



Kingdom Living

A Kingside Infusion Event
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To enter the Kingdom of God, to maintain residency, and to fulfill the great commission to preach the Gospel to the world it is necessary to understand the principles and patterns of the Kingdom. But there is a greater purpose than just understanding Kingdom principles. We must go beyond mere knowledge of the Kingdom to actually experience it and make it the central purpose of our life. We must make the Kingdom of God our central purpose of life and ministry. It is a Kingdom which cannot be shaken by enemy forces. It is an eternal cause to which we can give our total allegiance.

The Word of God explains His plan for the nations of the world from the beginning through the end of what we call "time." It is our fiscal responsibility to the nations to avail ourselves of current global spiritual conditions, stressing the urgent need to spread the Gospel to unreached people groups of the world. We must also focus on our social responsibility and begin to see the world as God sees it. But as faith without works is dead, a Kingdom worldview without personal involvement is also not effective.

Developing a Kingdom or Biblical worldview is basic to good living as part of God's larger, transcendent story. Having a Biblical worldview means we see the world on the basis of what is revealed about it in the Bible. We do not look at the world as politicians, economists, or educators. We do not view the world in terms of our own culture. Instead, we view the world as God sees it. We begin to understand it from His perspective.

The Kingdom of Heaven

The Kingdom of Heaven on earth is Jesus, the King, ruling and reigning with divine authority and spiritual power in the earth. This dynamic power of the Spirit is at work in a process over time. Sometimes the Kingdom advances gradually like a little bit of leaven, or grows persistently like a mustard seed. The Kingdom is God's power present among His people.

The Kingdom in Jesus' thinking is always associated with righteous or redemptive acts. God breaks in and by His Spirit takes charge, healing, saving, delivering and setting captives free. Pentecost (*Shavuot*) in Jewish tradition is viewed as the "completion" of Passover (*Pesach*). Israel's redemption from Egypt came to its measured completion at Sinai 50 days later, with the giving of the Torah and Israel recognizing God as King and accepting the yoke of His Kingdom.

God's redemptive acts that began in Israel now continue in all the earth under King Jesus. But God redeems in order to rule. Jesus' divinely empowered reign comes to its intended "completion" in those who receive Him as Lord and are led by his spirit.

The Kingdom: A Person. A Power. A People.

The Kingdom of Heaven was the passion of Jesus' life. To proclaim, explain, illustrate and demonstrate the Kingdom was the preeminent call upon his life and ministry as a Jewish sage. As the Son of God, Jesus was called to the ultimate sacrifice of an atoning death on behalf of mankind. But as a man, He was first called and anointed to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God. It was the reason for which He was sent. (Luke 4:43)

Jesus draws upon the Hebrew Scriptures to illuminate his concept of the Kingdom as involving redemption, revelation, and the responsibility of God's covenant people. In its most basic expression, "Kingdom of Heaven" is simply God's rule. It speaks of the dynamic activity of God's ruling and reigning power in the lives of willing people. The "Kingdom of Heaven" has multiple dimensions and implications, but for clarity's sake, we can say that Jesus spoke of the Kingdom in three primary but interconnected ways:

- The Kingdom draws attention to a Person.
- The Kingdom emphasizes a Power presently at work.
- The Kingdom refers collectively to People who have entered it as disciples.

Will You Enter Into His Kingdom?

The Kingdom of Heaven is something you can enter. Said another way, the Jesus movement is something you can join ... if you are humble, childlike and repentant - how blessed are those who do so.

This is why the Kingdom of Heaven is good news to the poor in spirit, the humble, the downcast and downtrodden. Those on the margins of society are often the first to receive the good news and gladly enter in.

