurrection.

Just as they were doing with dead works, some members of this church were placing their faith in ceremonial washings, not in the work of Christ.

The great diversity in matters associated with the laying on of hands makes it difficult to know what the author is addressing. In the Old Testament, hands were laid on people during blessing, on animals about to be sacrificed, on someone being devoted to a service, or on criminals in cases requiring the death penalty. In the New Testament, hands were laid on people for blessing, healing, commissioning, receiving the Holy Spirit, and receiving spiritual gifts.

Whatever the case, these Christians were getting caught up in matters regarding the laying on of hands and not the righteousness secured for them in Christ.

Third Couplet: [Resurrection of the Dead and Eternal Judgment](#)

The third couplet concerns the final judgment and its eternal consequences. The two truly belong together: **the resurrection of the dead is for the final judgment.**

Unless Jesus Christ stands as our advocate and our substitute, we cannot stand before God in the judgment that is coming. The resurrection of the dead should not be ignored; it should never be far from the horizon of our thinking. But there are other teachings that should also be addressed by the maturing Christian.

“If God Permits”

The final phrase, “*We will do this if God permits,*” teaches us not to presume upon spiritual opportunities but to pray to God for our maturation in the faith.

We cannot assume the future. Anything is done only if God permits. This awareness deepens dependence on God and drives prayerful expectation of perseverance. Nevertheless, **this verse reveals that the author believes that his recipients will rise to the occasion. They *will* build on the elementary foundation if the Lord permits.** The author is confident of this.

[The Danger of Irreversible Apostasy](#) **Hebrews 6:4-8**

A Warning Against Apostasy

These verses are some of the most difficult verses in the entire New Testament.

The phrase ***“it is impossible”*** **is used four (4X) crucial times in the book of Hebrews.**

“It is impossible to renew to repentance those who were once enlightened, who tasted the heavenly gift, who shared in the Holy Spirit, who tasted God’s good word and the powers of the coming age, and who have fallen away.” (6:4-6)

“It is impossible for God to lie.” (6:18)

“It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” (10:4)

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.” (11:6)

This particular passage focuses on the impossibility of restoring to repentance those who were once enlightened and partook of the goodness only God can offer. **Who are these people who were “once enlightened” and “tasted the heavenly gift”?**

The first option is that **these people are genuine followers of Jesus Christ**. They truly repented of their sin, were united with Christ, and were active in the body of believers. Then they fell away. **If understood this way, the passage is a dire warning that many genuine Christians will fall away from the faith. Scripture, however, rules out this interpretation.** **The Bible repeatedly tells us that God keeps us (John 5:24; Rom 8:39; 11:29; 1 Cor 1:6-8; Phil 1:6; 2 Thess 3:3).**

In 1 John 2:19 and following, John describes apostates who had left the church. In leaving the faith, they showed they were not truly part of the faith in the first place.

When interpreting difficult texts, it is imperative that we look at other, clearer texts. Scripture is unified and does not contradict itself. Therefore, this warning is not addressing Christians losing their faith because other passages say genuine faith cannot be lost. Rather, those who leave and apostatize never really had true faith.

The second option is to read the passage as a hypothetical warning (cf. **Matt 24:24**). **This is a rhetorical technique used by the author to offer an ominous warning of something that cannot actually happen.** Nevertheless, because of its grim consequences, it incites believers to cling to Christ and to grow in grace. The **problem with this interpretation is that this passage is not talking about something hypothetical.**

The third option, which is **the most faithful way to interpret this text**, is to **read this passage as a real warning**. However...

...it is not a warning for the truly regenerate. Rather, it is a caution for individuals who have tasted the things of Christ but have not become genuine Christians. The author describes the people here as “those who were once enlightened.” Many people hear and respond in a positive way to the gospel, but they do not truly believe it. They may know many things about the gospel, but they are not truly Christians. They have “tasted the heavenly gift.” That phrase is a very strong expression. Blessings come to Christians, and these people have received some of those same blessings. They may even have demonstrated some of the gifts of the Spirit.

The third descriptive phrase is that they “shared in the Holy Spirit.”

This means they have demonstrated some of the new life attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit. They show signs of regeneration and even a commitment to identify with Christ and with his people.

In other words, they look like believers.

The last phrase, that they “tasted God’s good word and the powers of the coming age,” show that these people understand the gospel.

Yet even in their understanding, they do not have true spiritual life; thus, they fall away.

How are we to understand this warning?

First, we are told that they have fallen away. In falling away, they returned to their former state of Judaism.

The question then becomes:

Can a Jew who converts to Christianity and then repudiates Christ as they go back into Judaism come back to repentance again?

The answer is no.

At issue is more than just going back into Judaism.

We have all known people who made public professions of faith in Christ, got involved in a church, showed signs of Christian growth and maturity, and yet ultimately fell away.

They are not ignorant.

They know who Christ is and what he offers, and they still reject him.

In their departure, they were “recrucifying the Son of God and holding him up to contempt.”

