

Elementary Teachings of Christ

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July 1, 2026

And Bible Foundations

On a Wednesday evening, Jim delivered a Bible class at West Side Church of Christ focusing on the foundational doctrines of Christianity. Drawing from Hebrews 6:1-2, he outlined a series on the elementary teachings of God, especially timely for younger members and as a refresher for all. The lesson explored the six basics listed by the Holy Spirit through Paul, the structure and preservation of Scripture, the transition from Old to New Testament, and the importance of rightly dividing God's Word.

Jim began by inviting the class to consider what constitutes the "elementary teachings of God." He directed everyone to Hebrews 6:1-2: "Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity: not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment." These six items—repentance from dead works, faith toward God, instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment—represent the basics every young Christian should know.

The context in Hebrews was a group of Hebrew Christians who had stagnated. They should have become teachers but had slipped into a "retired" mindset of letting others carry the load. Paul's words served as a loving provocation to stir them back to spiritual growth and productivity.

Understanding these foundations requires appreciating how the Bible is organized and preserved. The Jewish people were entrusted with God's oracles (Romans 3:2). Moses authored the Torah (the first five books) over 3,500 years ago. Scribes copied scrolls with extraordinary reverence, washing before writing God's name. This human diligence, combined with God's providence, ensured remarkable accuracy across generations.

The Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh, divides into three sections: Torah (Law/Instruction: Genesis through Deuteronomy), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings). The Christian Old Testament contains the same content but follows a different arrangement: Law, Historical Books (Joshua through Esther), Wisdom/Poetry (Job through Song of Solomon), and Prophets (Major and Minor).

Evidence of preservation includes the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered post-World War II when a shepherd boy's stone broke a clay pot in a cave, revealing manuscripts nearly identical to modern Bibles. In contrast, works like Homer's **Iliad** show significant variations from repeated copying, much like the children's game of Telephone. God's Word stands unique in its fidelity.

The Torah recounts creation, early humanity, the law of sin and death given to Adam and Eve, moral decline leading to the Flood, Noah's family repopulating the earth, the patriarchs,

Jacob/Israel's family entering Egypt, 430 years there (including 400 in slavery), the Exodus, wilderness wanderings, the law at Sinai, and conquest of Canaan. Historical books continue Israel's story through exile and return. Wisdom literature explores worship, life, and godly living. Prophets, including major figures like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, pointed forward.

Jeremiah 31:31-33 foretold the old covenant's end: "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt... I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts." The old system, with its festivals and sacrifices, found its expiration at the cross. Jesus' death nailed the old law to the cross (Colossians 2:14).

While Jesus lived, he operated under the old covenant but laid the foundation for the new. He taught new principles, especially in the Sermon on the Mount and temple debates. John the Baptist prepared the way, preaching repentance and baptism in the spirit of Elijah as prophesied in Malachi. After John's imprisonment, Jesus continued: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matthew 4:17), fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of light dawning in Galilee.

A pivotal verse is Luke 16:16: "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it." The "until" and "since" mark a decisive shift. The old proclamation ended with John; the gospel era began. People even tried to forcibly crown Jesus king after the feeding of the 5,000, but he was already God's anointed.

Some mistakenly claim Jesus taught only Old Testament principles. Jim corrected this: Jesus fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17) while inaugurating the new. His teachings form the foundation of New Testament doctrine for the church.

In John 8:31-32, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." This freedom is liberation from sin's dominion. The old self dies with Christ in baptism; sin loses its mastery. Christians may still stumble—gossip, dishonesty, covetousness—but confession brings faithful forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Believers are continually cleansed by Christ's blood.

Paul reinforces this in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2: "Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain." This if-then statement demands active holding to the gospel in deed, not name only. Love for one another, absence of backbiting and envy—these prove genuine discipleship. When negative patterns arise, private confession and repentance restore fellowship.

Sanctification sets believers apart for holy purposes (John 17:17). God's Word, Christ's blood, and the indwelling Spirit accomplish this. Christians perform good works prepared in advance (Ephesians 2:10), not to earn salvation but out of gratitude. Ephesians 2:8-10 balances grace through faith (not of works, lest anyone boast) with the expectation of good works as God's workmanship. This counters "faith only" or "once saved, always saved" extremes.

Paul received the gospel by direct revelation from Christ, not human tradition (Galatians 1:11-12). On the Damascus road, the risen Lord appeared to him. After baptism by Ananias, Paul spent time

in Arabia being taught by Jesus himself. Paul later affirmed that his writings are commands of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Jim concluded by laying groundwork for future classes on each elementary teaching. The session ended in prayer: gratitude for God's preserved, accurate Word; a request for open minds to understand wonderful things in His law (Psalm 119:18); and commitment to share truth joyfully.

This class reminds us that Christianity rests on solid foundations. The elementary teachings provide the basis for maturity. God's Word, preserved across millennia, transitions seamlessly from promise to fulfillment in Christ. As we study repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection, and judgment, may we hold firmly to the gospel, live as sanctified people doing good works from grateful hearts, and experience the freedom that comes from knowing and obeying the truth.

The Bible's reliability, the clear shift to the new covenant, and the call to active discipleship challenge every generation. Just as the Hebrew Christians needed stirring, we too must avoid stagnation. Let us press on to maturity, teaching others and living as lights in a dark world, because the King has come and His kingdom is near.

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On a Wednesday Evening, Jim taught a foundational Bible class at West Side Church of Christ drawn from Hebrews 6:1-2. He introduced a series on the six elementary teachings every Christian should know: repentance from dead works, faith in God, instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

These basics were emphasized because the Hebrew Christians had stagnated spiritually. They should have become teachers but had grown complacent. Paul urged them forward to maturity.

Jim stressed understanding the Bible's structure and preservation. The Jews faithfully guarded God's Word for millennia. The Hebrew Tanakh divides into Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings). The Christian Old Testament contains the same content. Evidence like the Dead Sea Scrolls confirms remarkable accuracy, unlike corrupted human texts such as Homer's **Iliad**.

The Torah records creation, the law of sin and death, the Flood, patriarchs, Egyptian slavery, Exodus, and conquest of Canaan. Later books cover history, wisdom, and prophecy. Jeremiah foretold a new covenant written on hearts, fulfilled at the cross when the old system ended.

John the Baptist prepared the way with a message of repentance. Jesus continued it: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 4:17). In Luke 16:16, Jesus marked the shift—the Law and Prophets were until John; since then, the gospel of the kingdom is preached.

Jesus' teachings laid the foundation for the New Testament. Holding to them brings truth and freedom from sin's power (John 8:31-32). Baptism unites us with Christ's death; ongoing confession keeps us cleansed. We must hold firmly to the gospel in deed, not name only, producing good works out of gratitude (Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2).

Paul received this gospel directly from Christ. The class closed with prayer for open minds to understand and share God's preserved truth.

These foundations call us to active discipleship and spiritual growth in Christ's kingdom.

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