“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.”

Ephesians 5:25, 31-32
“Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan.”

(Lev. 25:9-10)

In Hebrew the fiftieth year is called Yovel, a celebration year, jubilee. It is the year of the blowing of the ram’s horn. Thus Yovel got its name from the shofar announcing the beginning of the year.

The sound of the Yovel declares the beginning of a new era, the era of God’s favour towards Israel. In Hebrew the word yovel can be read in two ways. Either “yovel”, which means a ram or a ram’s horn like a shofar, or in passive voice “yuval”, is led or was led, like in Isaiah 53: ”he was led like a lamb to the slaughter... for the transgression of my people he was punished.”

Like a lamb which has a desire to follow its shepherd humbly, to be led, ”yuval”.

The three names of the shofar are like a road signs on our salvation path: Keren, which is the name including the personal calling, rose up in smoke with the sacrificed ram instead of Isaac (Gen. 22:13).

On Mount Sinai the Israelites heard the sound of that horn, Shofar, for the first time when it called the people to make the change, a turn a round, teshuva.

The nation learned the sound of the shofar when The Lord himself blew the horn (Ex. 19:16).

From that point on the Israelites were commanded to blow themselves on the shofar (Lev. 25:9), until The Sovereign Lord himself blows it, this time the shofar called Yovel (Zech. 9:14).

Then He will announce freedom, liberation, a jubilee to all nations, to all of those who will hear His voice.

Yeshua the Messiah, Jesus Christ, started his ministry in the synagogue declaring with the words of Isaiah 61:1-2 proclaiming good news to the poor, freedom for the captives, release from darkness for the prisoners and proclaiming the year of the Lord’s favor.

Proclaiming the jubilee, which is The Messiah himself.

In Him is the heritage restored, the one we lost in the garden of Eden. In Him is the essence of Yovel.

(http://torah-art.net)

Markus Nurmesniemi
“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.” (Gen. 2:24, Eph. 5:31)

“This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.” (Eph. 5:32)

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.” (Rev. 19:7-9)

Bible’s words above crystallizes our Lord’s plan concernig marriage and the meaning of the family. We can see from His Word that He ordained the roles of man and woman in the creation. Right in the beginning. Man and woman together form “a divine unit” with a purpose to multiply and fill The Earth, but at the same time that unit includes a picture of a larger entity. The union of a man and a woman is a solid picture originated in the ancient times, a strong allusion of The Messiah’s and His Bride’s future consummation.

God’s Word Yeshua took part in the creation. In Him, through Him and for Him was the world created. Man and woman were created to rule on earth and eventually to advance The Gospel everywhere on Earth. We will see this consummation in the Millennial Kingdom when Yeshua reigns everything with His Bride.

God’s clear order is seen in the structure of a family. The children are a blessing from God to parents, and also indication of God’s creations and the continuity in His plans. The birth of a child is to raise both man and woman to their parenthood, and also to give an understanding to equipe future generations with knowing our Lord.

As we can see, the family is in the center of it all. Family itself is a picture of the Bride, functioning with many members and features. God’s will is to unite the families in to one big happy bridal family. This doesn’t mean however that God’s plan shuts out all singles, widows or childless couples. On the contrary.

In all His richness He loves also the diversity of His beloved Bride. Everybody gets to be a part of The Bride, if one’s will is so. That goes without saying. It all comes down to a big, happy family of our Heavenly Father. But first we all need to receive His son Yeshua as our personal Lord and saviour and come under His redeeming blood.

It can be said that God’s ultimate plan is the plan of the covenants, and it is seen all the way from the creation. His will is that we all would be as one, “echad”, as He is one with His son Yeshua, and so that we would be as one in Him. And because the adversary knows God’s plans, he strikes straight to the core. In the creation, as it is in Genesis, we can see how the enemy struck division between man and woman and into their harmony and unity.