To fall away from Christ is to pour contempt on him, which is equivalent to crucifying him all over again.

An Illustration of Apostasy

The concluding agricultural illustration helps explain this passage. The word *for* marks that an explanation is coming.

This illustration about agricultural land receiving rainfall was common in the Old Testament. For instance, [Isaiah 5](#) uses the metaphor of rainfall causing crops in a field to grow. Isaiah makes clear that the field is Israel and the rain is the word of God. [Isaiah 5](#) also warns that an **unproductive field where rain has fallen is worthless. In [Hebrews 6](#), the illustration begins positively. “For the ground that drinks the rain . . . produces vegetation.”**

That is its purpose. It produces “vegetation useful to those for whom it is cultivated.” This results in “a blessing from God.” However, the illustration continues. “If it produces thorns and thistles, it is worthless.” **The phrase “*thorns and thistles*” brings to mind the curse on Adam in [Genesis 3](#).** Because of man’s sin, the land no longer yields produce without cultivation and rigorous husbandry. Rather, the land naturally brings forth thorns and thistles. In [Hebrews 6](#) a land that received rain but yielded weeds rather than a beneficial crop was to be burned.

[Matthew 13](#) also informs our reading of this passage. There Jesus told **a parable about a sower who scattered seed on four types of soil. These soil types represent four different patterns of response.** The first represents hard-heartedness. The second represents the shallow heart. It produces immediate signs of life, but there is no root. When the afternoon sun comes, the plant withers and dies. The third soil represents the one who hears the word “but the worries of this age and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” ([Matt 13:22](#)).

The second and third soil types are the people warned about

in Hebrews 6. They receive the word of God but ultimately produce thorns and thistles.

Through the author's choice to include this agricultural metaphor at the end of this warning, the Matthew 13 connection is apparent.

More importantly, it reinforces the sobering warning Jesus gives in the parable of the Weeds. Under pressure, under persecution, or just when distracted by the allure of the world, many who once claimed Christ will go back to the world.

Jesus is clear that these people never actually received salvation. John also affirms, "They went out from us, but they did not belong to us" (1 John 2:19). This is why Peter commands us "to confirm your calling and election" (2 Pet 1:10).

Furthermore, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, which is the final refusal of Christ, is a sin of which we cannot repent. Those who refuse the gospel will justly bear judgment for all eternity for their rejection of it.

For believers, [Hebrews 6](#) is a humbling word that reminds us always to look to our own lives for the fruit of regeneration.

Christ appeals to many for a time, but they reveal the true condition of their hearts when they go back into the world. As a pastor, the author of Hebrews is addressing this problem in his church. Sadly, it continues to be a common problem in the church today.

Happily, Hebrews does not end with this warning.

The author assures believers that he had to write the warning for the unbelievers in the church needing to hear it.

Pastorally, he is not seeking to put insecurity in the hearts of Christians. Believers who are faithfully following Christ's commands can be confident in their salvation. If we seek assurance of our faith, we will find it by doing the things faithful Christians do. We will grow out of the elementary things and into maturity.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Why is the temptation to try to earn our salvation through works so strong? Why do we still sometimes find ourselves returning to fruitless attempts to win God's favor through works even though we know better?
2. The author of Hebrews was encouraging his people not to divide their trust in Christ's righteousness with things that could not save them. In what elementary doctrines of the faith do you sometimes trust rather than resting in the righteousness secured for you in Christ?
3. What does it mean to recrucify the Son of God?
4. Why can't this warning be referring to true believers losing their salvation? Why can't the warning be merely hypothetical?
5. How can believers be confident that their salvation is secure? What are some of the marks of true conversion and genuine salvation? Can we actually ever be sure, this side of heaven, if someone is a genuine believer? Why or why not?
6. How does the tension between God's sovereignty and human responsibility play itself out in this passage? Are there other places in Scripture where you see this tension? If so, list them.
7. How does this author use God's sovereignty and "if God permits" in [verse 3](#) to motivate his congregation into prayerful and obedient action?
8. How do other agricultural illustrations in the Bible inform our reading of this warning passage? What does the author want to enforce by using this illustration?
9. Why is it significant that the author concludes this warning with words of hope in [Hebrews 6:9-10](#)? How does this encourage you?

- Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary

The Tragedy of Rejecting Full Revelation ([Hebrews 6:1-8](#))

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we shall do, if God permits. For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. ([6:1-8](#))

People can go to church for years and hear the gospel over and over again, even be faithful church members, and never really make a commitment to Jesus Christ. That kind of person is addressed here.

The writer is specifically talking to Jews who had heard the gospel and not accepted Christ as Savior and Lord, but the warning applies to anyone, Jew or Gentile. **All who know the truth of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ, who perhaps have seen it change the lives of many of their friends and family members, who may even have made some profession of faith in Him, yet turn around and walk away from full acceptance, are given the severest possible warning.**

Persistent rejection of Christ may result in such persons' passing the point of no return spiritually, of losing forever the opportunity of salvation. That is what always happens to one who is indecisive. He

eventually follows his evil heart of unbelief and turns his back forever on the living God.

