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Once Fallen Away, It is Impossible to be Brought Back to Repentance **The Fourth Warning - 6: 1-8** **The Danger of Falling Away: Hesitating Jews**

Once fallen away, it is impossible to be brought back to repentance DIG: What caused some of the Jews who had professed faith in Messiah to go back to Judaism? What were the Jewish people repeatedly warned about in the letter to the Hebrews? What did the writer of Hebrews mean when he asked his readers to go on to maturity? What do works that lead to death refer to? How does it differ from the concept of repentance in the B'rit Chadashah? What is the difference between baptisms and washings? How does the TaNaKh describe the resurrection of the dead? How does the New Covenant help to clarify the doctrine of the resurrection? What does it mean to have tasted of the goodness of God's word? If someone shares in the Spirit necessarily be a believer? What is the point of the illustration in verses 7-8?

REFLECT: Some of these Jews were hesitating and were tempted to return to the Jewish ceremonies rather than embrace Christ as their Lord and Savior. Identify some ways that you sometimes feel more comfortable with the familiar, even though it is not necessarily what YHVH wants for you. Can you lose your salvation? How do you know if you are making spiritual progress or not? In what ways can you take responsibility for your own spiritual growth? We often don't realize how far we've fallen away from the Word of God until we have really fallen. How would you describe the very first steps toward becoming dull to God's Word? What elements of our culture make it easier to drift away from the Word and love of God?

As John MacArthur relates in his commentary on **Hebrews**, people can go to their messianic synagogue or church for years and hear the gospel over and over again, even become faithful members of the congregations of **God**, and never really make a commitment to **Christ**. Just because you sit in the garage, it doesn't make you a car. That kind of person is addressed here. **The Ruach ha-Kodesh** is specifically talking to **Jews** who had heard the gospel, but not accepted **Yeshua Messiah** as **Savior** and **Lord**, but the warning applies to

anyone, **Jew** or Gentile. All who know the truth of **the Lord's** saving grace in **Jesus**, who perhaps have seen a change in the lives of many of their friends and family members, who may even have made some flimsy profession of **faith** in **Him**, yet turn around and walk away from full acceptance, are given the severest possible warning. Persistent rejection of **Messiah** may in result in such persons' passing the point of no return spiritually, becoming reprobate, such as Pharaoh (see the commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Ch - The LORD Will Fight For You, You Need Only To Be Still**), and losing forever the opportunity for salvation. This is what always happens to one who is indecisive. They eventually follow their evil heart of unbelief and turn their back forever on the living **God**. This is the fourth of **five warning passages** (see **Ag - The Audience of the Book of Hebrews**).

Such people have often adopted a form of spirituality, but they don't have **Christ**. They use the right lingo and seem to act in the right way, but at best they are only playing the game, and at worst they are wolves in sheep's clothing ripping off the flock (see the commentary on **Jude Ah - Godless People Have Secretly Slipped In Among You**). **Yeshua** says of them: **Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name and in Your name drive our demons and in Your name perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers" (Mattityahu 7:21-23)**. This is the issue here in the parenthetical statement to unbelievers from **the Spirit of God**.

Unlike a knife, truth becomes sharper with use, because acceptance and obedience comes from truth. A truth that is heard but not accepted and followed becomes dull and empty. The more truth is neglected, the more immune we become to it. By not accepting the gospel when it was still fresh in their minds, those first century **Jews** slowly began to grow indifferent to it and had become spiritually sluggish, neglectful and dull. Now **they** were hesitant about the gospel and couldn't make a decision. But at that point, doing nothing was making a decision, a decision to walk away from **the Lord** and fall back into their comfortable cocoon of the Levitical sacrifices and system of worship (see **Ba - It is Hard to Explain, Since You Have Become Dull of Hearing**). **The Spirit** then gave them the solution.¹⁴²

The Torah is incomplete: Therefore, since solid food is for the mature, for those who can distinguish good from evil (5:14), they needed to leave behind the initial milk teaching (5:13), about the Messiah found in the symbolism of the Tabernacle, the priesthood, and sacrifices. All dependence upon the Levitical sacrifices needed to be **left behind** in order that the unbelieving **Hebrews** could **go on to maturity** (Greek: *teleios*).

