

## Leaving The First Principles Of Christ #2

*"Wherefore leaving the doctrines of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit"* (Heb. 6:1-3). In our last article we discussed two of six items the Hebrew writer said Hebrew Christians should lay aside: repentance from dead works and faith toward God. Refer back to that article for further explanation. A few brief comments will be made regarding the four remaining items: the teaching of baptisms; laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead; and eternal judgment.

*"The teaching of baptisms."* Jewish readers, particularly those who resided in Judea, would be familiar with the early teaching of the Pharisees regarding the *"washing of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels"* (Mk. 7:4). Those who taught them the doctrine of Christ had shown that such items were of no spiritual value. Jesus said, *"There is nothing from without the man that going into him can defile him: but the things who proceed out of the man are the things that defile the man"* (Mk. 7:15). Furthermore, the Hebrews would have been familiar with the baptism of John: many of them might in fact have been baptized of him. They would have learned that it, too, was no long valid (Acts 19:3-5). Then, some might have been in Jerusalem on Pentecost when the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit or had marveled greatly at the astonishing news of the similar experience Cornelius (a devout Gentile) and his household experienced when Peter had visited them in Caesarea (Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-48). Perhaps some of them had been part of the 3,000 on Pentecost who, when pricked in their hearts by Peter's sermon, had gladly received his instructions: *"repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:37f). But, baptism is the doorway into Christ, His death and His body and they were not to dwell on these fundamental matters but grow in the grace of God (Rom. 6:3f; Gal. 3:26f; 1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Pet. 3:18).

*"Laying on of hands."* This expression is found frequently in the New Testament and denotes a variety of things. It is used to signify arrest (Acts 4:7); to accuse (1 Tim. 5:22); to effect a healing (Mt. 9:18); to ordain to an office or task (Acts 6:6; 13:3) or to impart a spiritual gift (Acts 8:18). With most of these different usages the Hebrews would be aware. Those that would affect them most directly would be either the laying on of hands to impart to them a spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:1ff.); perhaps to be healed from some disease or to have witnessed the appointing of the seven to serve the needs of

the widows which men they had themselves participated in the selection of. But, whether the receipt of a gift or the setting into office an elder or deacon; the work which was to be done was imminently of more importance than the moment of setting them into that work.

*"Of the resurrection of dead."* Hebrew Christians were well aware of the doctrine of the Sadducees: that there was no resurrection of the dead. They would equally remember Jesus' astonishing response to the Sadducees on the great day of questions when Christ showed from the scriptures the falseness of their doctrine (Mt. 22:22-33). More than that, they had been led to be Christians through the preaching of the gospel which fundamental doctrine is based upon the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). They were well aware that the resurrection of Christ was a promise of their own, for He not only promised a general resurrection, but was Himself the firstfruits of it (Jn. 5:28; 1 Cor. 15:20). Their conviction in the resurrection of Christ and subsequently their own resurrection was an anchor to their souls. Still, they must proceed further than this: they must grow in knowledge and faith and godliness so that they hope might be realized.

*"Of eternal judgment."* Prediction of a final judgment had been part of their remembrance. Solomon had spoken of it, as well as Jesus (Eccl. 12:13f; Mt. 26:31-46). But the phrase *"eternal judgment"* does not mean a judgment which goes on eternally; it means that the decree of that judgment is eternally sealed: the righteous into eternal life; the wicked into eternal fire (Mt. 25:46f). These thoughts are sober, but we must go on beyond them to a higher knowledge of the true God. With the Hebrew let us say, *"And this will we do, if God permit."*

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