



Here we go. In the late 1800's, when evolution was taking over the popular mind, spiritual leaders from a great number of denominations met together to articulate and nail down what they considered to be the basic fundamentals of our biblical faith. Sadly, over the years, the meaning of fundamentalism has changed and in our time, it is considered to be a total mindless adherence to radical doctrines which allow no challenges. This kind of complete submission to an arbitrary perspective has nothing to do with the original fundamentalist movement. Biblical, historical fundamentalism adheres to the basic teachings of the Bible and refuses to accept anything which contradicts them or undermines them.

I am this kind of biblical fundamentalist, so as an introduction to my new series, I want to briefly review these five basic fundamentals, so they can remain the foundation of all that we teach and all that we believe.

In the first place, we believe with perfect faith that the Bible, and the Bible alone is the Word of G-d. Sometimes it contains mysteries which we may not understand and we may have to invoke Deut. 29:29. It has come to us through the centuries and it has developed an extensive human finger print, but this has never diminished its divinely inspired content. There is no other sacred document which can claim this honour.

Next, we believe with total certainty that Yeshua (Jesus) is G-d the Son. Both the New and the Old Testament proclaim this wonderful cosmic reality. Here is a related note. When there is a difference between quotes found in the New Testament and those in the Old Testament, this is not an inaccuracy. It just means that the Old Testament is quoting the Masoretic text which the rabbis used to try and undermine what the older Septuagint teaches. The New Testament never misquotes the Old Testament. I would like to get my hands on an Old Testament based on the Septuagint Greek text.

Moving on, in the third place, we understand that our Messiah was born of a virgin. This was Eve's vengeance to give birth to the serpent crusher. It was not an immaculate conception where our Messiah was born sinless. He was born with Adam's nature and as such, is fully human and fully divine. He did not sin because He could not, but because He chose not to (*posse peccare, posse non peccare*). His first victory was over Adam's nature where He remained sinless by choice, and not by some advantage which we do not possess (2 Cor. 5:21). The sinless lamb of G-d took Adam's nature to the cross.

This brings us to the fourth point: He died on the cross for the sins of the world. His sacrifice opens the gates of heaven for all the nations and generations of mankind, but He alone decides who may pass through (John 14:6). His incarnation had two purposes. First to defeat sin and then to bring this victory to the cross so it could apply to all of mankind. There is no other Saviour and He is the only way to Heaven.

Lastly, number five, the Bible teaches that He arose, He ascended back into Heaven and He will one day return to establish His everlasting Kingdom over all the nations and generations of mankind.

Lets review and you can count them off on your fingers: (1) the Bible is the Word of G-d. (2) Yeshua is G-d the Son. (3) He was born of a virgin. (4) He died on the cross for the sins of the world. (5) He arose, ascended and will one day return.

These form the core of all that the Bible teaches and they need to be the rock upon which we build our house of faith. They are the consistent teaching of the Bible's entire content, from Genesis to the Revelation. They will always form the basis of everything which I teach. I may keep coming to them from any number of perspectives, but they will remain the only core from which the unchanging truth of God and His Word proceeds. Can you recite them on your hand? How firm a grip do you have of the essential truths of the Bible? We need to all stand as biblical fundamentalists in our ever changing, darkening world.

Now let's move onto my new series: bridging the gap that is not there. One of the purposes of our ministry is to teach Old Testament truth to the gentile church and to introduce our Jewish brethren to what the New Testament teaches.

This was one of the major tasks which the apostle Paul embraced and along with the teachings of other early church leaders, the fruit of their labours has given us the New Testament. Again, neither document contradicts the other and the New Testament remains the best commentary of the Old Testament (Matt. 5:17-20). When modern Jews have trouble understanding the New Testament, it is because much of modern Judaism has wandered far from what the Torah teaches.

Further to that, you cannot have a deep, balanced understanding of the New Testament without an extensive knowledge of the Old Testament. So rather than go through each book of the New Testament and show you how each connects with the Old Testament, I have selected one New Testament book to show you how to proceed with this task.

I have selected Paul's epistle to the Ephesians and over the winter we will be diving into the contents of this amazing book. It is broken up into roughly 12 portions and covers a wide spectrum of material on how to walk with the Messiah according to the promises and the stipulations of His Word.

It is one of the epistles which Paul wrote from jail, towards the end of his ministry. He knew that his days were numbered and wanted to leave behind a firm guide to discipleship for both Jews and gentiles. He considered his teachings to be applications of the Gospel story to the truths of the Torah and we will examine this epistle from this perspective.

Each section overflows with spiritual truth about the wonder of our salvation, so I will only highlight some of the major aspects of what Paul is teaching. The first section is chapter 1:1-14. Chapter 1:15-23 is an extension of the first section which I will commend to your personal study.