This **maturity** speaks of the belief in the New Covenant sacrifice of **Jesus Christ** on the cross. In **7:11** the writer argues that if **maturity** (Greek: *teleios*) came under the Levitical priesthood, then there would be no further need of another priesthood. But since **YHVH** has brought in another priestly line in **Christ** after the Order of Melchizedek, it logically follows that this **maturity** can only be obtained under the New Covenant that **Messiah** has established. The author also states in **7:19** that Levitical sacrifices **made nothing perfect** (Greek: *teleios*). That is, **the blood of bulls and goats** could not pay for **sin**. But after **the Lord Jesus had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God (10:12)**. His sacrifice was complete. Consequently, the writer urged those unbelieving **Jews** to desert the type for the reality, to **leave** the shadow for the substance, and to abandon that which is incomplete for that which is complete **(6:1)**.¹⁴³

Six aspects of the incomplete Torah: The **Spirit of God** then urged those unbelieving **Jews** to abandon concepts that pointed to the gospel, but were not in themselves part of the gospel. These are not, as is often interpreted, elementary truths *of* the gospel, but actually stumbling blocks *to* the gospel. If they went back to the sacrifices described in the Torah, they would only be **laying a foundation** on that which was incomplete, then building upon it again! But, since the Torah was incomplete, **they** were being encouraged *not to do so*.

1. Repentance from works that lead to death: This is turning away from **works** righteousness. **The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from works that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God (Hebrews 9:13-14)**. The TaNaKh teaches that people should **repent** from their evil **acts that bring death** and turn to living **God**. But too often the **Jew** turned to **ADONAI** only in a superficial way - fulfilling the letter of the Torah as evidence of repentance. The inner man, however, was still dead (**Matthew 23:25-28; Romans 2:28-29**). Such repentance was not the kind that brought salvation (**Acts 11:18; Second Corinthians 7:10**). Under the B'rit Chadashah, however, **repentance from works that lead to death** is coupled with **faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21)**. **Messiah** declared: **I AM the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6)**. An incomplete way of dealing with sin must be abandoned for a complete one.¹⁴⁴

2. Faith in God: **Faith** directed *only* toward **God the Father** is unacceptable without **faith in God the Son**. On the day of Shavu'ot **Peter** said: **Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38)**.

There is no acceptable repentance apart from **Jesus Christ**. The only repentance that **leads to life** is that which is related to belief in **Yeshua Messiah (Acts 11:17-18)**. The TaNaKh taught repentance from **dead works**, and **faith** toward **God**. The B'rit Chadashah teaches repentance in **faith** toward **the Lord Jesus Christ**. The distinction is clear. The unbelieving **Hebrews** believed in **ADONAI**; but **they** were not saved. **Their** repentance from **dead works** and **faith** in **YHVH**, no matter how sincere it may have been, could not bring them to **God** without **Yeshua**. **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12)**.

3. Instructions about washings: The Greek word here is *baptismos*, or **washings**, and not *baptizo*, which would be translated *baptisms*. This is a strong indication that this passage is not addressed to believers. Every **Jewish** home had a basin by the entrance for family and visitors to use for ceremonial **washings**, which were outward signs of cleansing (**Exodus 30:18-21; Leviticus 16:4, 24, 26, 28; Mark 7:4 and 8**). It is these **washings** that the readers are told to abandon. Even the TaNaKh predicted that one day its ceremonial **washings** would be replaced by a spiritual one that **YHVH Himself** would give: **I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols (Ezeki'el 36:25)**. The New Covenant, however, called for an inner **washing**. The old **washings** were many, physical, symbolic and temporary; the new **washing** is once-for-all-time, spiritual, real and permanent. It is the eternal **washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)**. It is being **born of water and the Spirit** that **Yeshua** told **Nicodemus** was necessary for entrance into **the kingdom of God (John 3:5)**.