Such people often have adopted a form of Christianity, but they do not have the reality of it.

Jesus says of them, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'"* (**Matt. 7:21-23**).

This is the issue here in the parenthetical statement to unbelievers from the writer of Hebrews.

Unlike a knife, truth becomes sharper with use, which for truth comes by acceptance and obedience. **A truth that is heard but not accepted and followed becomes dull and meaningless. The more we neglect it, the more immune to it we become.** By not accepting the gospel when it was still "news," **these first century Jews had begun to grow indifferent** to it and had become spiritually sluggish, neglectful, and hard. Because of the disuse of their knowledge of the gospel, they now could not bring themselves to make the right decision about it. **They were, in fact, in danger of making a desperately wrong decision, of turning around because of pressure and persecution and completely going back to Judaism.**

That was the situation the unbelieving Jews faced, and it is the theme of [5:11-14](#).

Spiritually they were growing dull, hard, and stupid. The solution is given to them in chapter 6.

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ([6:1-2](#))

The key ideas are **leaving** and **press on to maturity**, and are really two parts of the same idea.

Together they are the first step in these Jews' becoming spiritually mature. They had to leave once and for all their ties with the Old Covenant, with Judaism, and accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

They should do it immediately, without further hesitation.

The maturity that salvation brings is not a process. It is an instantaneous miracle. The maturity about which this passage is talking is that of leaving the ABCs of the Old Covenant to come to the full revelation & blessing of the New.

Leaving in the Greek is *aphiēmi*, which means to forsake, to put away, let alone, disregard, put off. It refers to total detachment, total separation, from a previous location or condition. *The Expositor's Greek Testament* translates [Hebrews 6:1](#), "Let us abandon [give up] the elementary teaching about Christ." Alford comments, "Therefore... leaving (as behind, and done with; in order to go on to another thing)."

In [1 Corinthians 7](#), Paul uses *aphiēmi* in speaking of a Christian husband's not sending away (that is, divorcing) his unbelieving wife. Divorce is total marital separation, complete abandonment of the relationship. **It is wrong in relation to marriage but mandatory in relation to leaving Judaism for Christ. The unbelieving Jew must completely divorce himself from his former religion before he can be saved.**

The same Greek word is often used of forgiveness of sins (as in [Matt. 9:2](#), [5, 6](#); [Rom. 4:7](#); and [James 5:15](#)). When we are forgiven, our sins are put away from us, separated from us, divorced from us.

In [Matthew 15:14](#) the same term is used to speak of separating ourselves from false teachers,

and in [Mark 1:20](#) it is used of James's and John's leaving their father, Zebedee, in order to follow Jesus. As far as their life's work was concerned, they abandoned, completely separated themselves from, their father and his fishing business.

The **elementary teaching about the Christ** (Messiah) that the unbelieving Jews were to leave was the Old Testament teaching about Him—**another indication that it is not immature Christians ("babes") that are being addressed. We are never to leave the basics, the elementary teachings, of the gospel, no matter how mature we grow in the faith.**

Remember, **the issue here is not that of growing in spiritual maturity as a Christian, but of coming into the first stage of spiritual maturity by *becoming* a Christian.**

It is a matter of dropping, leaving, putting away, that which we have been holding onto and taking up something entirely new. Therefore, it can only be a reference to unbelievers, because at no time does the Word of God suggest that a Christian drop the basics of Christianity and go on to something else.

It is the provisions and principles of the Old Covenant, of Judaism, that are to be dropped.

It is not a question of adding to what one has. It is a question of abandoning what you have for something else.

This is precisely what the Holy Spirit asked the Hebrews to do—to abandon the shadows, the types, the pictures, and the sacrifices of the old economy and come to the reality of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. A paraphrase could be, "Leave the pictures of the Messiah and go on to the Messiah Himself," or "Drop the Old Covenant and accept the New."

Incomplete Old Testament Features

The foundation, the Old Covenant, had six features that are pointed out in [verses 1-2](#).

1. **repentance from dead works,**
2. **faith toward God,**
3. **instruction about washings,**

4. **laying on of hands,**
5. **the resurrection of the dead, and**
6. **eternal judgment.**

These are not, as is often interpreted, elementary Christian truths that are to be abandoned in order to go on to maturity. They are Old Testament concepts. To be sure, they pointed to the gospel, but they are not themselves part of the gospel.

1. Repentance from Dead Works

Repentance from dead works is turning away from evil deeds, deeds that bring death. "For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" ([Heb. 9:13-14](#)). *"The soul who sins will die,"* said **Ezekiel (18:4)**. In the New Testament the truth is expressed as, *"The wages of sin is death"* (**[Rom. 6:23](#)**). The Old Testament taught that a man should repent and turn from his evil works that brought about death. But this Old Testament pattern is only the first half of repentance. Men only knew that they were to turn away from evil works and turn toward God. That was the whole doctrine they knew.