Today, I want to highlight seven concepts as we begin our pilgrimage through this epistle which is filled to the brim with wonder and blessings. After his initial, introductory blessing (1:1, 2), Paul introduces a concept which outlines God's personal selection of both Jews and gentiles as His special people.

I am talking about our election by God and it has two potential meanings. Some times, election can refer to the selection of a candidate through a process of voting, as we will do in our coming municipal election. In this case, election means selecting a candidate to a position of power and responsibility over us. This is not what Paul is talking about here.

In some instances, election refers to the selection of a candidate by a higher power where no voting is held. It is more of an appointment. Once we come to faith, we are appointed by G-d to become a member of Messiah's redeemed community. It does not mean that sometime before the foundation of the world, G-d decided which of us would come to faith and which of us wouldn't. We are created to choose and when we choose our Messiah, we are elected to become part of His marvellous faith community.

Related to this is the concept of predestination. Some churches teach that all that we are and all that we will become was decided for us before the dawn of time and we really have no choice in the matter. This teaching deeply divides believers to the point that some believe we were either born a lamb or a goat. Lambs have no choice but to come to faith and goats cannot come to faith, even if they wanted to.

Predestination actually describes how we were created. Before the foundation of the world, we were designed to be choosers and not losers. There are not two arbitrary groups of mankind, one destined for glory and the other for damnation. What was predestined before the foundation of the world was we are to possess free will. This does not mean that we can choose what happens to us. It means that we choose how we are going to respond to what happens to us. These choices and responses determine whether we will become sheep or goats.

Calvinism gives us no choice and we are either sheep by nature or goats by nature and we have no choice in the matter. The Bible teaches that our choices determine our destiny, not some arbitrary selection process which was made for us before the foundation of the world. We become children of G-d by adoption by the exercise of our free will and this ability to choose was given to us by G-d before the foundation of the world. Nothing more and certainly nothing less.

The passage goes on to discuss the timing of G-d. In the fullness of time, according to G-d's own agenda, all things shall be accomplished so that His eternal kingdom can be established over all the nations and generations of mankind.

Human history can be both complex and confusing and when all is said and done, some incredibly cruel things have too frequently happened to innocent people. At the same time, there have always been some very good people who have done some very good things. It appears that G-d only allows evil to proceed so far, generation by generation.

The promises of His Word interact with the major events of history and will continue to do so until all things are finally ready for the Kingdom. In the past, I have taught that there are seven signs of the end of the world which have to be in place before our Messiah intervenes to bring this veil of tears to an end. We are racing towards this climax, but we are not there yet. We have to keep trusting in G-d's appointed times, because ultimately, He is in final control and not us as we wander through the swirling events of history.

It takes a special kind of insight to begin to perceive the purposes of G-d and our portion describes this as spiritual understanding. Two things. This understanding is not some kind of strange mysticism like the ramblings of Nostradamus. They are based on a biblical understanding where we study and accept what this amazing document teaches. As well, we are not talking about some kind of hidden, secret spiritual realm.

Spiritual understanding refers to a perspective which cannot be deduced, either by logic or by examining the wonder of the created universe. Both of these are useful and can help us to bring order to our lives, but only G-d's Word can teach us about the timing of G-d and about the world which is to come.

When we come to faith and begin to make our lives revolve around G-d's Word, our passage says that we become sealed by G-d's Spirit. Just like the seal which was attached to the high priest's turban, so the Spirit seals us and we are thus separated from the rest of mankind. On the other hand, the mark of the beast is a searing (scorching) of our conscience designed to turn us into spiritual zombies who have lost the ability to distinguish between right and wrong and who are no longer able to discern the purposes of G-d. Our passage says that we carry the seal of G-d and not the mark of the beast.

The Spirit is also given to us as a guarantee or down payment, so that we know that our entrance into the world to come is assured. We develop groans and mutter because we are less and less connected to our fading world. We also feel a stirring as our taste for the coming kingdom develops and intensifies.

Finally, our passage describes the message of Paul as the gospel of our salvation. Now, as we travel through this darkening world, our Messiah will deliver us from all kinds of oppression and danger, but we need to keep our eyes focused on what lie beyond this life. Salvation refers to our final deliverance from this fading world. Now, we belong to the world to come and its grip on us strengthens, the closer we grow to our Messiah.

Our life tells a different story and the event of this carnal world have an ever diminishing impact on how we live and even on what we are living for.

Well, my fellow elected brethren who are predestined to choose, let us grow in spiritual understanding so that we have faith in G-d's appointed time. We are sealed by His Spirit and have received a down payment of the Kingdom which is coming. Let us grow in our understanding of this Gospel of our salvation. We are destined for great things and the wonder of His Kingdom is beautiful beyond description. May we be sustained, may we be strengthened and may we remain joyful, for this is the whole duty of man.