4. Laying on of hands: This has nothing to do with the apostolic practices (**Acts 6:6, 8:17, 9:17; First Timothy 4:14**, and so on). The Torah taught that **Israelites** who brought a sacrifice had to put their **hands** on it, to symbolize **their** identification with it (**Leviticus 1:4, 3:8 and 13**). Our identification with **Jesus Christ** does not come by putting our **hands** on **Him**; it comes by **the Spirit's** baptizing us into union with **Him** by **faith** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does For Us at the Moment of Faith?**). It was if the author was saying to those hesitating **Jews**, "Forget the teaching about **laying** your **hands** on the Temple sacrifices. Lay hold of **Messiah** by believing in **Him**."

5. Resurrection of the dead: The doctrine of **the resurrection** in the TaNaKh is neither clear nor complete. We learn of life after death and of rewards for the good and punishment for the wicked - and not much more. From **Job**, for example, we learn that **the resurrection** will be bodily and not spiritual (**Job 19:26**). In the B'rit Chadashah, of course, the doctrine of **the resurrection** is much more detailed. It is the theme of apostolic

teaching and comes to fullness in **Yeshua Messiah**, who said: **I AM the resurrection and the life (John 11:25)**. The resurrected body is described in considerable detail in **First Corinthians 15**, and in **First John 3:2** we are told: **We shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is**. Why should anyone be satisfied with trying to understand the resurrection from the limited and vague teachings of the TaNaKh when they have the clear and detailed teachings of the apostles and **Jesus Himself**?

6. Eternal judgment: We can learn little more from the TaNaKh about final judgment than what is given to us from Solomon: **For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil (Ecclesiastes 12:14)**. Punishment would come to the wicked and blessing to the good. Again, we are told a great deal more about eternal judgment in the New Covenant. Much more than some people want to hear. We know what will happen to believers: **For there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1)**. We will have to stand before **the Lord** and have our work judged - for reward or lack of reward - but we ourselves will not be judged (see the commentary on **Revelation Cc - We Must All Appear Before the Judgment Seat of Christ**). We all know what will happen to unbelievers (see the commentary on **Revelation Fo - The Great White Throne Judgment**). We know that **the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son (John 5:22)**.

The point of **6:1-2** is simply that the unbelieving **Jews** should let completely go of the immature, elementary shadows and symbols of the TaNaKh and take hold of the **mature** and perfect reality of the B'rit Chadashah. These six doctrines were the basics of Judaism that were to be laid aside in favor of the better things that come with **faith in Christ**. The Torah is incomplete. It is true. It is of **God**. It was a necessary part of **His** revelation and of **His** plan for the salvation of mankind (see the commentary on **Exodus Da - The Dispensation of Torah**). But it was only partial revelation, and is not sufficient for salvation after the cross.

And we will do so, if God permits (6:2-3). In other words, the writer is saying, "I will continue to teach you what you need to know **if God permits** me to **do so**, and therefore, you will go on to **maturity** (Greek: *teleios*), **if God permits**. Both the writer and the readers needed to be energized by **the Ruach HaKodesh** if they were to be effective and fruitful. **Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God (Second Corinthians 3:5)**.¹⁴⁵

Five great advantages of those unbelieving Jews: As John MacArthur relates in his commentary on **Hebrews**, the **Jews** being addressed here, however, had five great

advantages, which are summarized in these two verses.

1. They had been enlightened: For when people have once been enlightened. First of all, we should notice that this passage makes no reference at all to salvation. There is no mention of justification, sanctification, saved, or regeneration. Those who **have once been enlightened** are not spoken of as born again, saved, made holy or righteous. Non the normal New Covenant terminology for salvation is used. In fact, no term used here is ever used elsewhere in the B'rit Chadashah, and none should be taken to refer to it here. The word **once** is literally, *once for all* and never needs repetition. That meant that as those unbelieving **Hebrews** listened to the message of the gospel, **the Ruach ha-Kodesh enlightened their** minds and hearts to clearly understand it. They work of **the Spirit** had been so thorough that it never needed to be repeated to make it clear to them. Those **Hebrews** understood the gospel perfectly.

