



Exegetical Study of the Book of Hebrews | Dr. Randy White

SESSION 9 | HEBREWS 6:1-8

### MOVING ON | VV. 1-3

- What the writer is doing: *moving on*
  - Literally, "having left." A morphological search of this term in its same form (Verb/Aorist/Active/Participle) will confirm that translators unanimously put this in the past tense except in this instance.
  - This is more testimony about what the writer is doing than instruction on what the reader should be doing. Though such instruction would be valuable, the primary meaning of the words is that the writer is saying, "Now I'm moving on to deeper subjects." Since this is in the plural, the writer is making an assumption that the recipients of the letter are with him, "having left."
  - Translation alert:
    - Literally, it is "the word of the beginning of Christ" which Judaism needed to leave behind, and which the author was doing.
    - KJV "the principles of the doctrine of Christ" is a poor translation. Such principles should never be left behind. The Greek contains no word that could rightly be translated as "principles" (as in 5:12) or "doctrine" (as in 6:2)
    - NASB, NKJV, HCSB, ESV, and NIV all go with some version of "elementary principles of Christ." This also confuses *principles* in v. 1 with *principles* in 5:12
    - TEV says we are to, "leave behind the first lessons of the Christian message." This makes the same error as the KJV, since what follows is not at all the first lessons of the Christian message (nor should the first lessons be left behind).
    - *The Message* gets ridiculously artsy, saying, "Let's leave the preschool finger-painting exercises on Christ and get on with the grand work of art."
- Where is the writer going?
  - Literally, "we should go on to perfection" (or "to full growth").
  - This is a passive verb, but translators are making it an active verb [For comparison of other passive translations of this word, search - lemma:φέρω@VPP].
    - The word (phero) is "to bring," and in the passive would be "to be carried or taken."
    - Thus, again, the primary meaning of the words is the author's testimony, "I'm moving on to bigger subject matter, and I'm hoping I can carry you on the journey."
  - A foundation is only laid once. What the text is about to declare has *been laid* but now the writer is ready to move on.

- What the writer is leaving: *Jewishness without the Messiah*
  - Each of these six things is fully explained in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament).
  - There is no need for the writer to further dwell on Judaism. Rather, it is time to move on to the full completion of these things.
  - If these are the "principles of the doctrine of Christ" (KJV), or the foundation for Christianity, it would be a Christ-less Christianity.
  - The writer explains that these six elements of Judaism have been taught enough, but now it is time to go to maturity, to build on the foundation rather than laying it again.

### MISSING OUT | vv. 4-6

- The five things of vv. 4-5 are things which Judaism had experienced.
  - Have once been enlightened - Judaism had both the revelation of God through the Prophets and through His Son (Hebrews 1:1)
  - Tasted of the heavenly gift - likely a reference to Christ, sent from Heaven to Israel.
  - Made partakers of the Holy Spirit - Partaker does not need to mean that they were filled with the Spirit. Israel was a partaker of the Spirit in that the Spirit came to Jerusalem, a city which became "bewildered, amazed, and astonished" (Acts 2:6-7, 12) when they saw what was happening.
  - Tasted the good word of God - as with the Heavenly gift, this was more than "hearing" to a real experience of "tasting."
  - Tested of the powers of the age to come - the miraculous works of the Gospels and the Pentecostal era were a display of the powers of the coming age (the Messianic age).
- Can these five things be claimed of Christians today?
  - On some level 5 of the 6 could be claimed by Christians today. The final one, however, is not something we have experienced except through reading about it.
  - Further, there is nothing here that speaks of justification by faith (nor can it be implied).
  - In short, the description is of unsaved Israel, with no other people in the history of man having less excuse for not coming to Christ for salvation.
- Because this is an active verb, it is not by accident or neglect that they are "fallen away."
  - See the active sense of the Word used in the Septuagint in Ezekiel 15:8, 18:24, and 20:27.
  - NOTE: KJV adds "If" though this is not a subjunctive. Young's Literal Translations says, "and having fallen away," which is accurate (assuming one knows that the falling was an active choice).
- Summary of vv. 4-6: Israel experienced five blessings which inexcusably bring them to the point of an impossibility of renewal should they walk away.
  - In the Greek, this words "it is impossible" is the beginning of v. 4, vv. 4-6 being one long and grammatically difficult sentence. KJV has a closer rendering in the word order of the Greek.
  - If that generation of Jews (having received the 5 things they experienced) were to walk away from Jesus as the Christ, they would have no refuge. In the Hebrew context, the City of Refuge was for those who accidentally or inadvertently killed someone. That generation of Jews killed Jesus out of ignorance (Acts 3:17). However, now they have had this ignorance revealed. If they walk away now, they "crucify to themselves the Son of God" and will have no refuge.

### MAYHEM ONCOMING | vv. 7-8

This particular illustration is of the ground and its crop. Israel as the vineyard had received the five blessings (above), yet the vegetation it had brought forth was "thorns and thistles." At the time of the writing of the epistle, Israel was then "close to being cursed." When the land is burned, it is the vegetation that is destroyed, not the land itself, which remains to give another (and more healthy) crop in a future day.