By contrast, religious leaders, those who are wealthy, those who have pride of position and influence, who are noble and wise - such people find it difficult to enter the Kingdom. When Jesus speaks of the Kingdom He identifies Himself as the King and emphasizes the dynamic activity of his reign in the power of the Holy Spirit. But he also uses Kingdom language to refer to those who have entered his movement, who are walking after him in discipleship and keeping his commandments. We see several examples of this in the gospels. For example:

- Jesus says that those in the Kingdom are even more blessed than John the Baptist, who was the greatest of the prophets. John prepared the way but did not himself enter in. (Luke 7:28)
- Jesus advises a wealthy ruler who asks about eternal life to sell all that he has, give to the poor and walk after him as one of his disciples. He then comments on how difficult it is for the wealthy to enter the Kingdom - to join His movement and submit to His authority. (Luke 18:18-25)
- Calling Jesus "Lord" is characteristic of His disciples, but does not necessarily mean they are in the Kingdom of God. Jesus says that only those who keep His commands truly enter in. (Matthew 7:21)
- In the Parable of Two Sons, Jesus emphasizes the importance of obedient actions over mere words. To the chief priests and elders He comments that "tax collectors and prostitutes" are entering the kingdom and joining his movement ahead of them. (Matthew 21:28-31)

A Life That is King-Centered

Principles of Kingdom Living

To live a King-centered life is to operate with a “Kingdom consciousness” at all times, with an awareness of the King’s presence, priorities and purposes for our lives. The King’s program will become our priority. His every wish becomes our command, because we are passionate about the King and His reign.

It is imperative that we have an accurate and intimate understanding of the King if our loyalties are to be complete. If we are uncertain or distrustful of Him - our faithfulness may waver. Many of Jesus' parables illustrate for us the true character of the King, our Father in heaven, whom the Son reveals in fullness.

- The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30). The servant who received one talent feared the Master and buried it in a field. Why was he chastised when the Master returned? Because his image of the Master as a hard taskmaster was wrong. Our lives are on loan from God, a gracious God, and all that we do, we should do in gratitude and loving service to Him.
- The Parable of the Gracious Father (Luke 15:11-32). This great parable, usually called the Parable of the Prodigal Son, actually is focused on a father who at every point surprises us by his grace.

Seeking First the Kingdom

Jesus taught that our prime directive or first priority is to seek the Kingdom of Heaven and God's redemptive activity in our lives. In the "Lord's Prayer" more accurately called the "Disciple's Prayer," Jesus reinforces this priority. The first thing we do in prayer is to acknowledge God as our heavenly Father, and then immediately commit ourselves to sanctifying (blessing) His name.

The most important declaration and the spiritual apex of the prayer is found in the words, "May your Kingdom come, may your will be done." In effect, we are praying, "May your reign increase in our lives; please come into our lives with ever greater authority and exercise your abundant power in redemptive acts." This key phrase is paralleled by the equivalent statement: "Father, we commit ourselves to doing your will." The King's name is sanctified (set apart) and His kingdom reign advanced in the obedience of faith exhibited by His people.

To seek first the Kingdom of God is thus to delight ourselves in the Lord because He is good and His steadfast love endures forever - so we commit all our ways unto him. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a pearl of great price ... worth all that we have and all that we are.

Walking in the Way of Repentance

Jesus proclaims: “Repent. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” God’s reign and our repentance are interlinked. His Kingship is not imposed; it must be received willingly as we repent of self-centeredness and submit to His rule as King. Repentance is an act of the will, making a decision to turn from one’s own path or preferred way to God’s, which then is implemented by the feet turning around and walking in the ways of the Lord ... and following Jesus.

A change of mind should lead to a change in direction, which over time will lead to a godly change of heart and character. Repentance is a continual turning from anything in thought, word or deed that is not in alignment or agreement with God’s will, purposes, and nature. Surely it is significant that the first word of Jesus’ prophetic proclamation announcing the arrival of the Kingdom was, “Repent”, and his last recorded word to the church was “Repent.”

A Life That Prioritizes Discipleship

Principles of Kingdom Living

The mission of the man, Jesus of Nazareth, was to raise up many disciples. His three years of ministry and disciple making were every bit as integral to God's purposes in the earth as his atoning death and resurrection. Following his sacrificial death, but before ascending to the place of power in order to pour out the Holy Spirit upon his followers, Jesus hands over his mission to his disciples. It becomes their co-mission, that which we call the "Great Commission."