From that point on it has continued by corrupting and dismantling families with using large variety of sins. This microlevel attack against family is also seen in macrolevel in the society. Marriage is no longer between a man and a woman. Even the identities of the genders are being blotted out. All colourful transgender man is being hailed as a sort of a “one new man”. Recently it has been reported that a man has been pregnated.

All this is of course an attack against The Bride. The purpose is to keep it divided (=weak) instead of being united (=strong). The state of the modern society is a result of rejecting the laws and the commandments of our Lord, but of course all this lawlessness has been prophesied already thousands of years ago. This means that the times of the restoration of all things are coming at hand, and that The Messiah will come to claim His Bride. But the timing of His coming is solely in the hands of our Heavenly Father.

This issue’s theme is the restoration of family. It is, of course, a vast subject, so instead of trying to cover it all we have decided to offer you a solid cross-section. The restoration of family includes the restoration of the right order in the family, but also the restoration of The Bride (spiritual family) and Israel (the children of the covenants). It’s about the restoration of the whole world.

In this issue we are also proud to welcome in our Yovel-family as writers such decorated scholars and bible teachers like Joseph Shulam, the president and the founder of Netivyah-organization in Israel, Dr John Garr, the founder and the president of Hebraic Christian Global Community, Dr Karl Coke, the founder and the president of The Karl Coke Evangelistic Association and Kalle Venäläinen, bible teacher and lecturer. Their insight brings valuable assets and in-depth meaning to our theme at hand.

So, let us pray for courage and skillfulness so that we all could be in the position on our part, unifying and strengthening The Bride, the grand family of our Heavenly Father, for the delight of our Creator and our Bridegroom.

May God bless you all, and may The Holy Spirit guide you in your steps!

Markus Nurmesniemi
Chief Editor
In this case many of the believers trusting in the authority of the Bible may have felt the heavy weight of the defeat. Yet one of them wrote an encouraging e-mail: “We will rely on our Lord and we will cry out for mercy for our country from Him! And the fact that He is to turn the tables around, and He will unite the ones who has received the salvation faith for the first time since the war (IIWW).”

This is exactly how I’m experiencing this! And I even believe that this present day degradation where this so called “Christian Nation” has sunk herself will help many to see, that the reasons for this corruption (and also the division of the believers) can be found way back in the history. All the way from earlier conflicts and the choices made in them. Even in paradise the snake questioned God’s words by asking: “Did God really say...?” (Gen. 3:1). And already then the temptation to stray away from the path shown by God won to please the personal desires. From that point on the majority of the mankind has been wanting to hear more of its deceiver than its Creator.

God’s Laws Are Under Constant Attacks

There are two decrees which originates from Eden, and which has been facing fierce attacks from the adversary, so that the good plans for the mankind by our Lord may never consummate through them. These two decrees are the marriage between man and woman and The Sabbath, which is the sign of our God as a Creator. The pagan-christian church changed the weekly Sabbath to sunday in the third century. This change was made under authority of the Roman emperor Constantine in the year 321, when a first sunday law was established. It announced that The Sabbath, which originally was to be sanctified to remember God’s creation, (Biblically the 7th day of the week) was shut down and replaced it. – Of course the Christians found justifications for the change: one being the fact that Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. True, but the change lacked the authority and approval of God’s Word! Another argument was that The Sabbath was a “Jewish” decree. General doctrine was that the Jews as a nation were abandoned and that Christian Church had taken their place as a God’s chosen people. Therefore it was concluded that the decrees made to the Jews were no longer valid among Christian Church. – But also these arguments were lacking the authority and approval of God’s Word. It was also forgotten that The Sabbath was given in the creation “for man”! (Mark 2:27).

