



What are the Basics of the Messianic Faith?

By Moshe Schwab

What does Christianity believe about faith? A lot of Christians believe that all we need to do to be saved is to have faith. In this short teaching on faith, I will talk about some of the main principles of our faith that should shape our faith. We have at times shared briefly on this topic, but this teaching is intended to go a little more in depth. It is by no means all that needs to be shared. Since this is about the faith once delivered to the early believers, we would expect to hear about faith frequently. We will begin by addressing the "just by faith" thinking.

Faith in God by itself is not good enough to be part of God's future kingdom according to the Bible. James 2:19 NKJV says, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe." The devil is going to the lake of fire and brimstone. Revelation 20:10 NKJV says, "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. The devil believes there is a God but demonstrates no actual trust in God.

Even Shaul says that the unrighteous, those who live in sin, will not be in God's future kingdom. He then goes on to mention sins that are in the Torah or implied by the Torah. The Bible says that God's commandments are "right and good," (see Deuteronomy 6:17-18). Righteousness means to do what is right and keep God's commandments, and therefore unrighteousness is to not keep God's commandments. Sins of the flesh are unrighteous acts and are sin. So, these scriptures tell us that those who do not keep God's commandments will not be in God's future kingdom. Shaul (Paul) says, "Do not be deceived." If you have been taught that you are righteous because you only have faith, you have been deceived.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV says,

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19-21 NKJV says,

The works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

It says that Shaul told them before that sin will keep people out of God's kingdom. Ya'akov (James) also says "Do not be deceived."

James 1:14-16 NKJV says,

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-

grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. The Bible plainly says that it takes more than faith to be saved. Sin "brings forth death," namely, spiritual death.

Shaul said in Romans 3:31 NKJV, "We establish the law." That does not sound like the law is done away with. We have a lot more evidence that it is not just by faith. Yochanan (John) said that not keeping the law is sin.

1 John 3:4 NKJV says,

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. Verse 8 says, "He who sins is of the devil.

So those who do not keep the law are living in sin according to the Bible. Yeshua said that He will reject those who do not keep the law.

Matthew 7:23 NKJV says, "I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

Why is there confusion on this matter? It could be from misunderstanding the text, a problem with the translation (the translators are imperfect people), or even in the text itself because we only have copies of the originals and no originals.

Kefa (Peter) says that people misunderstand Shaul to their own destruction. There were problems with people misinterpreting Shaul's teaching right from the beginning.

2 Peter 3:15-16 NKJV says,

Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

Also, the translators sometimes make mistakes. For example, John 5:4 is in no manuscripts and was added by the translators to the King James Version. Some think that the King James Version of the Bible is perfect, but the more recent King James Versions are different than the older ones. They update the Bible to try to remove the mistakes they made in translating. The Greek text is a compilation of manuscripts, and it shows sometimes up to 10 deviations or more per scripture. Scholars work hard to try to account for all the differences, but we do not always know what was added or changed by the scribes. There are some 8,000 verses in the New Testament portion of the Bible. If we take a low average number of total deviation in the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, perhaps 2, then we have 16,000 deviations between the manuscripts of the New Testament. That is a lot. We might come up with a lot of different doctrines just because of problems with the translation. Even Jerome, a Bible scholar who lived in the 2nd century said there were problems with the Greek manuscripts.

We now have a significant number of Hebrew manuscripts of the New Testament. While nowhere in the thousands, they can be used as another manuscript to determine if the Greek has been altered. In the Hebrew James, James 1:25 does not have the word liberty in it. James 1:25 NKJV says, "He who looks into the perfect law ~~of liberty~~ and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." The word

liberty is crossed out to help you see what the Hebrew is saying. It is saying in the Hebrew James that the Torah is perfect. This actually agrees with what the Old Testament portion says about God's law. Psalms 19:7-8 NKJV says, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes."

We sometimes see scriptures that say we are saved if we believe, and there are lots of scriptures that say faith requires more than just believing in Jesus. Sometimes even translators inject their personal beliefs into the translation. The translators of the King James Version added a scripture in John 5:4 that came from a pagan fable that the translators thought was what the text implied. Imagine that, a pagan fable instead of a Jewish understanding of what was going on. Also, I went to a translating seminar many years ago, and they said that they cannot update some scriptures to their correct meaning because people would not buy their Bible. The any number of problems we can have in getting to even a proper translation is why we need to understand what faith really is, and work the scriptures to develop a proper understanding.