In the words of an ancient version of the Great Commission, Jesus says in effect, "What you have seen me do, you do. What I have taught, you teach. What I have been to others, you be to them." In other words, "In your going, do what I have done - make disciples." Discipleship is integral to the advancement of the Kingdom of God because disciples study the Word in order to obey it. They study the text in order to revere the Author.

The greatest worship we can offer God is to hear His voice and do His will. The Kingdom "comes" as the Father's will is "done." Jesus said to his disciples: "I am the way; I am the truth. In the knowledge or intimacy of close covenant relationship with me I will lead you into the fullness of life. As my disciples, you will be set free to be who the Father created you to be."

A Life Characterized by Humility

Principles of Kingdom Living

Humility is central to the advancing Kingship of God. He is most exalted when we are most humble. Jesus taught in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3), “How blessed are the *anavim* - the poor in spirit.” In other words, “How blessed are the humble, for such is my movement, the Kingdom of Heaven.” The humble have the “good news” proclaimed to them. They cannot rely upon pride of place or position of power; they look entirely to the Lord for every good gift and have a vision that God is all-in-all.

Humility is putting down the false self, the selfish self, or the “flesh.” Then the authentic self or “spiritual man” comes to the forefront, nurtured by the indwelling Spirit of Messiah. Humility is being childlike; for instance:

- Children are unselfconscious, quick to repent, and radically dependent and trusting.
- Jesus declares: “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for such belongs the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Matthew 19:14)
- The Kingdom of Heaven calls us to a radical dependence on our Father in Heaven and unwavering trust in His goodness.

A Life Characterized by the Obedience of Faith

Principles of Kingdom Living

Paul says, “My mission is to call the Gentiles to the obedience of faith” (Romans 1:5). By this he means more than just calling them to “believe” in Jesus. The Apostle to the Gentiles is calling them to faith-in as well as faithfulness-to the Lordship of Jesus the Messiah. Faithfulness is a chief characteristic of God: “Great is Thy faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:23). The obedience of faithfulness also commended Jesus to God. Likewise followers of Jesus the Messiah should be noted for their obedience and their faithfulness.

The Kingdom of Heaven advances in the earth in the believer's' obedience of faith. You hinder the Kingdom when you are *antinomian* - if you are “against the Law” (Torah). Jesus warns, “Not everybody who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” enters the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). The Terminology “Lord” suggests a recognition of who Jesus is and the appropriate response of obeying his commands as we see in Luke 6:46, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you?”

Love God and Neighbor

We can know the will of the Father in the same way Jesus did. He hid the Word of God in his heart. He knew the Torah, the Prophets, and the Psalms, and he did not sin. He kept the commandments. Jesus is a model to us for the obedience of faith.

The greatest Kingdom command, emphasized by Jesus in his teaching, is the combination of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18: You shall love the Lord your God and you shall love your neighbor. Jesus connects these two commandments in such a way as to show that loving actions toward our neighbor are in fact loving acts toward God. Deuteronomy 6:5 is fulfilled in the keeping of Leviticus 19:18.

The prophet Isaiah records a valuable principle and a treasured promise in Isaiah 9:7, “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” Jesus is the *Sar Shalom* or Prince of Peace of whom Isaiah prophesied. The more we allow his “government” and ruling to increase in our lives by doing the Father’s will, the more *shalom* or peace we will have. Conversely, if there is no *shalom* or peace in some areas of our lives as believers, perhaps it is because we have not yet given the Lord the “government” or ruling over that area.

A Life Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Principles of Kingdom Living

Simon Peter is the first Apostle to proclaim the good news to a Gentile audience - to the God-fearing Cornelius and his household at Caesarea. He begins by noting something essential about Jesus: “You know about Jesus of Nazareth ... how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power (Acts 10:36-38). The terms “Spirit” and “power” are often interchangeable. So we could render this, “anointed him with Holy Spirit power,” or “with the power of the Holy Spirit.” The point here is that the Holy Spirit was a power at work in the life of Jesus.

Notice the results of the Spirit's anointing: “and he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the Devil, for God was with him.” (Acts 10:38) As a man in the service of God, Jesus did all that he did in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is why the Apostle Paul so often speaks to the early church about the importance of the Holy Spirit.