On this day, about 1700 years later, in Finland can only be found a vague variation of the other decree given in Eden, and that is the marriage. Originally meant only for between man and woman, but on the day earlier mentioned it was changed to be open for same sex relations. Changing The Sabbath and marriage has questioned the authority of what our God The Creator have said. Changing The Sabbath has successfully blurred the understanding of men - even the Christians - concerning God as The Creator. He hasn’t been glorified as God nor given thanks to as Creator (Rom. 1:18-21) so that the day He decreed to be remembered for creation, weren’t honoured as holy. The minds of men have dimmed to the extent that the evolution doctrine is a general and widely respected “truth” of man’s origin, which in fact is a lie clothed in the name of science. Therefore the authority of God’s Word isn’t the one any more which decides what is right and what is wrong. Forgetting one’s Creator, which is rooted in changing The Sabbath in the 300’s, has led to the changing of the marriage decree 1700 years later. The enemy has had his long term plans to change these both decrees God set in The Garden of Eden.

If we believers want to do true repentance in front of our God and seek the true and ultimate reformation, then we will truly come to the place of separation from the world. But at the same time we will unite ourselves as one, “echad”, which will be blessed by God by supernatural way, through the pouring of The Holy Spirit, as in the days of the apostles! That little group, faithful full to the Word of God, was blessed at the early days of the Gospel. So it will be again at the end of this work (John 17:20-23). We are truly living in the end times before the coming of our Lord.

According to The Book of Revelation the saints of God is described as follows: “This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.” (Rev. 14:12).

The Marriage Law In The Center Of The Battle

During these last years many members of the The Lutheran Church have been struggling with the question whether to leave the Church or not. The biggest issue dividing the Lutheran Church is the gender-neutral marriage law (established 1.3.2017) which enables the same sex weddings within the church if the Church decides to do so. The current decision of The Church Assembly does not allow it for now. A group of liberal priests have

Kuva: Raamatunopettaja ja puhuja Kalle Venäläinen.

(These texts have been combined from two different writings by mr. Venäläinen)

Written by: Kalle Venäläinen

On friday 28.11.2014 the civil motion for the gender-neutral marriage law won by votes with 105-92.
plead to change the Church Law so that the gay weddings would be possible within the Church. One among them, Eeva-Kaisa Rossi, writes (21.03.2017/Koti-maa magazine): “What comes to equal marriage the society has been even more Christian than the Church concerning the law.” This liberal stand has been so strongly out there in the media, that the traditional view of the matter, that is the marriage between man and woman, is heavily cornered. Even to the extent that Reverend Timo Pöyhönen wrote on his Facebook-page: “A request for help for different denominations and churches out there: Support publicly the conservatives in the Lutheran Church concerning the marriage issue. Don’t think selfishly and short sided that the issue at hand doesn’t concern you, because if the Lutherans will slide on this it’s going to be only a matter of time when the pressure falls on you with this.”

My desire is that this appeal will be responded to. If the Lutheran Church will backslide with the marriage issue and change its official view on marriage to gender neutral, the created “problem with the air inside” can drive the conservatives right out of the Church. It might even result something more serious than that. One tool is being presented to prevent this danger, and that is that the Church would give up its right to wed couples.

When The Foundation Is Cracked, Neglecting It Will Spread The Damage
So, the Church’s “problem with the air inside” can be solved. But what if the screw starts squeezing too hard in the society as well? There’s no escape from one’s living surroundings. The gender-neutral marriage law effected radiates its influence on every levels of society and its situations. We’ve seen worrying examples everywhere this law has been put through for longer period of time. The supporters of the traditional marriage view have been pressured in educational and business areas among other things. Also the liberty of speech has being restricted.

This kind of reflex effects seems to go on unnoticed past many priests and politicians. Even the evaluation concerning the law’s effects on children was never made. The most worrying effect will probably hit on the children and the young, for theirs is the future of the society. Tapio Puolimatka, Professor of Education and Tradition, wrote 17.03.2017 on the column of Uusi Suomi newspaper with the headline “National Board of Education Crumbles the Foundation of High Culture”. He brings out the fact that sexual education starting from the kindergarten is changing throughout the whole nation with worrying effects. He says: “Finnish National Board of Education published in 2015 a guide called The Work Of Equality Is a Game Of Skillfulness: A Guide To Progress The Equality Between Genders In Elementary School. It questions both natural understanding of gender and the understanding of marriage based on gender.

