

# Spiritual Foundations: Hebrews 6

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## Review:

Over the last few weeks we have studied the foundational doctrines of our Christian faith. The writer of Hebrews was encouraging believers to press on in their faith, and not laying the foundations of Christian doctrine. We have looked at the first two couplets in Hebrews 6; repentance from acts that lead to death and faith in God, as well as, instructions about baptisms (plural) and the laying on of hands.

Foundations are important for several reasons. The concept of a foundation speaks to me of something that is solid and firm. It is the place where you begin to create and establish. Foundations and beginnings are both extremely important. When building a new house you want a solid foundation. When starting a new job you want a stable work environment. When embarking on a new marriage, the couple wants a pure and unadulterated relationship. Foundations are key. On a more spiritual note, when commencing your new faith in the Lord Jesus, it is important to consider the foundations. The parable of the two houses as seen in **Matt 7:24-29** and **Luke 6:47-49**, reveals the wise and foolish builders. We need to build on the solid rock of Jesus Christ. This morning we are looking at the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement as the last two foundational concepts of Christian doctrine.

## Resurrection of the Dead: Old Testament

The Christian idea of the resurrection of Jesus is different from the Jewish concept of rising from the dead. In the Old Testament the idea of the resurrection is somewhat obscure. The general idea of the resurrection of the dead is not clearly identified in the Old Testament. There are a few Scriptures that speak to the idea but not in the fullest sense to contrast to the New Testament. In Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (**Ezek. 37:1-14**) coming to life simply refers to the return of the exiles from Babylon. **Daniel 12:2** is one of the strongest references to the idea of the resurrection; **"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."** In reference to Jesus, **Isa 53:11** tells us **"after the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life."** The Old Testament believers looked forward to the Messiah and therefore did not have the entire picture with regards to Jesus Christ, his life, his death and his Resurrection.

By the time of Christ, the concept of the resurrection became more thought of, but there was disunity among the Jewish scholars. The Pharisees, who were the most influential Jewish sect at the time of Jesus' coming, believed in the idea of resurrection while the Sadducees explicitly denied such a belief.

## Resurrection of the Dead: New Testament

One of the most prominent teachings of the early church was its emphasis on the resurrection. After Jesus' death and prior to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the disciples were a fearful and motley crew at best. They ran and hid from the authorities of their day. They were sorrowful and uncertain as to their future. However, after Jesus appeared to the first disciples, the first preachers became more and more confident that Christ had risen.

The first sermon Peter preached after the Day of Pentecost declared loudly the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; **Acts 2:24 - But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.**

The Resurrection of Jesus is confirmed by the retelling of the empty tomb which is found in all four Gospels. The empty tomb of Christ stands in sharp contrast to other world religions whose prophets and their adherents never make such a claim. As well, the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection to chosen individuals play an important role in the proclamation of the gospel message – Jesus is alive.

The resurrection of the dead begins with Jesus but does not end there. Paul speaks the message of the Gospel to the church in Corinth as seen in **1 Cor 15:1-5a - Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared...** This is the earliest teaching in the New Testament concerning the resurrection of the dead.

Paul goes on to tell us that the resurrection is foundational to our doctrine. Using simple rhetorical logic, Paul interacts with the church in Corinth helping them to understand the importance of the resurrection. The Corinthian church was questioning **“how are the dead raised? With what kind of body with they come?”** Some believers in Corinth were saying there was no resurrection of the dead. Therefore Paul speaks to the resurrection of the dead in more detail.

- First, the preaching that Jesus is alive “is useless” (v. 14) if Jesus is not raised from the dead.
- Second, if there is no resurrection the faith of the believer is “vain and futile” (verses 14, 17). In other words, the resurrection of Jesus guarantees the resurrection of the believer. Our future salvation is based on the resurrection of Jesus.
- Thirdly, Paul states “you are still in your sins” (v. 17) if Jesus has not been raised from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus reveals that the Father accepted Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the whole world.

- Then Paul tells us if there is no resurrection then “those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost” (v. 18). In other words, they have died (returned to dust) and have no future existence. The result of such logic led Paul to declare that if this is all life is, then “we are to be pitied more than all men” (vs 19).

Paul asks a rhetorical question is asked in **1 Cor 15:35**, “**With what kind of body will they come?**” Paul's answer is one of identity for us as believers. There are different kinds of life on earth, humans, animals, birds and fish. And even though we as individuals will be “changed” or die, we will remain in essence who we are. **So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:42-44).**

Paul's discussion on the “first Adam” who is born of dust and the “second Adam” who is Christ and is a life-giving spirit leads us into the statement “**flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**” (**1 Cor 15:50**). In other words, spiritual rebirth – or the resurrection of the dead – is necessary to enter the eternal kingdom of God.