For the Kingdom to advance in our lives, like it did in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the empowering presence of the Spirit is essential. The Spirit is the dynamic power that propels the Kingdom forward and enables us to “break through” to liberty and service of the King.

Guided by the Holy Spirit

To the saints at Corinth, Paul echoes a similar sentiment when he urges them to “Pursue love and earnestly desire things pertaining to the Spirit” (1 Corinthians 14:1). Love and the work of the Spirit go hand in hand. Indeed love is the first fruit of the Spirit. For the sake of the Kingdom, of love, and for the mutual building up of one another in the Body of Messiah, we should earnestly desire and seek after the complete set of Spirit empowered actions, including gifts, fruit, workings and manifestations.

To be the fullness of the embodiment of Jesus in the world, the church must be full of the Spirit. Not only were his actions Spirit inspired but even Jesus' words were inspired of the Spirit: “It is the Spirit who gives life ... my words are Spirit and life” (John 6:63). Indeed our minds are renewed by the Spirit as we study God's word; and we study in order to discern the will of God and do it, which also requires the empowering presence of the Spirit. So not only are our minds renewed by the Spirit but our deeds also must be inspired and enabled by the power of God.

Paul points out that “if we walk by the Spirit then we will fulfill the righteous requirements of the Torah” (Romans 8:4). The obedience of faith which characterizes a King-centered life is an obedience birthed in love and a faithfulness empowered by the Spirit.

The Power of God at Work

The consistent witness of Scripture is that God raised Jesus from the dead. We tend to use the language, “He arose,” but the Bible emphasizes that “God raised him up.”

- “God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” (Acts 2:24)
- “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses.” (Acts 2:32)
- “And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead ...” (Acts 13:29-30)
- “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)
- “Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus and God the Father, who raised him from the dead ...” (Galatians 1:1)

The power that caused Jesus to live again was the life-giving power of the Spirit. In his resurrection from the dead, Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God in power” by the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:3-4). Jesus' atoning (offsetting) death makes way for us to come near to God. His resurrection makes a way for God to come near to us and even indwell us. Jesus was raised up to the right hand of God and given the Holy Spirit to pour out upon his disciples. The resurrection was essential then for the gifting of the Spirit.

A Life Joined to the Community of Faith

Principles of Kingdom Living

Jesus called people to discipleship with the words, “Follow me,” literally, “walk after me” in Hebrew. It was an invitation to join his movement, to become part of his community, to walk with the other disciples behind the shepherd and be “covered in the dust” of the Rabbi.

In Jewish tradition, study is done in the context of community. The rabbis say that when two or three sit at a table and study Torah, the *Shekinah* or Presence of God dwells. In a parallel way, Jesus said when two or three disciples are assembled together, studying his words, he would be there in the midst of them.

This way of thinking is very natural to the Jewish mind, with its historical awareness of being the People of God. But this emphasis on community is alien to the Western mind, which celebrates self-governance and independence. In the Kingdom of God we are not called to be individualists on a spiritual quest but disciples and students in a redemptive community.

Community of Redeemed Disciples

This community of redeemed disciples, dedicated subjects of the King, forms the basis for what Jesus near the end of his life calls the “church.” Following Simon Peter’s confession of Jesus as God’s Messiah, Jesus declares, “*I am going to build my church*” (Matthew 16:18).

The English word church translates the Greek term, *ekklesia*, which refers to an assembly of people, an assembly called together by the Lord. What then is the church? It is the Spirit-filled community of faith that assembles in order to bear witness to the work and person of Jesus as part of God’s identity and actions. The risen Lord, using language from Isaiah, declares to his *edah* or Kingdom congregation, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses ...” (Acts 1:8).

The Kingdom of God is the power of God present in the midst of His people. The Church is not the Kingdom, but the Kingdom advances when the *edah* or assembled congregation of the Messiah is living redemptively and walking by the Spirit in obedience to the instructions and example of Jesus.