The Truth Lies Within God’s Word
So where does this new marriage law ultimately leads us with its effects? Puolimatka’s recently published book says it all in its title: The Sexual Revolution And The Collapse Of Family And Culture.

So: Where do we get the right medicines against this “problem with the air inside” in our society and congregations? I believe they are to be found in Yeshua’s prayers for His followers (John 17): “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” (verse 15). Then Yeshua continues: “Sanctify them to live in accordance with the truth; your word is truth.” (verse 17). The same word of God, which we were given in Finnish 500 years ago, thanks to reformation, and which life protecting principals our nation was birthed upon 100 years ago, is our Messiah’s medicine also for today’s problems.

These days challenges us all, but most of all all the followers of Yeshua to take the instructions of God even more serious than ever! When the world keeps darkening, the light of the Bible is suppose to shine even brighter than ever before. Antero Laukkanen, member of Parliament, held a speech in 11.03.2017 in Helsinki Old Church. In it he reminded, that although decisions with nation departing away from God has been made, it is now the time for the Christians to take the step closer to our God.

As Yeshua prays that His followers may be one (verse 21), so encouraged Laukkanen also: “We have to humble ourselves to unity... Now it is time for us to be together as bigger light than ever before.”
Written by: Keijo Lindeman

Marriage In The Light Of The Bible

Marriage is one of the most important areas of human life.

If marriage has been concluded according to the will of God, and family life corresponds to the Word of God, it can become the foundation pillar of a very happy and blessed earthly life. But if God and His Word’s advice have no place in the life of the family, marriage can become a great burden, even “hell” on earth to those involved.

Sin and disobedience to God’s commandments in different aspects of marriage and family life have brought about much pain, divorces, and suffering to innocent children amidst this evil and adulterous generation.

It is God’s will, however, for people to live close to Him, get married according to God’s will, and live their married lives according to the indications given in His Word. That is when marriage can become the source of blessing and happiness.

When God pours the Spirit of Elijah on earth in the End Times just before the Lord’s Day, it will cause also marriages and family relationships to be restored among believers, so that relationships between family members will be reestablished on principles of love and truth decreed by God (Mal. 4:4-6; Matt. 17:11; Luke 1:17).

On a Shabbath, the husband in every religious Israeli family reads to his wife from the last chapter of Proverbs “the song of praise to a wife of noble character” (Prov 31:10-31). May good God help us heed His Word so that our marriages would also be like that!

(In this article we will discuss these matters briefly in the light of the Bible. More extensively on marriage in the light of the Bible in “Apostolinen seurakunta”;”The Apostolic church”.)

Marriage was set by God

“Then the Lord made the woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said: This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:22-24).

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Ephesians 5:25, 31-32).

When the Lord God made man and gave man the early paradise to live in, He gave the man, Adam, a wife, Eve, to live with him as a companion and a spouse. God thus instituted and willed marriage as the foundation pillar of life in couple between man and woman. Wed in holy matrimony man and wife form together a new unit of co-living that parents are not allowed to meddle in. It is all right to give good advice, but the married couple will decide themselves about their own affairs; that is what God has decreed from the creation.

God also set the marital relationship between man and wife as an example of the wonderful spiritual relationship between the Messiah and the church.

Besides being an example of the beautiful relationship between the Messiah and the church marriage has many other meanings and purposes. When God created man in the early paradise, He saw that it was not good for man to be alone. He gave Adam a wife to be his companion and help. Many of us, too, know how difficult and painful loneliness can be; therefore a suitable spouse is a great gift from God given to us for help and support in our married life (Prov.4:7-12).

In creating mankind God also told man and woman to be fruitful, and to fill the earth. To accomplish this task we need marriage in order to get offspring, children, who will live and carry on the task given to mankind, when we are dead.

Mankind has fulfilled this mission and purpose of marriage extremely well on average; even so that we are now facing overpopulation, especially in developing countries. Getting children is not, however, the only purpose of sexual intercourse in marriage: there is also the aspect of having innocent children amidst this evil and adulterous generation.