### **Eternal Judgement:**

Following on the thought of the resurrection of the dead, now the writer of Hebrews describes eternal judgment. This is a sobering doctrine for both the believer and the unbeliever. The Jewish believers had been taught the concept of judgment as a result of their Jewish upbringing. The God of the Old Testament was frequently seen as the Judge of the righteous and wicked, as well as the Judge of Israel. There are many passages within the prophets that describe God as the Judge; **Isaiah 3:13 - The LORD takes his place in court; he rises to judge the people.**

The New Testament again speaks to the resurrection of the dead, more specifically Jesus and then ties the resurrection to judgment as seen in **Acts 17:30-31**. “**In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.** <sup>31</sup> **For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”**

The writer of Hebrews describes this judgment as eternal, pertaining to an unlimited duration of time. The idea of time is easily understood for us today. However, the concept of eternity stretches our minds to the limit. At the time of judgment, time will cease to exist and we will be brought forth into eternity. Both the believer and the unbeliever will be judged, one to everlasting life and the other to everlasting death. The writer of Hebrews later tells us in “**It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God**” (**Hebrews 10:31**). This final elementary doctrine of Christian faith was to put the fear of the living God into our lives. It is the exclamation point of our faith; one day we will all face eternal judgment.

### Here are a few Scriptures to consider in light of eternal judgment:

Matt 25:31-46 - “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

<sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’ <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

<sup>37</sup> “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

<sup>40</sup> “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’

<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

<sup>44</sup> “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

<sup>45</sup> “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

<sup>46</sup> “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

The Judgment of the Dead: Rev 20:11-15 - Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. <sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. <sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. <sup>15</sup> If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

This passage of Scripture refers to the judgment of unbelievers who are not found in the Book of Life. For those whose names were found in the Book of Life, Paul tells us of the Judgment Seat of Christ in 2 Cor 5:6-10. “Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. <sup>7</sup> We live by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup>

**So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.**  
**<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.**

In the context of Scripture the Judgment Seat of Christ refers to Christian coming before God, not unbelievers. We are at all times, even now, seen by God; whether good, bad or ugly. However, one day we shall be assembled before the Judgment Seat of Christ, where two things shall happen.

- Firstly, for the judgment of each believer's life, whether good or bad. This judgment does not determine one's salvation or the judgment of our sins, but rather the rewarding of one's life according to our deeds, obedience to the Great Commission, victory over sin, how we controlled our tongues and how we loved one another. The Bible speaks of believers receiving crowns for different things based on how faithfully they served Christ; crown of righteousness (**2 Tim 4:8**), the crown of life (**James 1:12; Rev 2:10**), and the crown of glory (**1 Peter 5:4**).
- Secondly, the Judgment Seat of Christ vindicates God's righteousness through the person and work of the Lamb of God. It is not our righteousness but the righteousness of Jesus Christ that brings us to the Judgment Seat. It is at the Judgment Seat where we will worship and lay our crowns down at his feet for he alone is worthy.

Lastly, the thought of eternal judgment is brought to bear upon Satan and his demons. **John 12:31** tells us "**Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.**" Jesus is referring to his death and resurrection when he will gain full authority over death and demons; **Col 2:15 - And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.**

The use of the judgment language in connection with the defeat of Satan and his demons is significant, for it shows that this was no random happening. God had purposed judgment for Satan, not because he is stronger than Satan, which is true, but to show, that the defeat of Satan was righteous and just. Revelation 20:10 reveals that the devil and his demons will be completely defeated and tormented in the lake of burning sulfur day and night for ever and ever.

## **In Conclusion:**

This morning we have looked at the resurrection of the dead as relating to Jesus and his followers. But we did not stop there because the writer of Hebrews connects resurrection to eternal judgment. These are the last two foundational teachings by which believers secure right thinking about Christ. When we think right about God it leads us to live right for God. Good foundational doctrine leads one to live a good life.

The lessons of Heb. 6:1–2 are clear:

- You have laid the foundation...
- You know your ABCs...
- Now move forward! Let God carry you along to maturity!

### **In Application:**

How does the Resurrection of Jesus affect your life today?

Describe your thoughts toward your own death...

Describe your thoughts toward eternal judgment...

- Are you looking forward to it?
- Are you fearful to it?