A Kingdom Congregation

The church then is the community of people who are walking after Jesus, submitting to his authority, obeying his will, living redemptively and loving relationally in such a way that gives faithful witness to the Kingdom of Heaven and the Divine Messiah, the Son of the living God.

Kingdom living is extremely covenantal and thereby relational. It is “people” oriented and community centered, where love is pursued and the presence of the Spirit is evident and experienced. Jesus did not call his disciples to withdraw into an isolated or sectarian community of believers. He is “Lord of all” and that includes the cosmos and all that is within it - not just Lord in our hearts and maybe of our church.

We are to be “witnesses” at home and in the marketplace with the good news of the Kingdom. With our recorded relationships and our re-prioritized values we are to become a light where there is darkness. The church of the Messiah operates with a new order of relationships and a new level of love. We not only are being put right with God, but with others as well. This is what it means to be joined to Jesus’ movement, the Kingdom of Heaven. Kingdom living is made real and gives authentic witness in the context of community.



A Life Challenged by Spiritual Warfare

Principles of Kingdom Living



There is another kingdom presently reigning in the world: the dominion of the Adversary. To be in the Kingdom of Heaven is to be in conflict with the works of the devil. Because Jesus of Nazareth was anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit, he could go about “healing all who were oppressed by the devil” (Acts 10:38).

Jesus was on a collision course with the Adversary who opposes God and the people of God. The Adversary, like a thief, seeks to “steal, kill and destroy” (John 10:10). The Kingdom of God and His Messiah, by contrast, is “righteousness, peace and joy - the fullness of life in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

Those who repent and choose to follow Jesus enter the Kingdom of Heaven and thereby are transformed out of the power of darkness into the Kingdom of God’s Son. They are joined to a holy nation and royal priesthood that is intended to be a light to the world. As priests in God’s Kingdom, we encounter spiritual warfare. The Adversary opposes us as well as the Kingdom we bear witness to.

The Fullness of Life

Under God's reign we must not become preoccupied with *Satan* but keep our priorities straight - seeking first the Kingdom of God. We must continually draw near to God and submit ourselves to Him by keeping His commandments, and then, as Apostle James assures us, we can "resist the devil and he will flee." Under the authority of Jesus of Nazareth and in the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is warring against the brokenness of this world and the agent of death, despair, and disease. For the Kingdom to advance, the devil must flee.

To enter God's Kingdom is costly because it requires radical trust and a relinquishing of our own right to rule. To live a King-centered life is to be willing to take up our cross and follow Jesus in radical commitment. But the good news of the Kingdom is that when we put our life on the line for the King's sake, we actually find the fullness of the life He intends for us, one of righteousness, *shalom* - wholeness, peace, joy, and well-being.

A Life Instructed by the Torah

Principles of Kingdom Living

Followers of Jesus who want to develop the Hebraic mind of the Messiah will find it helpful to rethink the Torah (Law) in the light of the Spirit. We tend to overlook the baseline biblical truth that “*the Torah (Law) is spiritual*” (Romans 7:14); that our true selves delight in it (7:22); and that when we walk by the Spirit we will fulfill its righteous requirements (8:4), as did our Lord.

The Hebrew word *Torah* fundamentally implies guidance and instruction that points you in the direction to hit the mark, which for the *Torah* always means life. The Law was given to Israel after they had been saved out of Egypt, but not as the basis or means of their salvation. It was meant to guide the covenant people in paths of righteousness that would bring them to the appointed place of promise and productivity. As followers of Jesus, it is good to be reminded that these things “were written for our instruction” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

God’s word is truth (Psalms 119:160; John 17:17), and Jesus reminds us that the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of truth (John 15:26).

Keeping the Commandments

As a devout Pharisee, by his own testimony, Paul had a zeal for the Torah, and was completely confident of his righteous standing with respect to it (Philippians 3:5-6). Even after his encounter with the risen Lord, Paul continued to identify himself, in the present tense, as a Pharisee (Acts 23:6) He went out of his way to celebrate the Feasts (Acts 20:16), and insisted that the Torah was “spiritual” and the commandments, “Holy, just and good” and that which he delighted in (Acts 7:12, 14, 22).