The meaning of marriage

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground’” (Genesis 1:27-28).

“The Lord God said: ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him’” (Genesis 2:18).

“Now concerning the things about which you wrote to me: it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection owed to her, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife doesn’t have authority over her own body, but the husband. Likewise also the husband doesn’t have authority over his own body, but the wife. Don’t deprive one another, unless it is by consent for a season, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and may be together again, that Satan doesn’t tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (1 Corinthians. 7:1-5).

This is not to say that an unmarried person, walking with Yeshua and leading a disciplined life of a believer, couldn’t stay chaste and without fornication, and be a useful member in the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 7:32-34).

Asking God for a spouse
Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights (James 1:17) according to the Word of God. This applies to finding a spouse, too. It is of utmost importance that we ask God for a believing spouse suited for us. God will certainly answer even this prayer request according to His good will.

When Abraham wanted to get his son a good wife from among his own tribe, he relied totally on God’s help and guidance, and God answered by leading Rebekah to be Isaac’s wife. According to the Bible marriage is an eternal “yoke”, and that is why it is crucial that we get the spouse that God has chosen for us for our marriage to be as durable, harmonious, and blessed as possible (1 Cor. 7:10-11, 39).

A believer must marry a believer only

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people’” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).

God warned the people of Israel through Moses not to intermarry with heathen daughters or sons to prevent these from enticing Israelites to turn away from the Lord, their God (Deut.7:1-4). God did not warn them in vain. Look at King Solomon who married daughters of pagan nations and was enticed by them to serve idols of those nations (1 Kings 11:1-13). The Lord was angry with Solomon and punished the Israelites during the following generations as apostacy started to gain ground and finally led to the splitting up of the nation of Israel, and to decades of civil war.

What happened amidst the chosen people of God during the days of the First Covenant, serves as a warning example for believers in the New Covenant (1 Cor. 10:1-11). Believers in the New Covenant are also told not to carry a foreign yoke together with unbelievers. Marriage is the most lasting common “yoke”, as it is meant for one’s whole life in the Bible, and a believer should not on purpose break the clear instructions God has given on this matter in His Word, for it will only bring curse and turning away from God into one’s life.

Many believers get married with an unbeliever against the Word of God (generally because they can’t wait for God to answer) and presume they can win their unbelieving spouse to the Lord through marriage. But in nearly every case, because God’s blessing is missing as a result of disobedience to His Word, what happens is that even the believer turns away from God. And even if he or she doesn’t turn away from God, it is highly probable that later on he or she will repent not having obeyed God’s Word. If the unbelieving spouse has in some rare cases become a believer, it is only by God’s infinite grace (and generally the believer has been unaware of God’s instructions before getting married), which doesn’t change the clear commands of God’s Word.

Marriage ceremony and wedding party

“Isaac brought her [Rebekah] into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death” (Genesis 24:67).

“When Isaac gets married the Bible only tells us that Isaac took Rebekah into his tent and married her. There are believers who, acting on this account, have come to the hasty conclusion that no wedding ceremony is needed; it is enough to bring a woman to your apartment and make her your wife. In this age of cohabitation this line of thinking is becoming commonplace also among those who call themselves believers among this evil and adulterous generation (Matt. 12:39).

In spite of the fact that there is no mention of a wedding party nor ceremony in the case of Isaac, it is, nevertheless, a biblical tradition throughout the Scriptures of the Old and the New Covenant. A believer must not follow the godless customs and sinful life with loose marriages and divorces of this world, but be wed in holy matrimony according to the instructions and traditions given in God’s Word.

Though one would dislike big weddings it is advisable to get married in such a way that Yeshua is sure to be there to bless the marriage, the same way He was at Cana in Galilee witnessing the marriage vows as an invited guest with His disciples.

When marriage is embarked upon, following biblical customs and traditions and with God’s blessing, this covenant “till death us apart” has all chances of being greatly blessed.

God’s Marching Order in the family

“But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3).