In John the Baptist's preaching, and even in Jesus' own early ministry, the basic message was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" ([Matt. 3:2](#); [4:17](#)). Only repentance was preached.

Turn from evil toward God. But **the doctrine of repentance becomes mature, complete, in Jesus Christ.**

Paul reminded the elders of the Ephesian church of his "solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" ([Acts 20:21](#)). In his defense before King Agrippa, Paul mentioned that he had "kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance" ([Acts 26:20](#)). But he went on to explain that the focus of this message was Jesus Christ and His work of salvation ([v. 23](#)). It no longer did any good simply to turn from evil works toward God. **A person could come to God only through Jesus Christ.**

Now that the New Covenant is in effect, **repentance is meaningless without faith in Jesus Christ.**

"No one comes to the Father, but through Me," said Jesus ([John 14:6](#)).

A person who, no matter how sincerely, seeks to repent of his sins and turn to God apart from Christ will never reach God.

Jesus Christ is the only way to Himself that God has provided.

Repentance from dead works is simply turning from evil, and is an important and wonderful truth of the Old Testament. But it is not complete. It is fulfilled, made effective, only by a person's also coming to Jesus Christ in faith. **An incomplete dealing with sin must be abandoned for a complete one.**

2. Faith Toward God

The meaning of **faith toward God** has already been touched on. **It does no good at all today to have faith in God unless there is also faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the only way to God.** Peter said, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" ([Acts 2:38](#)).

There is no acceptable repentance apart from faith in Christ.

The only repentance that "leads to life" is that which is related to belief in Jesus Christ ([Acts 11:17-18](#)).

The only faith toward God that is now acceptable is faith in God the Son. There is no way to the Father except through the Son.

The Old Testament taught repentance from dead works and faith toward God. The New Testament teaches repentance in faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Way to God. The distinction is clear.

The Jews addressed in this letter believed in God; but they were not saved.

Their repentance from works and faith toward God, no matter how sincere it may have been, could not *bring* them to God without Christ. ***"There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved"*** ([Acts 4:12](#)).

3. Instruction About Washings

The King James translation ("doctrine of baptisms") is misleading, especially since everywhere else, including [Hebrews 9:10](#), the same Greek word (*baptismos*) is translated washings. It is not *baptizō*, which is always used for the ordinance of baptism.

It may have been that the King James translators assumed this passage was addressed to Christians, in which case "baptisms" might be appropriate. But the use here of *baptismos* rather than *baptizō* is another strong indication that the passage is *not* addressed to Christians.

Every Jewish home had a basin by the entrance for family and visitors to use for ceremonial cleansings, of which there were many. It is these washings that the readers are told to abandon and forget. Even the Old Testament predicted that one day its ceremonial cleansings would be replaced by a spiritual one that God Himself would give: "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols" ([Ezek. 36:25](#)).

The old washings were many, physical, symbolic, and temporary; the new washing is once, spiritual, real, and permanent.

It is the wonderful, effective, and eternal "*washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit*" ([Titus 3:5](#)). It is the being born (regeneration) of water and the spirit that Jesus told Nicodemus was necessary for entrance into the kingdom ([John 3:5](#)).

4. Laying on of Hands

This *laying on of hands* has nothing to do with the apostolic practices ([Acts 5:18](#); [6:6](#); [8:17](#); [1 Tim. 4:14](#); etc.). Under the Old Covenant the person who brought a sacrifice had to put his hands on it, to symbolize his identification with it ([Lev. 1:4](#); [3:8,13](#)).

Our identification with Jesus Christ does not come by putting our hands on Him; it comes by the Spirit's baptizing us into union with Him by faith.

*"Forget the teaching about laying hands on the Temple sacrifices," the writer is telling these immature Jews.
"Lay hold of Christ by putting your trust in Him."*

5. Resurrection of the Dead

The Old Testament doctrine of **resurrection** is not clear or complete. We learn of life after death and of rewards for the good and punishment for the wicked—and not much more about resurrection than this. From Job, for instance, we learn that resurrection will be bodily, and not just spiritual ([Job 19:26](#)). There is little else that we can learn of it from the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, of course, resurrection is one of the major and most detailed doctrines. It is the theme of apostolic preaching.

It comes to fullness in the very Person of Jesus Christ, who said, "*I am the resurrection and the life*" ([John 11:25](#)).

The resurrection body is described in considerable detail in [1 Corinthians 15](#); and in [1 John 3:2](#) we are told, "We shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is."

Why should anyone be content with trying to understand the resurrection from the limited and vague teachings of the Old Testament?

6. Eternal Judgment

We can learn little more from the Old Testament about final judgment than what is given in **Ecclesiastes**: *"God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil"* ([12:14](#)).

Punishment would come to the wicked and blessing to the good.