In Acts 21:20, James reported to Paul that in Jerusalem many “*thousands of Jews*” had come to faith in Messiah and all continued to be “*zealous for the Torah*”. They had heard (falsely) that Paul taught Jews to “*forsake Moses and the customs*” of Judaism, including circumcising their children (Acts 21:21). James suggested a course of action to prove that this was a bogus charge, that Paul in fact did “*live in observance of the Torah*” (Acts 21:21).

According to Paul's rule, Gentile believers were not required to become converts to Judaism, nor were believers, like Paul himself, to renounce their heritage of Torah obligations but each should remain in their respective calling. As a believer in Jesus, Paul continued to keep the commandments of the Law and the customs of his people (Acts 24:14; 25:8; 28:17).

The Goal of Torah (Law)

Everything written must be fulfilled and, since that has yet to occur, the Torah continues as a source of guidance, direction, and instruction for people of God. Indeed Jesus commends his disciples who keep even the “*least (lightest) of the commandments*” (Matthew 5:19). As a teacher, Jesus uses well known rabbinic terminology to emphasize that his instruction does not “abolish” but “fulfills” the Torah. To abolish is to undermine the Law by misinterpreting it; to fulfill the Torah is to properly interpret the text’s meaning so that people will conduct themselves in accordance with the Author’s intent.

Jesus rejoiced in the Law, just like the Psalmist who declared, “*Oh, how I love your Torah! It is my meditation all the day*” (Psalms 119:97). If Jesus is the “*end of the law*” (Romans 10:4), in the sense of its terminology, then he contradicted himself when he said it would not pass away. In truth, Jesus the Messiah is the end (*telos*) of the Torah in the sense of its aim or goal. Jesus is the Torah-incarnate, the Word-made-flesh, full of grace and truth.

When we love God and one another we are fulfilling the Torah, and God rejoices over us. So, yes, let us “Rejoice in the Law” with Israel. It is part of our heritage in Messiah, and to do so in accord with New Testament teaching that honors our heavenly Father who gave us His Torah in love.



A Life Called to Advance the Kingdom

Principles of Kingdom Living



The Hebrew Scriptures constituted the Holy Bible for the early church, even unto third and fourth centuries. The “New Testament” did not exist as such, only the “memoirs of the Apostles” and occasional letters to the saints in diverse congregations throughout the world. Through Abraham and his seed they obtained a spiritual inheritance; in the Law, the Prophets and the Writings they received a godly heritage that daily informed, instructed and inspired them.

Those “*God breathed*” Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15-16) were profitable for instruction and continue to be so today. Indeed for today's New Testament centered church, the sacred writings of the *Tanakh* (Hebrew Scriptures - OT) serve a corrective and invaluable counter balance for Christian tendencies to become too “new-age” in theology and worldview.

We are saved to be a “*royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people ...*” (1 Peter 2:19). In other words, we are saved to serve, not for our sake, but saved for God's sake. As with Israel, our redemption prompts a corresponding responsibility and our salvation issues a summons to serve the One, true God. As we keep the commandments, the Kingdom of God advances in the world through our witness as followers of Jesus.

“You Shall Be My Witnesses”

The Apostle Paul emphatically reminds the Church that Israel remains “*beloved of God*” and that the gifts and chte call upon His elect people are “*irrevocable*” (Romans 11:29). The core of that is to be witnesses to the nations that there is one God, the Holy One of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Isaiah 43:10; 44:8).

In a parallel way, the Church has a call upon it as well: to witness to the nations that there is one Lord and Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, whom God Raised from the dead. “*You shall be my witnesses*” was Jesus' final injunction to his faithful disciples (Acts 1:8). So both Jew and Christians carry a mandate to bear witness. The challenge for Christians has always been how that witness in rendered and to whom.

Ultimately, no person is called to judge who is saved and who is not. God will be the judge. We are called simply to be His witnesses. And the most transparent and enduring witness we can render is to lead a life that speaks of a holy difference from the ungodly ways of the world; and, when asked, to be prepared to give an account of the hope within us - thanks to the God of Israel and His redemptive act through Jesus our Messiah and Lord.