“You husbands, in like manner, live with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor to the woman, as to the weaker vessel, as being also joint heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7).

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’, which is the first commandment with a promise, ‘that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth.’ You fathers, don’t provoke your children to wrath, but nurture them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1-4).

“`If he takes another wife to him, it is enough for him to support his household, and the head of the woman is the head of the man, and the head of Christ is the Lord of the man and of the woman’” (1 Timothy 5:8).

God is the head of the Messiah, the Messiah is the head of a man, and the man is the head of the wife. This is the simple divine marching order Paul reveals in his letter to the Corinthians. If we stick to it, and most of all, if we let our Lord Yeshua be the head and the Lord of the man and of the whole family, harmony, blessing,
happiness, and peace will reign in our home. Paul also instructs married women to have their heads covered when they pray or prophesy, as a sign of authority (1 Cor. 11:1-10). The husband has the main responsibility to provide for his family, but nothing prevents wives from sharing in this responsibility. The husband must love and treat well his wife, so that the prayers would not be hindered.

Children must obey their parents, and parents must bring up their children in God’s fear and discipline, which doesn’t mean disciplining in anger, but guidance in love. In these End Times that we live, many children unfortunately choose not to honour nor obey their parents, nor any authorities for that matter (1 Tim. 3:1-5).

Adult children are responsible for taking care of their parents (1 Tim. 5:4).

Rightly understood, marching order in the family is far from tyranny; it is following in a loving way God’s Word’s good instructions that bring about blessing. Rebellion against instructions and order decreed by God has caused and will cause only curse and broken homes.

**Abortion is a murder**

“If men fight and hurt a pregnant woman so that she gives birth prematurely, and yet no harm follows, he shall be surely fined as much as the woman’s husband demands and the judges allow. But if any harm follows, then you must take life for life” (Exodus 21:22-23).

“Before I formed you in the belly I knew you, and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5).

God knows the life of all people before they were born. From the moment of conception in the womb of a pregnant woman, a human being has an existence before God (Psalm 139:13-16).

The precepts of the law of Moses reveal that the life of a foetus is as precious as any person’s life. With this background abortion, accepted by today’s fallen mankind, is murder in the eyes of God. In ancient times people in pagan cultures sacrificed children as burnt offerings to Molech (Lev.18:21). God warned the Israelites severely of this pagan idolatry, even under penalty of death (Lev. 20:1-5; Jer. 7:31).

Thousands of children are sacrificed on this altar of Molech in the form of free abortions among this fallen mankind, and even in nations that call themselves Christian. Corrupted morals and free sexual relations have resulted in abortion being used, even in Finland, as ultimate form of contraceptive in case of non-desired pregnancy. Besides other sins, this endless murdering of thousands of children will bring God’s wrath and punishment on corrupted societies.

Believers must raise their voices for biblical morals, and abstain from abortion. Abortion can be accepted only for good medical reasons. According to Bible-reading doctors this would be the case, when the life of the mother is endangered. In such a case, if one is forced to make a choice, the life of the mother is saved. There is no other occasion, except this compelling reason, where abortion would be acceptable.

**Polygamy**

“Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart not turn away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold” (Deuteronomy 17:17).

“This is a faithful saying: if a man seeks the office of an overseer [or, bishop, or deacon], he desires a good work. The overseer therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, modest, hospitable, good at teaching” (1 Timothy 3:1-2).

“I left you in Crete for this reason, that you would set in order the things that were lacking, and appoint elders in every city, as I directed you, if anyone is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, who are not accused of loose or unruly behavior” (Titus 1:5-6).

“For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? Only, as the Lord has distributed to each man, as God has called each, so let him walk. So I command in all the assemblies. Was anyone called having been circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let each man stay in that calling in which he was called”(1 Corinthians 7:16-20).

When God made Adam, He gave him one woman, Eve, for a wife. In creating mankind, God’s original purpose was for them to be monogamous. After the Fall Lamech, who was from Cain’s family line, introduced polygamy by taking two wives (Gen. 4:19).