Again in the New Testament, however, we are told a great deal about **eternal judgment**—much more than many people like to hear. We know what is going to happen to believers. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" ([Rom. 8:1](#)). We will have to stand before the Lord and have our work judged—for reward or lack of reward—but we ourselves will not be judged ([1 Cor. 3:12-15](#)). We also know what is going to happen to unbelievers. We know about the judgment of the sheep and goats ([Matt. 25:31-46](#)), and the judgment of the great white throne ([Rev. 20:11-15](#)). We know that to Jesus Christ has been committed all judgment ([John 5:21-29](#)). We know this and much more about judgment from the New Testament.

The point of Hebrews 6:1-2 is simply that the unbelieving Jews should let go completely of the immature, elementary shadows and symbols of the Old Covenant and take hold of the mature and perfect reality of the New.

The Holy Spirit is calling for them to leave the ABCs of **repentance from dead works** for the New Testament teaching of repentance toward God and new life in Christ. Leave the ABCs of **faith toward God** for faith in the Person of Jesus Christ. Leave the ABCs of ceremonial **washings** for the cleansing of the soul by the Word. Leave the ABCs of **laying hands** on the sacrifice for laying hold of the Lamb of God by faith. Leave the ABCs of the **resurrection of the dead** for the full and glorious resurrection unto life. Leave the ABCs of **eternal judgment** for the full truth of judgment and rewards as revealed in the New Covenant.

These six doctrines were the basics of Judaism that were to be laid aside in favor of the better things that come in Christ.

The Old Testament is incomplete. It is true. It is of God. It was a necessary part of His revelation and of His plan of salvation for man. But it is only partial revelation and is not sufficient.

Judaism is abrogated. **Judaism is nullified. It is no longer a valid expression of worship or of obedience to God. It must be abandoned.**

The Power

And this we shall do, if God permits. ([6:3](#))

Interpreting this verse is difficult, despite its brevity and simplicity. We will look at it from two angles.

Some interpreters believe we is an editorial reference of the writer to himself. He is saying, "I will go on and teach you what you need to know if God permits me."
Others believe the writer is simply offering to identify himself with those to whom he writes, and is saying, "You will go on to maturity if God permits."

I believe that both interpretations could be correct.

They are not mutually exclusive and are consistent with the rest of Hebrews.

Both service (the writer's going on to teach) and salvation (the readers' going on to spiritual maturity in Christ) must be energized by the Holy Spirit (**if God permits**) if they are to be effective and fruitful.

Everything revolves around the permission of God.

Need for divine enablement is the point. "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God" ([2 Cor. 3:5](#); cf. [James 4:13](#)).

*"No one can come to Me,
unless the Father who sent Me draws him" ([John 6:44](#)).*

By teacher and seeker alike, God's sovereignty should be recognized.

Five Great Advantages

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come. ([6:4-5](#))

The Hebrews being addressed here had five great advantages, which are summarized in these two verses.

1. They Had Been Enlightened

*First of all, we should notice that this passage makes no reference at all to salvation. There is no mention of justification, sanctification, the new birth, or regeneration. Those **who have once been enlightened** are not spoken of as born again, made holy, or made righteous. None of the normal New Testament terminology for salvation is used. In fact, no term used here is ever used elsewhere in the New Testament for salvation, and none should be taken to refer to it in this passage.*

The enlightenment spoken of here has to do with intellectual perception of spiritual, biblical truth. In the Septuagint, the Greek word (*phōtizō*) several times is translated "to give light by knowledge or teaching."

It means to be mentally aware of something, to be instructed, informed. (D3)

It carries no connotation of response—of acceptance or rejection, belief or disbelief.

When Jesus first came to Galilee to minister, He declared that He had come to fulfill the prophecy of [Isaiah 9:1-2](#), which, in part, reads, "The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light" (**Matt. 4:16**). **All who saw and heard Jesus saw this "great light," but not all who saw and heard were saved. Seeing God's light and accepting it are not the same.**

Those people in Galilee, as **all people who hear the gospel, were to some extent or other enlightened**; but, judging by the biblical accounts, few of them believed in Jesus.

They had natural knowledge, factual information. They saw Christ, they heard His message from His own lips, they saw His miracles with their own eyes. They had firsthand opportunity to see God's truth incarnate, an opportunity that only a few thousand people in all of history have had. **The Light of the gospel had personally broken in on their darkness (cf. John 12:35-36).** Life for them could never be the same again. Their lives were permanently affected by the indelible impression Jesus must have made on them. Yet many, if not most, of them did not believe in Him (cf. [John 12:37-40](#)).

The same thing had happened to the Jews being addressed in [Hebrews 6:1-8](#). They were enlightened but not saved.

Consequently, they were in danger of losing all opportunity of being saved, and of becoming apostate.

It is of such people that Peter speaks in his second letter. *"For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them"* (2 Pet. 2:20-21).

Because of their unbelief, the light that was given to save them became a judgment against them.

