

FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD?

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I spoke last week about some translation issues in the Bible. We looked at a word that should be simply and consistently translated as “nations” ... but which is often translated as “heathens” or “Gentiles”. This introduces negative overtones that don’t apply in the original languages.

I want to speak today about another topic where translation problems can cause us to misunderstand what the scripture is actually endeavouring to teach us.

Matthew 13:34-35

34 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them,

35 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

“I will open My mouth in parables;

I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.”

This expression occurs 10 times in the New Testament. What does it mean? The obvious response might be “from creation ... when the earth or world was founded”.

However ... as we’ll see ... that is almost certainly not the case at all!

I seem to remember Mr Jim Mortensen giving a sermon on this point maybe 20 years ago — nothing since.

Two significant problems: Foundation doesn’t mean foundation! World doesn’t mean physical world or physical earth!

There is a common Greek word that definitely and always and only means FOUNDATION — as in the foundation of a building or foundation of a project.

Luke 6:46-49

46 “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?

47 Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like:

48 He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the **foundation** on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.

49 But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a **foundation**, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”

“**Foundation**” used twice. **The Greek word is: Themelios**. Used 16 times in the KJV as “foundation”.

Here’s another place:

1 Corinthians 3:10-13

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the **foundation**, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

11 For no other **foundation** can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if anyone builds on this **foundation** with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

13 each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.

“**Foundation**” used here 3 times is: **Themelios**.

However ... when we talk of the “Foundation of the World” ... it is an entirely different Greek word with an entirely different meaning.

The Greek is: Katabole. It means to throw down — usually violently — or to overthrow.

Let’s look at a couple of illustrations of the verb form of that word.

Revelation 12:10

10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, **for the accuser of our brethren**, who accused them before our God day and night, **has been cast down**.”

Satan has been “cast down” — Kataballo (the verb). Some translations say: the devil has been “thrown down” or “hurled down”.

No hint of foundation!

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

9 persecuted, but not forsaken; **struck down**, but not destroyed—

“Struck down” — Kataballo. Some translations: Cast Down (KJV) or Knocked Down.

Again ... no hint of foundation or beginning.

Katabole (noun) means the throwing down ... the hurling down ... the casting down — the overthrow — of the world.

So. When was the world cast down ... or overthrown?

Well ... what do we mean by “the world”?

Today ... we might think of the world being the planet ... or the earth? In the phrase **“Foundation of the world” — the Greek is: Kosmos.**

It means human society — not the physical earth we live on.

Even the English word “world” comes from old Anglo-Saxon. **It means “human existence ... life on earth”.** We are not talking about the physical planet.

We can see the real meaning of Kosmos in:

John 1:29

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, **“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away **the sin of the world!**”**

The sins of human society — not earth! The earth doesn’t sin.

John 7:6-7

6 Then Jesus said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready.

7 **The world cannot hate you**, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

The earth doesn't hate Jesus! Human Society hates Jesus (in general). Human Society's works are evil.

John 3:16-17

16 **For God thus loved the world (Kosmos)** that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son **into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

God loves the humans!

There is a separate Greek word for “earth” — “Ge”. Used over 240 times as in “meek shall inherit the earth”.

So the phrase “from the foundation of the world” means “from the overthrow of human society” — in other words — the time of the Flood.

The whole of human society at that time — KOSMOS — was cast down ... thrown down ... overthrown in the days of Noah. **That was the catastrophic end to the entire society — the world — of that day.**

2 Peter 3:3-7

3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,

4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”

5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and **the earth** standing out of water and in the water, (*Ge — physical planet*)

6 **by which the world that then existed *perished, being flooded with water.** (*Kosmos — human society*)

7 But the heavens and **the earth** which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (*Ge — physical planet*)

*"Perished" refers to people ... to human society. The earth is still here!

Evicting Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden wasn't the violent overthrow of human society. (And ... no humans perished in the Genesis 1 account).

So ... "Foundation of the World" refers to the time of the overthrow of human society at the time of Noah's Flood — the destruction of "the world that then was".

The phrase appears 10 times in the New Testament. Let's look at a few with this understanding ... see how it might change our views.

Matthew 13:34-35

34 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them,

35 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

"I will open My mouth in parables;

I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."

The mysteries of the Kingdom of God secret from the time of the overthrowing of human society violently — The Flood.

Matthew 25:31-34

31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

32 All the nations (*Ethnos*) will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, **'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:**

Inherit the Kingdom prepared from the time of Noah's Flood.

Ephesians 1:3-4

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

4 just as **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

Chosen before the flood — not before the Creation of the earth.

1 Peter 1:20-21

20 **He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you

21 who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Jesus was foreordained to be sacrificed as a lamb before the time of the Flood.

It seems fairly evident that God dramatically adapted His plan for salvation in the 120 years leading up to the Flood.

The whole world (Kosmos) of that day (1 billion or more?) ... was desperately wicked and depraved. Genesis Chapter 6 tells us that God repented that He had made man. He decided to terminate the project. It was unworkable. Maybe less than 10 people had come to God in the 1,600 years since Creation?

Time to reboot ... but this time with a significantly different plan. One that would hopefully work ... and ultimately bring 100's of millions or billions into God's Family.

We don't know much about the specifics of the plan as it was before the Flood. Only 4 or 5 chapters in the whole Bible deal with that period. There is no need for us to know any more as it's not relevant to us.

The fact that people in that world lived ... typically ... to be over 900 years old — shows it was a very different plan of salvation then. (Perhaps in those days ... you were given that length of time during which you must come to God ... or else?)

It seems in the century leading up to the Flood that God revised His plan. Now we have the calling only of the Firstfruits ... then the Millennium (lots of people)... then the Second Resurrection (nearly everybody).

That's what we're reading of in passages referring to things happening from the Foundation of the World.

Revelation 13:7-9

7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation (***Ethnos***).

8 All who dwell on the earth (*Ge*) will worship him, **whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**

9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

Book of Life of the Lamb slain (figuratively) from the time of the Flood. The time when God made that very significant change to His plan. Jesus agreed to come to the earth to redeem us.

Revelation 17:6-8

6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

7 But the angel said to me, “Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. **And those who dwell on the earth (*Ge*) will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world,** when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

TO REITERATE:

The Phrase “Foundation of the World”: Foundation does not mean Foundation (or origin or beginning). It means TO OVERTHROW ... usually with violence — as in satan cast down to the earth. **KATABOLE NOT THEMELIOS.**

World does not mean the physical earth — it means HUMAN SOCIETY (*the Kosmos*) ... HUMAN CIVILISATION ... HUMAN INSTITUTIONS. **KOSMOS NOT GE.**

So ... if we keep this in mind ... it might make quite a difference in our Bible reading and Bible study.

And once again ... it’s an illustration of how — at times— we’re somewhat at the mercy of Bible translators.

They’re good ... genuine ... sincere — but not perfect!! 😊