The enlightenment spoken of here has to do with intellectual perception of spiritual, biblical truth. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the TaNaKh, the word **enlightenment**, *photizo*, is translated several times, *to give light by knowledge or teaching*. It means to be mentally aware of something, to be instructed, or informed. It carries no connotation of response - of acceptance or rejection, belief or disbelief.

When **Yeshua** first came to Galilee to minister, **He** declared that **He** had come to fulfill the prophecy of **Isaiah 9:1-2**, which, in part, reads: **The people walking in darkness have seen a great light (Matthew 4:16a)**. All who saw and heard **Messiah saw the great light**, but not all who saw and heard were saved. **Seeing God's light** and accepting **God's light** are not the same thing. Those people in Galilee, and all the people who hear the gospel today, were to some greater or lesser degree **enlightened**. But judging by biblical accounts, few of them believed in **Jesus**, they had taken **the wide gate** and **the wide road that leads to destruction** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Dw - The Narrow and Wide Gates**). They saw **Christ**, they heard **His** message from **His** own lips, and they saw **His** miracles with their own eyes. They had firsthand opportunity to see **God's** truth. **The Light** of the gospel had personally broken in on **their darkness**. Their lives were permanently affected by the incredible impression **Jesus** must have made on them. Yet many, if not most, of them did not believe in **Him (John 12:35-40)**. The same thing had happened to the **Jews** being addressed here. **They** were **enlightened** but not saved; thus, they were in danger of losing all opportunity of being saved, and of becoming apostate (**Second Peter 2:20-21**).

2. They had tasted of the heavenly gift: **Yeshua's gift** of salvation is the ultimate **heavenly gift**. This great **gift**, however, was rejected. It was not feasted on, by only **tasted**

. . . sampled. **Christ** told the woman at Jacob's well: **If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water (John 4:10). Jesus** was speaking of the gift of salvation, the **living water** that leads to **eternal life (Yochanan 4:14)**. Those who drank it - not sipped it or just tasted it - would be saved. A short time later in Galilee, **Messiah** told **His** hearers: **I AM the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever (John 6:51)**. One of the presalvation ministries of **the Ruach HaKodesh** is that of giving the unsaved a **taste** of the blessings of salvation. This is a part of **His** wooing people to **Christ**. But **tasting** is not **eating**. **The Holy Spirit** will give us a **taste**, but **He** will not force us to **eat**. **God** had placed the blessing of salvation on the lips of these first century Jews, but they had not yet **eaten**. Those Jews were like the spies at Kadesh-Barnea who saw the Land and had the very fruit in their hands, and yet turned back (see [At - A Sabbath-Rest for the People of God](#)).¹⁴⁶

3. They become sharers in the Holy Spirit: the word **sharers** (Greek: *metochos*), has to do with *association*, not possession. Those **Jews** never possessed **the Holy Spirit**, they merely were around when **He** was around. This word is used of fellow fishermen in **Luke 5:7**, and of **Christ** in relation to the angels in **1:7**. It has to do with sharing in common associations and events. In the context of **6:4**, it refers to anyone who has been where **the Spirit** has been ministering. It is possible to be around when **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** is around and not be saved. As we have seen in **2:4** those **Jews** had heard the Word and had seen and even participated in **various signs, wonders, miracles and gifts of the Spirit of God**. They were actually involved in some of **His** ministry. But the Bible never speaks of believers being *associated* with **the Ruach**. It speaks of **the Holy Spirit** being *within* them! So there were some within this **Messianic community** who were merely *associated* with **the Ruach ha-Kodesh**, like most of the multitudes who **Jesus** miraculously healed and fed, **they** shared in the power and blessing of **the Spirit**, but did not have **His** indwelling. **They** did not possess **the Holy Spirit**, and **the Holy Spirit** did not possess **them (Hebrews 6:4)**.

