

The Basic Doctrines



Foundations (Day 58)
by Derek Prince

When we set out to study the Bible in detail, is there some easy way to identify the basic and most important doctrines that should be studied first?

This is a reasonable question, and, like all such questions related to the study of the Bible, an answer to it may be found within the pages of the Bible itself. The Bible does clearly state that certain of its doctrines are more important than the rest and should therefore be studied first. In fact, the Bible gives a list of six such basic, or foundational, doctrines.

> "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 judgement." (Heb. 6:1-2)

In the margin of the 1611 edition of the King James Version, the alternative reading suggested for the elementary principles of Christ is "the word of the beginning of Christ." This brings out the point that we are here dealing with the doctrines which should constitute the beginning – the starting-off point – in our study of Christ and His teaching as a whole.

This point is further emphasised by the use, in the same verse, of the phrase "the foundation." The writer of Hebrews is setting two thoughts side by side: 1) the laying of the right doctrinal foundation; 2) going on after this to perfection – that is, to a completed edifice of Christian doctrine and conduct. The purpose of his exhortation is that we should go on to perfection, to the completed edifice. But he makes it plain that we cannot hope to do this unless we have first laid a complete and stable foundation of the basic doctrines.

In speaking of this foundation, the writer lists in order the following six successive doctrines:

1. Repentance from dead works
2. Faith toward God
3. The doctrine of baptisms
4. Laying on of hands
5. Resurrection of the dead

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6. Eternal judgement

We need to note one particularly important feature of this inspired outline of basic doctrines. If we follow it through in the order given, it spans the entire gamut of Christian experience. It starts – in time – from the sinner's initial response: repentance. It takes us on, by a logical succession, to the climax – in eternity – of all Christian experience: resurrection and final judgement.

While it is important to study carefully each of these individual doctrines, we must never lose the vision of the single divine and perfect plan that runs through them all. In particular, we must never become so occupied with the things of time that we lose the vision of eternity. Otherwise, we may suffer the tragedy described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:19.

> "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."

The studies that follow in this section focus on the first two of these doctrines: repentance and faith.

Devotional

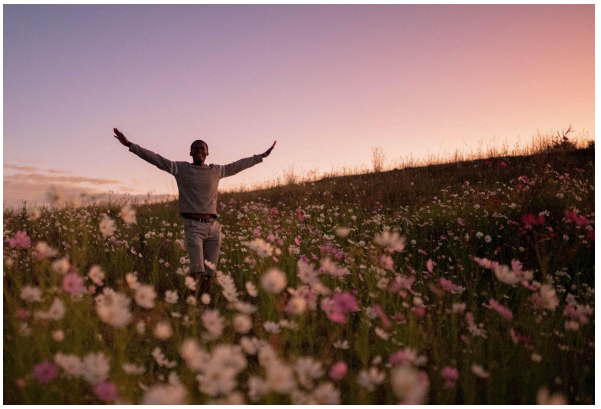
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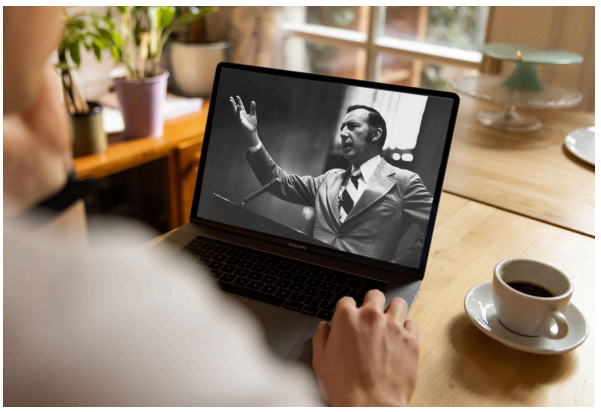
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