A Life of Freedom

A Weekly Cycle of Kingdom Living



Shabbat is the crown of creation and the first thing God made holy: “Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it” (Genesis 2:3). As Jesus reminds us in Mark 2:27, the Sabbath was made for man. It establishes a redemptive rhythm of blessing and rest in which time itself becomes hallowed and human existence enters God’s intended *shalom*.

On Shabbat we acknowledge the Creator as King, and we set apart the day unto Him and His sovereignty. Only under His reign do we experience the fullness of peace. The spiritual discipline of Sabbath observance brings harmony into our homes and holiness into our world. It blesses man and it honors God.

Shabbat counters our natural tendencies toward idolatry and self-centeredness. It redeems time and turns our hearts back to the Father and His priorities. Shabbat is a day set apart for family and friends, study and prayer, scripture and nature, but ultimately, it is the Lord’s day.

Honoring the Sabbath

For everyone created in the image of God, therefore, surely it is good and wise to imitate our Creator by resting from our labor and to honor Him by sanctifying the seventh day. Properly practiced, in joy, *Shabbat* can restore the soul, build up the family, and draw us closer to God. A careful examination of the gospel accounts reveal that Jesus observed the Sabbath as a devout Jew.

Against some of his critics, who were accustomed to imposing restrictions, Jesus stressed that the Sabbath is intended by God to be life-affirming and a blessing. The members of the first 'church', like Jesus, continued to honor the Sabbath and to worship at the synagogue. But as *Shabbat* ended they would gather from house to house "*on the first day of the week*" (Acts 20:7) for instruction from the apostles and for fellowship, and to set aside contributions for the needy (1 Corinthians 16:2).

In other words, they honored the God of Israel on the Sabbath and they assembled on the evening of the First day in remembrance of the risen Lord. *Shabbat* is intended to be an enormous blessing for everyone, for families and communities. Jesus said, "*The Sabbath was made for humankind*" (Mark 2:27).

A Life of Blessing

A Monthly Cycle of Kingdom Living

In Jewish culture, what sanctified the tithe (1/10th or 10%) was to give a Terumah (1/40th or 2.5%) - also called the offering of firstfruits. In their culture firstfruits had to become Terumah in order to be sanctified. The way for it to become Terumah, two things had to happen: it had to be lifted high (essentially saying I gift this to God) and then it had to be placed into the hands of their pastor (or spiritual mentor). A pastor was never intended to live on a salary from the tithe. The pastor was intended to live on the Terumah of the people.

The next thing they would do was to take a tenth of what was left, and they would give it to their church. Then, they would pay the next tenth to themselves. So they were commanded not only to give a tenth, but they were commanded to save a tenth. They saved a tenth for their annual cycle of feasts and festivals and then whatever was left over from their feast and festivals they would trade it in for silver and gold as an inheritance for their children's children. However, every 3rd self-tithe, instead of giving it to themselves; they gave it to the poor.

For example, every month we give a Terumah to our spiritual mentor, a tithe to our church (spiritual community), and then a second tithe to ourselves with every 3rd 'self-tithe' going to the poor. (Numbers 18, Numbers 31, Deuteronomy 14, Deuteronomy 26, Leviticus 27, 1 Corinthians 16, 2 Corinthians 9, Acts 2, Acts 4

God, Self, and Others

The central theme in a monthly cycle of first-fruits correlate with the three interwoven spheres of relationship that comprise our lives; God, others, and self. We take notice that God is our King and our judge. Therefore, we take time to reflect consciously and carefully on what we are doing and why, of where we are heading, and about who we are as human beings made in His image.

First, the *Tefillah* (prayer) in which we turn to God. The wondrous privilege of conversing with our Father in heaven, whether to express praise or thankfulness, to repent or to petition, opens our hearts to the Almighty and acknowledges His sovereignty over us. We confess our radical dependence upon Him and our desire for Him.