It is also easy for people to make the mistake of applying a modern thought to what is an ancient text. For example, if someone playing baseball goes home, they score a point for their team. If a person did not know anything about baseball, they may think the person went to where they lived. We need to understand the Bible the way it was originally intended to be understood. In the time of Yeshua, they were required to do certain washings including washing the body of a person who died. The translators translated a scripture about the baptism of the dead which if you understood that they washed the bodies of the dead, then you would understand it was referring to a ritual washing of the dead and not what some people call baptizing the dead.

We just read scriptures that conclusively tell us that we must also keep God's commandments to be saved. Romans 10:4 seems to say that the law has been done away with. Christ means Messiah, the Greek word translated "end" is also translated as goal in other places, the word law could be translated Torah which refers to the Old Testament commandments, and the word "to" is the Greek word that means toward. Romans 10:4 could be translated: "The Messiah is the goal of the Torah toward righteousness, for all who believe." It could more properly mean, that the Messiah helps us to keep the law. That goes better with what Yochanan said, "1 John 3:4 NKJV says, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." Verse 8 says, "He who sins is of the devil." Namely he says, those who do not keep the law are living in sin and they are of the devil. Then Yeshua rejecting those who do not keep the law makes sense. Shaul says in Romans 3:31 NKJV, "We establish the law." He says the law has not been done away with, it is established.

Some denominations interpret the scriptures in terms of believing or faith, or they interpret them by some other doctrine. They are developing a philosophy of the scriptures that blinds their minds to the truth. Faith in itself is important, but it is not the point of every scripture. They will then say that anyone who does not believe their made-up doctrine are blinded. The Bible tells us what doctrine is. Proverbs 4:2 NKJV "For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law." You can go round and round with these people because they reinterpret the scriptures based on their theology and not truth.

Faith is an important part of our Messianic belief. Faith must include faith and trust in God in a number of ways. I use trust in the active sense. For example, James 2:20 NKJV says, "But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" Faith without keeping God's commandments is dead. Dead works in the Bible refers to sin. Romans 6:16 NKJV says, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" Sin will keep people out of God's future eternal kingdom.

We must trust in God's law. That is part of what we must believe. I am not talking about lots of man-made Christian or Jewish laws. A multitude of extra commands can be inappropriate and micromanage life. The Bible warns us not to add or subtract from God's word. Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV says, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

The Bible says that we can end up following made up commandments instead of following God. Isaiah 29:13 NKJV says, "These people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men." Also, consider this. If a person is not following God's commandments, they must be making up their own set of man-made rules for life instead of doing what God's says. It said in Isaiah that their heart is then far from God. Extra inappropriate man-made commandments manufacture God. We do not want to make up God, but to follow the Creator God and His good commandments.

So, those who keep the extra man-made commandments can also be far from God. People can be so consumed about following a man-made commandment that they forget to keep God's commandments. Some even tear their toilet paper before Shabbat because somehow, they consider that it is work to tear a piece of toilet paper. They will put their lights on dimmers, so they do not have to turn on a switch on Shabbat because they think they are kindling a fire if they turn on a switch. Do you see how ridiculous this is? I know of people who do this religiously but get inebriated on drugs on a regular basis. They follow man-made laws, but not all of God's laws.

We need to address the problem of keeping man-made laws religiously and thinking we are okay with God. The Torah teaches us that getting intoxicated can lead to compromising situations or even sin. Genesis 9:20-21 NKJV says, "Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent." Perhaps this did not lead to sin, but only disgrace. Isn't disgrace something to be avoided? Lot's daughters got Lot drunk, and they sinned by having intercourse with their father. Genesis 19:32 NKJV says, "Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father." The Bible forbids sexual relations between family members.

Getting intoxicated by either drink or drugs can cause severe problems, cause a person to hallucinate, say wrong things, and even commit sin like Lot did with his daughters. Proverbs 23:31-33 NKJV says, "Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will

see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things." Rabbi Shaul said that drunkards will not be in God's future kingdom. Again, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV says, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." We need to understand what we are to have faith in, in this case we are talking faith in God's commandments.