4. They had tasted the word of God: Again these readers are spoken of as having **tasted** something of **ADONAI**, this time **the goodness of His word**. The Greek term used here for **word** is *rhema*, which *emphasizes the parts rather than the whole*, is not the usual one, *logos*, used for **God's Word**, but it fits the context here. As with **His** heavenly gifts, **they** had heard **YHVH's rhema** and sampled it, **tasted it**, without actually **eating it**. **They** had been taught about **Ha'Shem**, and no doubt they regularly attended the Messianic service. **They** may have listened carefully and even meditated upon what **they** had heard. But **they** could not say with the prophet, **"When Your words were found, I ate them; they were my joy**

and my heart's delight" (Jeremiah 15:16).

Herod Antipas was like this. In spite of John the Baptist's hard message, including accusations directly against the king himself, yet he liked to listen to him. The king was perplexed but fascinated by this dynamic preacher. He liked to sample the message of God, probably dismissing anything that he disagreed with. But when pressed into a decision, he rejected **God's** man and **God's** message. He reluctantly, but willingly, agreed to have John beheaded. His **taste** of **God's** word only brought him greater guilt.

Tasting is the first step to **eating**. It is not wrong to **taste God's rhema word**, or **God's logos Word**. In fact David encourages that very thing: **O taste and see that the LORD is good (Psalm 34:8)**. To some degree, everyone must **taste** the gospel before accepting it. Like so many who hear the gospel for the first time, those **Jews** were attracted to its beauty and sweetness. **They** just kept **tasting**. **It tasted** good to **them**, but then, like a wine taster, **they** spit it out. But **they** didn't **swallow it**, must less **digest** it. Before long, its appealing **taste** had become dull to them (see [Ba](#) - **It is Hard to Explain, Since You Have Become Dull of Hearing**). Their spiritual tastebuds had become insensitive and unresponsive.

5. They had tasted the power of the coming Age: The Messianic Kingdom is **the coming Age and the powers of the coming Age** (Hebrew: *the 'olam haba*) are miracle powers (6:5). Those **Jews** had seen the same kind of miracles that are going to come when **God the Son** reigns personally on the earth, and **His Chosen People** are saved. **They** saw miracle upon miracle. And the more **they** saw and **tasted** without **eating**, the more **their** guilt increased. **They** were like those who saw **Jesus** perform miracles. How hard it is to explain the hatred and unbelief of those who saw the resurrected Lazarus, who saw the blind given sight and the dumb given voices. How guilty will they be when they stand before **Jesus** at the great white throne judgment (see the commentary on [Revelation Fo](#) - **The Great White Throne Judgement**)? That Messianic congregation who had received this letter had been wonderfully blessed by **God's enlightenment**, by association with **the Holy Spirit**, the **tasting** of **His word**, and by witnessing **God's miracles**. But they still didn't believe.¹⁴⁷



The Fourth warning: But after experiencing all those advantages, **once fallen away - it is impossible to renew them to repentance (6:6a)**. The Greek word **impossible**, *adunatos*, cannot be diluted to mean difficult. The same word is used in **Hebrews 6:18, 10:4** and **11:6**, where it can only mean **impossible**. All three of these passages would be nonsense if **impossible** were changed to difficult. The harsh finality of the danger cannot be overstated. The same can be said of the Greek word **renew**, *anakainizo*, must be taken in its full force. It means to *restore, to bring back to an original condition*. When **they** first heard the gospel **they** were excited about it. **They** had moved from **Judaism** right to the edge of **faith** in **Messiah**. They had tried to **turn from their** old ways and **their sin**. But if **they** turned back now, **they** would be lost forever. There would be no more hope for **them** because **they** had rejected **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Em - Whoever Blasphemes Against the Holy Spirit Will Never Be Forgiven**). **They** had rejected the only gospel that could ever save **them**. There was nothing more that could be said or done.

