

The Kingdom of God

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MINISTRIES

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Yeshua:

The Bible tells us: *“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12 & 16:25, NKJV).*¹ Yeshua affirmed this when He said, *“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” (Matthew 7:13-14).*

I want to go back in time and tell you more about how my walk with the Lord has changed over the years. Before I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior in 2002, just as it says in Proverbs, I was also following a way that seemed right to me. It was the way of the world.

When I moved back to the United States from Israel in 1984, I came here like an immigrant in search of the opportunities this nation provided. I was intensely focused on going to college so that I could start a career. I wanted to get married, buy a house, and live out the American dream. Even now, it is hard to find anything inherently wrong or sinful with this desire. After all, didn't the Lord tell Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply the earth? It appeared that I was at least fulfilling one of God's commandments. And to the best extent possible, I was trying to be a good person, treating others as I desired to be treated—the golden rule.

Within ten years, I had achieved what many others only dreamed of. I was married to a kind and beautiful wife. My two children were healthy and incredibly smart. I had risen the career ladder very quickly and excelled in executive management from the young age of twenty-six. My income was above average, and we could afford to live in an upper-middle-class neighborhood that provided the best public schools. We were not, but we lived comfortably. Sure, there were challenges here and there, but overall, life was perfect.

But the Lord had another plan and purpose for my life. Though I was not aware at the time, His grace was gently leading me towards an alternative reality. I still had many questions about life. And so, sitting on my couch in New Hampshire, I decided to read the New Testament. That was the moment that would change my life forever.

I was not desperately looking to fill some void in my heart. But I was curious and adventurous enough to read a book that was, for the most part, forbidden by the Jewish people. I was seeking the truth about Christianity. It was either a false religion fabricated around a false Jewish

Messiah named Jesus, or, maybe, there was something I was failing to understand about this widely accepted world religion.

I opened a King James Bible and began reading the book of Matthew. What I discovered began to shatter and unravel my comfortable view of the world. On virtually every page there was something Yeshua said that challenged my life, and I needed to decide. Would I accept Yeshua as my Lord and Savior? That was the easy answer—Yes. But would I be willing to follow Him into the darkest places in the earth and possibly sacrifice everything I had gained? That answer was not so simple.

The book of Matthew uses the term “Kingdom of Heaven” and “Kingdom of God” interchangeably. The other three gospels use the term “Kingdom of God” exclusively. The Hebrew word for “heaven” is *shamayim*, which was used by the Jewish people as a circumlocution (substitute) for the name of God. So, the Kingdom of Heaven is also a reference to the Kingdom of God—they are the same.

Yeshua had some challenging things to say about His Kingdom. First, He required repentance, proclaiming: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matthew 3:2 & 4:17)*. Then He began to demonstrate what He further required to qualify for the Kingdom. Yeshua called this the narrow gate and the difficult way that leads to eternal life.

Let us explore more of Jesus’ challenging Kingdom principles:

1. We must seek the Kingdom of God above anything else. Yeshua said: *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33)*.
2. We must humble ourselves before the Lord and submit to Him. Yeshua said: *“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3)*.
3. We must do the will of our heavenly Father. Yeshua said: *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21)*.
4. We must put everything else in this world as secondary, even our own families, follow the Lord and become His disciple. Yeshua said: *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26)*.
5. We must be fully dedicated to the Lord and walking a straight path. Yeshua said: *“No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62)*.
6. We must be willing to sell everything and invest it into His Kingdom. Yeshua said: *“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matthew 13:44)*.

There are many other parables that Yeshua shared about the Kingdom of God. But from what I have briefly shared, you may be guessing by now that my comfortable little world was beginning to turn upside down. Everything I had labored for all these years had revolved around me. It was my career, my income, my wife, my house, and my family.

Suddenly, Yeshua's words required a radical change in my thinking. It was His Kingdom, His calling on my life, His finances, and His family. Even my very life was determined by Him and was now His possession.

I was faced with a crucial decision. Would I allow the Lord to radically change my earthly views and transform my thinking into that of the Kingdom? Or would I desperately hold onto the comfortable American life and ignore the higher call on my life?

I began to understand that there are two kingdoms—one of this world, and one *not* of this world. The prince of this world governed this kingdom. The other was governed by Yeshua, the chief Prince and the Prince of all princes. That is why He said, "*My Kingdom is not of this world*" (*John 18:6*). But one day soon, it will.

Yeshua spoke of two things we needed to sustain our lives. We need His living bread, and we need His living water.ⁱⁱ We know that Yeshua is the word of God made flesh. And so, the word of God is our daily bread.ⁱⁱⁱ We need to read His word and allow it to renew and radically transform our minds—continually.^{iv} Yeshua also asked the Father to send His Spirit into the world. He is the water of life that heals and continues to sustain all created things—*ex nihilo*.

Being hungry or thirsty is our initial motivation, yet desire alone will not sustain us. We must act by picking up our Bibles and reading them every day. And we must spend time in worship and prayer with the Lord so that we are refreshed every morning and renewed by His Spirit.

In contrast, there is a counterfeit to the Kingdom of God. This world has its own spirit—that of the anti-Christ—and this world also has its written ideologies.^v If we are not careful, it would be just as easy for us to translate these earthly views into the Kingdom of God. How many times have we done that? After all, the natural way of this world doesn't seem all that bad?