We should understand that faith includes several principles. It includes trusting in who God is, in His good commandments and repenting of behaviors that God says we are not to do. It includes the gift of the Holy Spirit in this Messianic era, in the resurrection of Yeshua, in eternal reward for those who keep God's commandments, in eternal punishment for those who do not keep God's commandments, and that Yeshua is the Messiah who died for our sins and will come back at a future time and rule in His future kingdom. We will talk briefly about each of these. In addition to these issues of faith, there are also other elementary principles. I would suggest that you would work on these I have addressed in this paper as an issue of faith.

Having faith, trust, in God's good commandments.

God is good and therefore His commandments are good. We do not have to second guess them. Psalms 119:68 NKJV says, "You are good, and do good; teach me Your statutes."

God's faithfulness and goodness towards mankind has endured for all of time. God's law helps us in life. Psalms 119:90-92 NKJV says, "Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances, for all are Your servants. Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction." God is good and wants us to follow His commandments for our own good. This is a key scripture. Deuteronomy 10:13 NKJV says, "Keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good."

God is the creator and knows what is best for mankind. We need to learn and keep His commandments. Some are for men, some are for women, some were for farmers, and some commandments were for the priests. Apply what is for you. Psalms 119:73 NKJV says, "Your hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments."

People that keep God's commandments instead of their heart or good intentions often realize that God's commandments contain good judgment. Why make up what we think is right when we can have good judgment and knowledge? Psalms 119:66 NKJV says, "Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe Your commandments."

We need good values for life. They can light our way so that we know the right path to take. Psalms 119:105-106 NKJV says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep Your righteous judgments."

Some value material things or value ideals other than what God teaches us. God's commandments though are extremely valuable, more than what gold, our own ideas, or what anything else has to offer. Psalms 119:127-128 NKJV says, "I love Your commandments more than gold, yes, than fine gold! Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right."

God's commandments are truth. If you need something to help you with life begin to learn and keep God's laws and commandments. Psalms 119:142 NKJV says, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth."

People who believe in God have often seen their life transform for the better by keeping God's good commandments. For thousands of years people have benefitted from God's commandments. God's commandments were good thousands of years ago and they are still good. Psalms 119:151-152 NKJV says, "All Your commandments are truth. Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever." The good news is that God does not change and has given mankind His good commandments and they are good forever. Malachi 3:6 NKJV says, "For I am the LORD, I do not change."

Hebrews 6:1 NKJV says, "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." We are to repent from sin and keep God's commandments. Sin is dead works. It is an elementary principle. There are other elementary principles mentions. But in regards to faith, we must have faith in God's commandments. Let us continue to talk about other issues that require faith.

Having faith, trust, in the Holy Spirit.

Also, in this Messianic age, we have the Holy Spirit as our helper. Yeshua said that God's commandments are our helper, and He gave us another helper for life, the Holy Spirit. Also, since Yeshua is God, He gave us His commandments at Mount Sinai. John 14:15-17 NKJV says, "Keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth." Shaul commands us to desire the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV says, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts." These gifts of the Holy Spirit are for our benefit and are good. Yeshua said in Luke 11:13 NKJV, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" If you haven't been taught about these spiritual gifts, then you have not heard all you are supposed to have heard.

Luke 24:49 NIV says, "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." We are to look like we are God's people and that includes having the Holy Spirit. So, do not try to look weird like some do, but be filled with goodness of God both from His commandments and the Holy Spirit. We are to be clothed with the Holy Spirit which is the power of God at work in us. Yeshua said in Acts 1:8 NKJV, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

This power is a witness that Yeshua rose from the dead and that we will rise from the dead. 1

Corinthians 4:20 NKJV says, "For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power." This is not just a philosophy for life. Ephesians 3:16 NKJV says, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man." And in Ephesians 3:20 NKJV it says, "To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." What is at work in us? It is the Holy Spirit that we are supposed to receive. Acts 2:38-39 NKJV says, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

The work of the Holy Spirit in our life is also necessary in this Messianic era. Begin learning and growing in all the spiritual fundamentals of what we are to believe in. We need to trust God; we need to have faith in God. Keeping God's commandments is a basic doctrine that we need to believe in. Proverbs 4:2 NKJV says, "For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law." Also, as we can see, receiving the Holy Spirit is another basic doctrine that we are to believe in.