2.They Had Tasted of the Heavenly Gift

This group not only had seen the heavenly light but had **tasted of the heavenly gift**. **The heavenly gift could be one of several things. The Holy Spirit is spoken of in Scripture as a heavenly gift, but, since He is mentioned in the next verse, I do not think He is the gift meant here.**

The greatest heavenly gift, of course, is Christ Himself (God's "indefinable gift," 2 Cor. 9:15) and the salvation He brought (Eph. 2:8).

*Christ's salvation is the supreme heavenly gift,
and no doubt the one referred to here.*

This great gift, however, was not received. It was not feasted on, but only tasted, sampled. It was not accepted or lived, only examined.

That stands in contrast with Jesus' work on our behalf.

Having tasted death for every man ([Heb. 2:9](#)),

He went on to drink it all.

Jesus told the woman at Jacob's well, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" ([John 4:10](#)). Jesus was speaking of the gift of salvation, the "living water" that leads to "eternal life" ([v. 14](#)). Those who drank it—not sipped it or just tasted it, but drank it—would be saved. A short time later in Galilee, Jesus told His hearers, "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever" ([John 6:51](#); cf. [v. 35](#)).

*Eternal life comes from eating, not simply tasting,
God's gift of salvation in Christ.*

***One of the pre-salvation ministries of the Holy Spirit is that of giving the unsaved a taste of the blessings of salvation. This is part of His ministry of drawing men to Christ.
But tasting is not eating.***

The Holy Spirit will give us a taste, but He will not make us eat. God placed the blessing of salvation to the lips of these New Testament Jews, but they had not yet eaten. **The tasting came from what they saw and heard, as many today have seen the transforming power of Christ and heard the gospel.**

3.They Had Partaken of the Holy Spirit

Partakers (Greek, *metochos*) has to do with association, not possession.

These Jews had never possessed the Holy Spirit, they simply were around when He was around. *This word is used of fellow fishermen in Luke 5:7, and of Christ in relation to the angels in Hebrews 1:9.* It has to do with sharing in common associations and events.

In the context of *Hebrews 6:4*, it refers to anyone who has been where the Holy Spirit has been ministering.

It is possible to have an association with the Holy Spirit, to share in what He does, and not be saved. **As we have seen (2:4) these Jews had heard the word and had seen and even participated in numerous signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit. They were actually involved in some of His work.**

The Bible never speaks of Christians being associated with the Holy Spirit. It speaks of the Holy Spirit being *within* them.

Here, however, are some persons who are simply associated with the Holy Spirit. **Like perhaps most of the multitudes whom Jesus miraculously healed and fed, they partook of the Holy Spirit's power and blessings, but they did not have His indwelling.**

They did not possess the Holy Spirit, nor did the Holy Spirit possess them.

4. They Had Tasted the Word of God

Again these readers are spoken of as having **tasted** something of God, this time His **word**.

The Greek term used here for word (*rhēma*, which emphasizes the parts rather than the whole) is not the usual one (*logos*) for God's Word, but it fits the meaning in this context.

As with His heavenly gifts, they had heard God's utterances and sampled them, tasted them, without actually eating them.

They had been taught about God. No doubt they regularly came to the assembly of the church. They may have listened carefully and even thought carefully about what they heard. They took it all in, possibly with enthusiasm and appreciation. But they could not say with Jeremiah, "Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart" (Jer. 15:16).

They tasted but they did not eat, just like the nation to whom Jeremiah spoke.

Herod was like this. In spite of the prophet's hard message, including accusations directly against the king, Herod enjoyed listening to John the Baptist preach (Mark 6:20). He was perplexed but fascinated by this dynamic preacher.

He liked to sample the message of God. But when pressed into decision, he forsook God's man and God's message. **He reluctantly, but willingly, agreed to have John beheaded. His taste of God's Word only brought on him greater guilt.**

Tasting is the first step to eating.

It is not wrong to taste God's Word. In fact David encourages that very thing. "O taste and see that the LORD is good" (Ps. 34:8). **To some degree, everyone must taste the gospel before he accepts it. The problem is stopping with tasting.**

Like so many who hear the gospel for the first time, these Jews were attracted to its beauty and sweetness. It tasted very good to them. But they did not chew it or swallow it, much less digest it.

They just kept tasting. Before long, its appealing taste was gone and they became indifferent to it. **Their spiritual tastebuds became insensitive and unresponsive.**

Any person who has heard the gospel and perhaps made a profession of Christ, but who is uncertain of salvation, should take Paul's advice: *"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!"* (2 Cor. 13:5).

Such a person needs to learn if he has only tasted the gospel without eating it.

5. They Had Tasted the Powers of the Age to Come

The *age to come* is the future kingdom of God.

Powers of the kingdom are miracle powers.

These Jews had seen the same kind of miracles that are going to come when Jesus brings in His earthly kingdom. They **tasted** them. **They saw the apostles do signs and wonders like those that will be reproduced in the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ.**

They saw miracle upon miracle.

*And the more they saw and tasted without receiving,
the more their guilt increased.*

They were like those who saw Jesus Himself perform miracles.

How hard it is to explain the hatred and unbelief of those who saw a resurrected Lazarus, who saw the blind given sight and the dumb given voices, and yet who rejected the One who did these marvels in front of their eyes.