Second, the *Tzedakah* (charity) in which we concretely express love and concern for the well being of others. In a consumer driven society, we must examine where our loyalties lie and whether we're giving into the lives of those God has given into our hands for care and kindness. If so, then we are giving life and hope to others, we are building loving and abiding relationships, and we are allowing God's light to shine into the darkness of the poor, the needy and the brokenhearted.

Finally, the *Teshuvah* (repentance) in which we examine ourselves with our innermost being is expressed by our outward deeds. Now is the time to consider how we are progressing towards the goal set before us and deepening our relationship as we serve the Lord. Where we fall short, the gift of repentance enables us to realign with our true selves as children of the Father and heirs to the fullness of life in Jesus.

A Life of Celebration

A Yearly Cycle of Kingdom Living

God set apart festival seasons for His people to reflect upon the important things in life. The annual succession of biblical feasts represents a cycle of sanctification whereas God sets in motion divinely appointed times (*mo'adim*) for celebrating with His covenant people. These *moadei-Adonai*, "set times of the Lord," recur in season cycles: spring (Passover), summer (Pentecost), and fall (Tabernacles). Each festival has its unique rhythm and character, corresponding on the one hand with annual agricultural harvests and on the other with key events in Israel's redemptive history.

In the spring, we are reminded of God's great Redemption fashioned in the Passover (*Pesach*). Fifty days later, at Pentecost (*Shavuot*), we are reminded of the great Revelation given by the Holy Spirit first at Mt. Sinai and then on Mt. Zion. And then in fall, we are instructed to rejoice in the goodness of the Creation by celebrating our Creator during the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*). In ancient times, these three pilgrimage festivals drew people out of Israel, including Jesus and His disciples, up to Jerusalem and the House of *Adonai* to celebrate.

Far more than celebrations of agricultural seasons and remembrance of historical events in the life of Israel, the appointed times were seasons of intense spiritual opportunity - reminding Israel of important truths about the character and conduct of God.

The Goal of Creation

Pesach/Passover, with the redemption of the Lamb of God, and *Shavuot/Pentecost*, with the revelation of the Spirit of God, are readily acknowledged by the church today. Significantly, of the three great appointed times of the Lord, Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) is the least easily accommodated within the classical Christian worldview. But *Sukkot* reminds us to truly rejoice over the good things in this world that God has given us the capacity to enjoy.

Scripture teaches that God has continuing obligations toward His covenant people, Israel. At the end of the age, when “His-story” comes to its final, glorious completion, it will be to Jerusalem that all the nations will ascend for the great Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16). On that Great Day, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be King, sovereign over all the nations. “The Lord, Y/H/W/H, will be One, and His Name the only Name” (Zechariah 14:9).

The Bible insists that God made the earth good, indeed “very good”, and that our bodies as well as the earth itself will be redeemed and renewed at the resurrection of the Last Day. Then the heavenly Jerusalem will come down to Zion (Revelation 21:2) and the nations will stream up to the holy city of God “*to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles*” (Zechariah 14:16). Our bodies as well as our souls will become immortal by God’s energizing action and our joy will know no bounds. Let us therefore live in the fullness of joy (Psalms 16:11), and impart that joy to others as Jesus did (John 15:11).

Annual Cycle of Celebration

The changes we desire to make in life become increasingly possible when we change our environment and the influences around us. We can also use our experiences to our advantage and use them to bring about positive changes in how we live and what we do. We see a process every year, where God reminds us that:

- We are cleansed from impurity and all our sins are covered by the blood of Jesus.
 - a. Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - b. Passover - Celebration of God's deliverance
- We have faith released to lay hold of the provision and blessing of God.
 - a. Feast of the Harvest
 - b. Pentecost - Celebration of God's provision
- We are able to move into His presence and experience His glory.
 - a. Feast of Ingathering
 - b. Tabernacle - Celebration of God's glory

Following the guidelines for good living permits evaluation to see if we are fulfilling God's purpose and plans in our life. It manages our time properly, which enables us to use our talents and treasures for the work of God's Kingdom. Everyday we make decisions on how to steward our time, talent, and treasures. It is not just a guideline for God's cycle of freedom, blessing and celebration, but an invitation to enter into His presence everyday as we advance the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.