We are to have faith, trust, in the resurrection of Yeshua.

The reason I talk about trust is because we need to act like Yeshua rose from the dead, and therefore, believe that we also have something to look forward to. I use the word trust to emphasize that we are to have faith in both an internal and external sense. The fact that Yeshua rose from the dead and is still alive is an evident witness that there is a future kingdom that we can enter and that there is life after death. The Bible says that there is life after death, and Yeshua's resurrection is a witness to that. In times past when people were raised from the dead, they went on to die. Not so with Yeshua. He is still alive. Also, as I already mentioned, when we receive the Holy Spirit, it is a witness to us of a future resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:3-6 NKJV says,

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once.

There is a future judgement and reward that we must trust in and act accordingly.

All must stand before the Messiah and be judged whether "sin leading to death," or obedience leading to righteousness." Romans 6:16 NKJV says, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" If we live in sin, we will not be in the future kingdom – it leads to death. If we keep God's commandments and show trust in God, we will enter God's future amazing and wonderful future kingdom. The word for "seat" in the following verse is the Greek word *bema* which is where the Torah is read in Jewish synagogues.

2 Corinthians 5:10 NKJV says,

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

The picture we can draw from this verse is Yeshua standing in front of the *bema* with the Torah scroll set in front of him and he is judging mankind. Shaul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-2 NKJV, "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. There was no New Testament at the time; he is talking about the Old Testament portion! 2 Timothy 3:15 NKJV says, "And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures." Timothy's mother was Jewish (see Acts 16:1); the Holy Scriptures being talked about there in 2 Timothy are the Old Testament commandments. It goes on to say there in 2 Timothy that Yeshua will judge us; He will also judge those who are teaching false doctrine. Revelation 21:8 NKJV says, "The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone."

Some will be detested and despised forever and those who are wise will be glorious forever.

Daniel 12:2-3 NKJV says,

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

The word wise in this verse seems to be a play on the word wisdom. A wise person is someone who lives a wise life, a life of wisdom. This refers to Deuteronomy 4:6 NKJV which says, "Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'" So those who keep God's commandments will shine like the stars forever.

Someday, believers who believe in and trust in God and act accordingly will put on immortality.

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 NKJV says,

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Believers who believe in and trust in God will experience the new kingdom of God.

Revelation 21:3-5 NKJV says,

Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

God can do what He says He will do because He is God, and He will do what He says He will do. The streets will be like pure gold it goes on to say.

Revelation 21:19-21 NKJV says,

The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

There are those who do not believe and those who do not understand the scriptures the way they are supposed to. You do not have to be among them. God is the final judge. I hope that you will be a person of faith and trust, act accordingly, and make it into the future kingdom of God. If all we need to do is have faith, then why did Yeshua say it matters what we do in life?

Do what is "right and good." Deuteronomy 6:17-18 NKJV says, "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD." Doing what is right or what is good is to keep God's commandments. Therefore, to bear good fruit means to keep God's commandments. Do not follow the crowd that lacks understanding. Bear good fruit. Yeshua says, "enter by the narrow gate."

Matthew 7:13-17 NKJV says,

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

There is a future eternal kingdom to come with the Messiah Yeshua as our King.

It is my hope that I will see you in the future kingdom of God with the Messiah Yeshua. The word "Christ" means anointed (smudged) in the Greek. Yeshua is that anointed King who will reign forever. Revelation 11:15 NKJV says, "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ."

God has sent His Messiah Yeshua, a descendent of King David. He is, "Yě-hō-váh the righteous." The word LORD in all caps in the following verses is the exclusive name for

God that is used over 6,000 times in the Old Testament portion. Someday in the future He will rule and reign as our Messianic King.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 NKJV says,

Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Do not wait until it is too late to accept Him and begin keeping these basic principles of faith. These principles would be a good start. The Bible refers to God's Old Testament commandments as wisdom (see Deuteronomy 4:6). Psalms 90:12 NKJV says, "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."