How guilty they will stand before God in the great white throne judgment.

These Jews had been wondrously blessed by God's enlightenment, by association with His Holy Spirit, and by tasting of His heavenly gifts, His Word, and His power. Still they did not believe.

A Fourth Warning

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame. (6:4-6)

Still speaking to the unsaved who have heard the truth and acknowledged it, but who have hesitated to embrace Christ, the Holy Spirit gives a fourth warning, the crux of [6:1-8](#).

Summarized, the warning is: "You had better come to Christ now, for if you fall away it will be impossible for you to come again to the point of repentance." They were at the best point for repentance—full knowledge. To fall back from that would be fatal.

Because they believe the warning is addressed to Christians, many interpreters hold that the passage teaches that salvation can be lost. If this interpretation were true, however, the passage would also teach that, once lost, salvation could never be regained. If, after being saved, a person lost his salvation, he would be damned forever. There would be no going back and forth, in and out of grace. But Christians are not being addressed, and it is the opportunity for receiving salvation, not salvation itself, that can be lost.

*The believer need never fear he will lose his salvation. **He cannot.***

The Bible is absolutely clear about that. *Jesus said,*

1. First.... See [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)
2. *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand"* ([John 10:27-29](#)).
3. Paul is equally clear. *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* ([Rom. 8:35, 38-39](#)).
4. *"He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus"* ([Phil. 1:6](#)).
5. *We are "to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven," and we "are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* ([1 Pet. 1:4-5](#)).

If the power of God cannot keep us, nothing is dependable or trustworthy or worth believing in. A Christian has no reason at any point in his life to believe that his salvation is or can be lost. If by Christ's death we can be saved, certainly by His life of power and intercession we can be kept saved ([Rom. 5:10](#)).

It is unbelievers who are in danger of losing salvation—in the sense of losing the opportunity ever to receive it. **The unbelieving Jews were in great danger, because of their spiritual immaturity and sluggishness, of turning back to Judaism and of never being able to repent and come to Christ. They would be lost forever, because they had rejected, at the most vital point in knowledge and conviction, the only gospel that could save them.** There is no other salvation message they could hear, no evidence of the truth of the gospel they had not seen.

These particular Jews had even heard the apostles preach and had seen them perform signs and wonders and miracles ([Heb. 2:4](#)).

They had been privileged to behold virtually all the manifestations of His saving Word and power that God could give. **They had heard it all and seen it all.** They even had accepted it all intellectually. Any who are so informed, so witnessed to, so blessed with every opportunity to know God's gospel, and who then turn their backs on it—for Judaism or anything else—are eternally lost.

They not only reject the gospel, **but crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.** They had either to go on to full knowledge of God through faith in Christ or else turn away from Him, to become apostate and be lost forever. There was no other alternative.

Some have translated *adunatos* (impossible) in 6:6 as "difficult." But it is clear even from other passages in Hebrews that such a translation is unjustified.

The same Greek word is used in 6:18 ("It is impossible for God to lie"), in 10:4 ("It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins"), and in 11:6 ("Without faith it is impossible to please Him"). All three of these passages would be nonsense if "impossible" were changed to "difficult."

The harsh finality of the danger cannot be escaped or minimized.

A vaccination immunizes by giving a very mild case of the disease. A person who is exposed to the gospel can get just enough of it to immunize him against the real thing.

The longer he continues to resist it, whether graciously or violently, the more he becomes immune to it. His spiritual system becomes more and more unresponsive and insensitive. His only hope is to reject what he is holding onto and receive Christ without delay—lest he become so hard, often without knowing it, that his opportunity is forever gone.

To renew means to restore, to bring back to an original condition. ***The original condition of these Jews was that of excitement about the gospel when they first heard it.***
It was beautiful.

They had moved from Judaism right up to the edge of Christianity, evidently even to repentance. They had turned from their old ways. They had tried to turn from their sin. They had begun to turn toward God. They had come all the way up to the edge of salvation.

All the revelation God had He had given them. There was nothing else He could say or do. ***If they fell away they did so with an evil heart of unbelief and they did it against full revelation.*** They had the advantage of having been raised under the Old Covenant and they had heard and seen all the beauty and perfection of the New. If they now fell away from that, if they now departed from the living God, there was no hope that they could ever be restored to the place where the gospel was fresh, where the gospel

taste was sweet, where repentance was a proper response. They could never get back there.

When one rejects Christ at the peak experience of knowledge and conviction, he will not accept at a lesser level. So salvation becomes impossible...

They could not return because they had *crucified to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.*

To themselves simply means that, *as far as they were concerned, the Son of God deserved to be crucified.* *Regardless of what they may still have been professing openly and publicly...*

They now took their stand with the crucifiers

In their hearts they said, "That's the same verdict we give."

They had made trial of Jesus Christ and, with all the evidence possible, they decided He was not the true Messiah.

They had turned around and gone back to Judaism.

