

Lesson #15

The Principles of Preparation

The Oracles of God

By now, it should be clear (maybe even monotonous), but the five elements in our Destiny Diagram are the elementary principles listed in Hebrews 6:1-2:

- 1) Repentance from dead works and faith toward God;
- 2) Doctrines of baptisms (washings);
- 3) Laying on of hands;
- 4) Resurrection of the dead;
- 5) Eternal judgment.

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

— Hebrews 6:1-2 (NKJV)

We have generally referred to these five things as elementary principles, as they are described in verse 1 above. Other translations use terms like: “*first principles of the oracles of God*” (KJV); “*the elementary truths of God’s word*” (NIV); “*the elementary principles of the oracles of God*” (NASB); and “*elements of the beginning of the oracles of God*” (Darby & YLT).

The wording “*elements of the beginning of the oracles of God*” reminds us that, even from the very beginning, God spoke of His plan to bring forth the Christ and redeem mankind from the power of sin.

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

— Genesis 3:15 (NKJV)

Here we see *the beginning* of the oracles of God describing Christ’s victory over the serpent and the destructive power of sin. It was for this purpose that Christ came, “... *to destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8). When Jesus said, “...*My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going...*” (John 8:14), it goes all the way back to the beginning and all the way forward to the Kingdom of God on earth ... and to eternity. This is why we have made the effort in this study course to impart the big picture, to present a general overview of history beginning with creation and to present a vision for the future. Everything in between is a preparation for eternity, but more specifically for us, the church is the preparation vehicle for the appearing of the Kingdom of God to appear on earth as it

is in heaven. No matter how you look at it, these teachings are the beginning, first, or elementary things, the first food (milk) that Christians should learn when they seek to know God's Word (oracles).

The Principles of Preparation in the Life of Christ

These principles can be divided into two parts: 1) The Present Preparation Strategy, and 2) The Powers of the Age to Come.

1) Present Preparation Strategy	2) Powers of the Age to Come
1) Repentance from dead works and faith toward God. 2) Doctrines of baptisms (or washings) 3) Laying on of Hands	4) Resurrection of the dead 5) Eternal judgment

Since we are called to be like Christ and these are the first or primary principles of the teaching of Christ, we should be able to see each of them in Christ's teachings — and we can. We can see the three principles of the Present Preparation Strategy in the ministry of Jesus pointing to the Powers of the Age to Come.

Looking from a broad perspective, we can see the three principles of preparation modeled in Jesus' ministry. He applied the first three as preparation for the last two. This should not be surprising since they are called the principles of the doctrine (or teachings) *of Christ* (Heb 5).

First, Jesus' confronted the hypocrisy and dead religious works of the Jews and, through a real relationship with His Father, demonstrated real faith. Jesus only did that which He saw Father doing (see John 5:19). This implies two things: 1) a relationship with the Father and 2) obedience to the Father. These two things sum up repentance from dead works and faith toward God because only in a real relationship with the Father can we be free from dead religion, and only in that real relationship can we walk in true faith toward Him.

Principle number two, doctrines of baptisms/washings, which can be summed up as purification or sanctification, was accomplished this by Jesus' atoning death on the cross. We are sanctified by the blood of the covenant and through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (see Heb.10:10, 29). From there, we continue to pursue holiness (see Heb 12:14).

Next we see principle number three, which is summed up as impartation/empowerment, represented in Pentecost, when Jesus sent the Holy Spirit and empowered His followers to be witnesses to the ends of the earth (see Acts 1:8).

Thus the early church was delivered from dead religion through their faith in God, they were cleansed from sin by the redeeming work of Christ, and they were empowered by the Holy Spirit for His purpose — to see the kingdom of God appear on earth. The table below illustrates these three elements of Jesus Ministry as they relate to the preparation strategy.