But following the ways of the world are of little use in building the Kingdom of God. The Lord said: "*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts*" (*Isaiah 55:9*).

So what exactly does His Kingdom look like? Let us begin with a definition. A kingdom is a nation of people—both physical and spiritual—whose ruler is God as King. God's Kingship (*Malchut*) and His Lordship (*Adnut*) lies in the fact that He is Lord of the whole universe. So, in summary, a kingdom has a King, and His name is Yeshua, and a kingdom has a people who form a nation that serves that King. There is one more aspect to God's Kingdom—His citizenship

The sages tell us: "It is known to all that the purpose of the creation of the world is the revelation of God's sovereignty, for there is no king without a nation."^{vi} That nation at the heart

of God's Kingdom is Israel. But the Kingdom now encompasses all who have been grafted into Israel. Paul said: "grafted in amongst them," the natural branches who are Israelites and the descendants of Abraham. Therefore, God's church, His *ecclesia*, and congregation are now encompassing people from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue.^{vii}

The kingdom belongs to the King, and its people are His domain. Therefore, the Kingdom is as much about the people of God as it is about God Himself. But this is no ordinary Kingdom. It is a Kingdom of kingdoms as it says, *"He is Lord of lords and King of kings"* (Revelation 17:14).

Many Christians misunderstand the Kingdom of Heaven. They believe it is a spiritual place that exists in some far-off location or alternate dimension. While we know there is a heavenly spiritual realm, God intends to bring heaven to earth. In other words, the spiritual and natural worlds will one day collide, and the Kingdom of Heaven will invade the earth, so the two shall become *one*.

The Lord instructed Moses concerning the building of the Tabernacle. He said: *"According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it"* (Exodus 25:9). The Tabernacle and all its artifacts provide a copy and shadow of heavenly things.^{viii} Yeshua instructed us to pray, *"Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10). God's Kingdom will one day be fully established in this natural realm.

To demonstrate that, Yeshua rose from the grave and was resurrected into a physical body.^{ix} And He is returning with His bride—the church—to a physical earth. The prophets declared: *"Thus the Lord my God will come, And all the saints with You"* (Zechariah 14:5), for *"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"* (Revelation 21:3).

When Yeshua returns, He will establish His earthly Kingdom in Israel from Jerusalem for all eternity just as the Lord promised to David, *"Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever"* (2 Samuel 7:16).

My walk with the Lord these past fifteen years has been one of gradual and continual transformation. The reality of God's word has slowly become a reality in my life. I know that I am far from perfect, and admittedly, I don't understand what a life completely sold out for Yeshua would look like. What I do know is that He has a desire and purpose for my life that is much different than the life I carved out for myself, and day-by-day, He continues to open doors for me to serve Him.

I have raised my children and continue to support our household. I continue to work a regular job at a local government agency and spend as much of my available time serving the Lord. I have read the entirety of scripture many times over, and my prayer life is continually advancing. My confidence rests in His salvation and transforming power over my life. And I love to sing and worship the Lord.

My faith continues to be challenged by the cares of this world and the flaming arrows of our adversary. My flesh is weak and aging, there are things I still fear, and strongholds I continue to wrestle with. And yet, God is gracious and incredibly patient with me.

When I read scripture, I notice that Yeshua never gave His disciples an itinerary. He would often disappear—either going to a nearby mountain to pray to His heavenly Father or walking away to His next assignment. Leaving His disciples perplexed and running after Him. I feel like our present walk with the Lord is often the same. Yeshua knows that my heart desires to serve Him, and I pray yours will be the same. However, following Yeshua requires a decision that we each must make.

In 2013, the Lord gave me a dream. In it, I was riding my bike to meet up with a group of Christians. As I entered a stone building, I saw to my left a sizeable group of men and women sitting at long rectangular tables. They were talking, laughing, and having a great time of fellowship. To my right, I saw Yeshua walking quickly towards a small door that was positioned along the backside of the building. He was wearing a long reddish-purple colored robe and had a gold crown on his head.

Yeshua did not look at me or any of the other Christians. He had His eyes fixed on the door and moved quickly towards it. I said to Him in my spirit: "I also have a crown on my head. Why did you not take notice of me?" I then answered the Lord in my spirit as He gave me understanding: "The crown I am to wear is a crown of suffering."

I saw Yeshua open the door. Behind the door was complete darkness. He paused for a minute to look back and see if anyone else was standing there with Him. As there was no one, He entered in and closed the door behind Him.

This dream represents an every-day decision the Lord gives me. I do have an opportunity to join the fellowship of Christians, and surely there is no condemnation for that. But I have also been presented a chance to follow Yeshua into the dark places. And following Him requires me to wear His crown of suffering. This is a life of sacrifice.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us become radically transformed, fully surrendered, and completely sold-out disciples of Yeshua. Paul reminded us that, *"Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:1-5).*

"[Therefore] let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Amen!

ⁱ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Bible (NKJV) unless otherwise noted, Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982.

ⁱⁱ John 4:10, 6:35, 7:38.

ⁱⁱⁱ John 1:14.

^{iv} Ephesians 4:23.

^v Ephesians 2:2.

^{vi} Emek HaMelech, Shaar HaMitzvot, beginning of ch. 1; Rabbeinu Bachaye, Parshat Vayeishev, 38:2. Cf. Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer, ch. 3.

^{vii} Revelation 7:9.

^{viii} Hebrews 8:5.

^{ix} John 20:27.