To them Jesus was an impostor and deceiver and got exactly what was coming to Him. They agreed with those who killed Jesus, and they put Him to an open shame again.

Shame here connotes guilt.

They declared openly that Jesus was guilty as charged.

When anyone has heard the gospel and then turns away, he has done exactly what these Jews did. Though he would never take up a hammer and spikes and physically nail Jesus to a cross, he nevertheless agrees to Jesus' crucifixion. He takes his place with the crucifiers. **If this happens with full light, such a person has become an apostate, and for him salvation is forever out of reach.** He has rejected Jesus Christ against the full light and power of the gospel.

He is incurably anti-God, and for him is reserved the hottest hell. He takes his place **with Judas**, who walked and talked and ate and fellowshiped with God incarnate, yet finally rejected Him.

"How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" ([Heb. 10:29](#)).

It is dangerously self-deceptive for a person to think that, by staying on the sidelines, by holding off deciding, by thinking himself tolerant of the gospel, simply because he does not outwardly oppose it, that he is safe. The longer one stays on (or flirts with) the edge, the more he/she leans toward the old life. Staying there too long inevitably results in falling away from the gospel forever.

[“If you hang around the barber shop long enough... eventually, you end up getting a haircut.” – Anonymous]

It may not be, and often is not, a conscious decision against Christ. But it is a decision and it is against Christ. When a person goes away from Him in full light, he places Him on the cross again, in his own heart, and puts himself forever out of the Lord's reach.

How terribly serious it is to reject Jesus Christ.

For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. (6:7-8)

Do you see the illustration? All those who hear the gospel are like the earth. The **rain** falls, the gospel message is heard. The gospel seed is planted and there is nourishment and growth. Some of the growth is beautiful and good and productive. It is that which is planted, rooted, and nourished in God. But some of the growth is false, spurious, and unproductive. It has come from the same seed and has been nourished by the same ground and the same water, but has become thorny, destructive, and **worthless**. It has rejected the life offered it and become good only for burning.

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary

- Does the Word of God say & teach:
 - It's all about you & it's all up to you?
 - It's all about God & it's all up to Him?
 - You control your eternal condition?
 - God controls your eternal condition?
- Ask & see... what is the plot & design plan of:
 - Hebrews
 - So far
 - Entire book
 - New Testament
 - Hebrews
 - Gospels
 - Acts
 - Other Epistles
 - Paul's
 - John's
 - Peter's
 - Etc.
 - Revelation
 - Old Testament
 - Entire Bible

Who was Demas in the Bible?

Question: "Who was Demas in the Bible?"

Answer: Demas had at one time been one of Paul's "fellow workers" in the gospel ministry along with [Mark](#), [Luke](#), and others ([Philemon 1:24](#)). During Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, Demas was also in Rome ([Colossians 4:14](#)).

There is also biblical evidence that Demas was with Paul during Paul's second imprisonment in Rome, at least for a while. Then something happened. Demas forsook Paul, abandoned the ministry, and left town. Paul wrote about the sad situation: "Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica" ([2 Timothy 4:10](#)).

The Greek verb used in the original implies that Demas had not merely left Paul but had left him "in the lurch"; that is, Demas had abandoned Paul in a time of need. The apostle was in prison, facing a death sentence, and that's when Demas chose to set sail. Undoubtedly, Paul was deeply let down by Demas. It's never easy to see a friend and associate in whom you've placed your trust forsake you in the midst of hardship.

The separation caused by Demas' desertion of Paul was not merely spatial but spiritual. Demas left Rome because he fell in love with the world. In other words, Demas chose the corrupt value system of the unsaved world over what heaven values. As the NLT translates it, Demas "loves the things of this life" ([2 Timothy 4:10](#)). We don't know the details of Demas' situation, but it is evident that Demas decided that what Satan has to offer in this life is better than what God has to offer in the next.

Much can be said in support of the view that Demas, in love with the present world, was never a born-again believer in Jesus Christ. Paul makes a sharp contrast in [2 Timothy 4:8](#) and [10](#). In verse 8, Paul speaks of those who love the Lord: "There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award . . . to all who have loved his appearing" (ESV). Demas, in contrast to those who love Jesus' return, loved the present world (verse 10). [First John 2:15](#) is clear about the spiritual state of those who love the world: "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them." Nowhere in the Bible do we read of the restoration of Demas.

The tragedy of Demas is still being lived out today by those who choose the temporary benefits of this world over the [eternal riches](#) of heaven. Today there are still those who seem to receive the Word but then "the worries of this life and the deceitfulness

of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful” ([Matthew 13:22](#)). Past service is no guarantee of future faithfulness; we must depend on the Lord, our Strength ([Psalm 28:8](#)). We must be born again ([John 3:3](#)); otherwise, we have no foundation of faith. “They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us” ([1 John 2:19](#); cf. [Matthew 7:22-23](#)).

Recommended Resource: [The Great Lives from God's Word Series by Chuck Swindoll](#)