	Principle One	Principle Two	Principle Three
Principles of Preparation	Repentance From Dead Works and Faith Toward God	Doctrines of Baptisms/Cleansing	Laying on of Hands
Ministry of Jesus	Jesus confronted dead religion, and only did what he saw the Father doing.	Jesus provided cleansing through giving His life	Jesus Sent the Holy Spirit to empower us to be witnesses for Him

Preparing for the Age To Come

The Power of the Age to come, (4) Resurrection of the dead and (5) Eternal Judgment are a vision of the future and give purpose to the work of preparation we do in the present age. The coming messianic kingdom, in which the resurrection power and judgment will be a manifested part, was clearly present in Jesus' teachings. He came preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Luke 4:43) and spoke of going away to receive that kingdom and returning (Luke 19:12). He spoke of the resurrection (Luke 14:14) and He warned of judgement (Matt 12:41). Not only did Jesus preach of the powers of the age to come, but He demonstrated those powers by healing the sick, casting out demons, and by performing signs, wonders, and miracles.

Peter Preaches the Preparation Principles

We can also see the three principles of preparation reflected in Peter's first sermon when he answered those who were convicted by the Holy Spirit after the outpouring of power on the day of Pentecost. After hearing Peter's sermon, they asked, "What shall we do?" In other words, they were asking what action they should take (see Acts 2:37). His reply was very foundational and gave them three points of action from the foundational framework.

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

— Acts 2:38 (NKJV)

Peter's reply included each of the three principles of preparation:

- 1) *Repent*. This correlates with the first principle of repentance from dead works and faith toward God.
- 2) *Be Baptized*. This is the second principle, doctrines of baptisms or washings.
- 3) *Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*. This is the third principle, the laying on of hands. It was usually by the laying on of hands that the power of the Holy Spirit was imparted manifesting often in healing, spiritual gifts, and Holy Spirit baptism itself (see Luke 4:40; 13:13; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6).

The table below illustrates how Acts 2:38 parallels the preparation strategy.

	Principle One	Principle Two	Principle Three
Principles of Preparation	Repentance From Dead Works and Faith Toward God	Baptisms/ (Washings Holiness/Cleansing)	Laying on of Hands (Impartation / Empowerment)
Acts 2:38	Repent	Be Baptized	And You Will Receive the Holy Spirit

Peter Preaching about the Age to Come

In the next recorded sermon preached by Peter, we find him continuing to preach repentance, but also including the vision of the age to come in his sermon.

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

— Acts 3:19-21 (NKJV)

In the passage above, by speaking of the return of Jesus and the restoration of all things, Peter was referring to the age to come. Also remember that the context of this sermon was the healing of a lame man who had been lame from birth. Like Jesus, Peter did not simply speak of the age to come, he demonstrated it!

The Settled Word

To be settled speaks of permanence and stability. In the construction trade, settled ground is essential before the work of building begins. Builders dig down to find settled ground upon which to place a foundation. A house built on unsettled unstable ground is a disaster.

We read in Psalms that the word of God is forever settled in heaven (see Ps 119:89). The word of God is permanent and stable. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35). The Word of God is settled in heaven, but the question for us is whether the word of God is settled in our hearts. The work of preparing the way for the King and His kingdom is a building project — and the foundations of this building project must rest on settled word.

One of the most commonly quoted passages of scripture is what we call the “Our Father” or “The Lord’s Prayer.” Most people can quote this passage, but again the question remains: “Is it settled in our hearts?” Committing the Lord’s Prayer to memory is good, but is not necessarily the same as having it settled in our hearts. But when we need direction for prayer, and we use it as a foundational framework upon which we build our prayer life, then we can say that these words of Jesus are settled in our hearts.

The same is true of the foundational principles from Hebrews 6:1-2. When we need direction for the work of preparation, and these principles and we use these principles as our go-to foundational framework or guide, then we can say that these first oracles of God are becoming settled in our hearts.

When Peter preached to the people on the Day of Pentecost, in Acts , Chapter 2, their hearts were convicted and they asked, “What shall we do?” (see Acts 2:37). As we have seen, his response was based on the first three foundational principles - the principles of preparation. The Lord’s Prayer is guide for *how to pray*. The foundational principles from Hebrews 6 are a guide for *what to do*.

As pointed out in our overview of history, the early church, for the most part, grew corrupt and gradually lost it’s grip on these principles. But we have also seen how these principles have been restored or refreshed in the church. Now we are ready to see a mighty church moving in power, preparing the way for the appearing of Christ and His Kingdom of peace on earth as these things become settled in our hearts.