It wasn't as if **they** were saved and lost **their** salvation. The true believers can never fear that they will lose their salvation. The Bible is absolutely clear about that (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**). **They** were never believers in the first place. **They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going out showed that none of them belonged to us (First John 2:19)**.

They couldn't be **renewed** because **they** were **crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting Him to public disgrace (6:6b)**. Regardless of what **they** were saying in public, **they** had taken **their** stand with **the crucifiers**. If this happens with full light, with a

full and complete understanding of the gospel, such a person has become apostate (see **Ci - If We Deliberately Keep On Sinning, No Sacrifice For Sins is Left**). It is dangerously self-deceptive for a person to think that just by staying on the sidelines, by holding off making a decision, by thinking himself tolerant of the gospel simply because he doesn't oppose it, that he is safe. The longer one stays on the edge of that decision, the more one leans toward the old life. Standing on the edge of the line of **faith** without stepping over inevitably results in **falling away** from the gospel. It may not be a conscious decision against **Christ**. But *is* it a decision and it *is* against **Christ**. When a person walks away from **Yeshua** with full knowledge of the gospel, he places **Him** on **the cross** again, in his own heart, and puts himself forever out of **the Lord's** reach.

For the land that soaks up frequent rains and then brings forth a crop useful to its owners receives a blessing from God (6:7 CJB). But "if it keeps producing thorns and thistles," it fails the test and is close to being "cursed," in the end, it will be burned (Hebrews 6:8 CJB quoting Genesis 3:17-18). Do you see the illustration? All those who hear the gospel are like the earth. The rain falls and the gospel message is heard. The gospel seed is planted and there is nourishment and growth. Some of the growth is beautiful and good and productive. It is that which is planted, rooted, and nourished by **ADONAI**. But some of the growth is false, counterfeit, and unproductive. **It** has come from the same seed and has been nourished by the same ground and the same water, but has become thorny, destructive and **cursed**. **It** has rejected the life offered **it** and **in the end, it will** only be good for **burning**. If you reject **the Sacrifice** . . . you become the sacrifice.¹⁴⁸

On June 30, 1869, Charles Blondin, the 34 year old French acrobat, traveled to Niagara Falls hoping to become the first person to cross the "boiling waterfall." Noting the masses of snow on either bank and the violent whirls of wind circling the gorge, Blondin delayed the grand event until he would have better weather. He always worked without a net, believing that preparing for disaster only made one more likely to occur. A rope, 1,300 feet long, two inches in diameter, made entirely of hemp, sagging some 50 feet in the middle, would be the sole thing separating him from the churning waters below. He was only 5-5 and weighed 140 pounds, but he used a balancing pole 26 feet long, weighing some 50 pounds.

Then, a few days later, on July 4, 1869, he began his walk across Niagara Falls and became the first person to complete the feat successfully in only 23 minutes. He would go on to repeat his dangerous tightrope act more than 300 times, covering more than 10,000 miles. He often used various theatric variations: he crossed on stilts, he crossed blindfolded, did backflips, crossed backwards, and even stopped, sat on the rope, and cooked an omelet.

One day he pushed a wheelbarrow across the tightrope with a concave wheel on it. When he



got onto solid ground, the crowd cheered loudly. But then Blondin asked, “How many of you believe I could put a person in this wheelbarrow and push him back to the other side?” Again, the crowd roared in approval. But then he asked for a volunteer. At first many in the crowd laughed. He wasn’t serious was he? Then they fell silent. The seconds ticked by . . . and they stood in awkward, immobile, silence. They were intellectually convinced that he could do it, but they didn’t have enough faith to get into the wheelbarrow.

Those unbelieving **Hebrews** were intellectually convinced that **Yeshua** was **the Messiah**, but **they** had not stepped over the line from knowledge to **faith**. Therefore, what the writer was asking his first century audience to ponder was this, “Are you in the wheelbarrow?”