In the days of the Old Covenant the Lord tolerated and allowed polygamy even among the saints of the Old Covenant, but at the same time He warned the kings of Israel of many wives, lest these should entice them to turn away from God. This warning Word of God became reality in the life of King Solomon, whose numerous pagan wives made the King’s heart turn away from the Living God of Israel (1 Kings 11:1-9).

In the New Covenant Yeshua restored marriage in alignment with the original plan of God, as we can read in the gospels (Matt. 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12). In the New Covenant God’s Word always speaks about a spouse in singular; there is no indication whatever of polygamy being favoured or accepted among believers. Paul in his epistles gives strict definitions: a pastor or overseer or elder must not have many wives, but he is to be husband of one wife. (The same applies to deacons).

In the Middle-Eastern cultures of those days, and still today, polygamy was common, but a man of many wives is not fit to be a pastor or an overseer, because such behaviour is against God’s original plan. (In some circles the concept of a husband of one wife is applied to divorced people, but that is not what is meant; the purpose is to prevent polygamy within the Church, and elders and deacons are called to be living examples of monogamy.)

How then should we react, when a polygamist in an African or an Islamic country becomes a believer? This is the question missionaries often have to face. Sometimes the solution is that when a polygamist tribal chief has become a believer, he chooses one of his wives he will live together with, and keeps providing for his former so called concubines. I find this, however, hypocritical; what is the point in trying to change existing reality in this situation? When Paul speaks about matters concerning marriage in his First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter seven, he says that everyone should stay in the same calling in which they were called to follow Christ.

I interpret this the way that, if an African tribal chief was a polygamist when he was called to follow Christ, so let him stay a polygamist till the end of his life with all his wives and many children, but he must not be appointed elder or overseer in the Church. And his descendants and other people unaware of God’s Word must be taught the way God expects us to live in the New Covenant.

**Divorce**

“When a man takes a wife, and marries her, then it shall be, if she find no favor in his eyes, because he has found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write
her a bill of divorce, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. When she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s wife. If the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorce, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house, or if the latter husband die, who took her to be his wife; her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abominati- on before Yahweh: and you shall not cause the land to sin, which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance” (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).

“If he takes another wife to him- self, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her mar- tal rights. If he doesn’t do these three things for her, she may go free without paying any money” (Exodus 21:10-11).

“This again you do: you cover the altar of Yahweh with tears, with weeping, and with sighing, because he doesn’t regard the offering any more, neither recei- ves it with good will at your hand. Yet you say, ‘Why?’ Because Yah- weh has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion, and the wife of your covenant. Did he not make one, although he had the residue of the Spirit? Why one? He sought a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For I hate divorce”, says Yahweh, the God of Israel, ‘and him who covers his garment with violence’, says Yahweh of Hosts. ‘Therefore take heed to your spir- it, that you don’t deal treache- rously’” (Malachi 2:13-16).

“Pharisees came to him, testing him, and saying, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?’ He answered, ‘Haven’t you read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall join to his wife, and the two shall be- come one flesh?’ So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man tear apart.’ They asked him, ‘Why then did Moses command us to give her a bill of divorce, and divorce her?’ He said to them, ‘Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so. I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery, and he who marries her when she is di- vorced commits adultery’” (Mat- hew 19:3-9).

“For don’t you know, brothers (for I speak to men who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man for as long as he lives? For the woman that has a husband is bound by law to the husband while he lives, but if the husband dies, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then if, while the husband lives, she is joined to another man, she would be called an adulter- ess. But if the husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she is joined to another man” (Romans 7:1-3).

“But I say to the unmarried and to widows, it is good for them if they remain even as I am. But if they don’t have self-control, let them marry. For it’s better to marry than to burn. But to the married I command — not I, but the Lord — that the wife not leave her husband (but if she departs, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband not leave his wife. But to the rest I — not the Lord — say, if any brother has an unbelieving wife, and she is content to live with him. Let him not leave her. The woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he is content to live with her, let her not leave her husband. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the hus- band. Otherwise your children would be uncircumcised, but now are they holy. Yet if the unbeliever departs, let there be separation.

The brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us in peace” (1 Corinthians 7:8-15).

God intended people to live close to Him through Yeshua, to ask Him for guidance when choosing a spouse, and to live together in marriage as believers, serving God till the end of their days, until death aparts. This is the ideal kind of marriage according to God’s Word. Tragically, marri- ages break up and end in divorce, because the fallen mankind has abandoned the principles and ideals of love and truth. It is the curse among the evil and adulter- eous generation of the End Times, where people divorce and chang- e spouses the way one changes cars. Believers who keep God’s Word in high esteem should not join this current of apostacy, but we should go on following the precious instructions of God’s Word even in these difficult mat- ters.

During the First Covenant God had ordered that, if a man slept with a virgin, he was to marry her and never to divorce her (Ex. 22:16; Deut. 22:28-29). The Law of Moses allowed a husband to abandon his wife and divorce her, if something shameful was found in her. The wife was allowed to divorce her husband, if the hus- band took another wife, and then stopped to provide the first wife with clothing, food, and marital rights.

What then were those shameful things that gave the husband the right to divorce his wife? Sham- mai and Hillel, two famous Rabbis of the generation before Yeshua’s generation, gave two totally dif- fering interpretations. According to Shammai a husband was not allowed to divorce his wife unless something immoral and unclean was found in her (if the wife was not a virgin, for instance), but ac- cording to Hillel a husband could divorce his wife, if she turned out to be a lousy cook who burnt the food.

This liberal Hillelian interpretati- on had become popular among Yeshua’s Jewish compatriotes. Many of them divorced for in- significant reasons: if the wife wasn’t pleasing enough or if the husband wanted to have a youn- ger wife. This liberal, pro-divorce interpretation of the Law of Mo- ses did exist before the time of Rabbi Hillel, for the Lord rebuked the Israelites through Malachi, because they were not faithful to the wife of their youth but re- jected her, and thus covered the alter of God with tears. The Word God gave through Malachi une- quivoically condemns this kind of liberal attitude to divorce. No one with even a tiny breath of God’s Spirit in him could behave in such a frivolous way, and leave his wife so hard-heartedly, for the Lord hates divorce.

Naturally the Jews who feared God didn’t behave in this hard- hearted way towards their wives, but they obeyed the more severe interpretation that Rabbi Sham- mai had given of the divorce sta- tute of the Law of Moses. Joseph and Mary (Miriam in Hebrew) are a perfect example, because when Mary, Joseph’s fiancee, got pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit, and was expecting the baby Yeshua, Joseph was about to leave her in secret (Matt. 1:18- 25). But Joseph was told that Mary was carrying the Messiah in her womb, and so he did not leave her.

The passage from the Gospel of Matthew tells us how the Phar- sees came to test Yeshua with a question concerning the grounds for a divorce. Their starting point was the liberal Hillelian interpre- tation: “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?” In his answer Yeshua dismissed categorically this liberal hard- hearted interpretation that had angered God, and joined Rabbi Shammai in his severe interpre- tation, saying, “Whoever divor- ces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries her when she is divorced, commits adultery.” Yeshua allo- wed divorce and remarriage only on the grounds of adultery, in alignment with Rabbi Shammai’s interpretation. However, even if
the spouse commits adultery, the innocent party is not obliged to take a divorce, although it is permissible. Yeshua Himself forgave the woman who was caught in the act of adultery, and admonished her to leave her sinful life (John 8:1-12). Mercy and forgiveness have saved many marriages even in the middle of this kind of crisis, but for the marriage to heal and prosper the spouses need to lead a life of repentance. Apostle Paul also discusses marital matters in his First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter seven. He states that a man must not leave his wife, and a woman must not divorce her husband, as this is the ideal standard God has set up for marriage that it should last till death.

When one of the spouses becomes a believer, while they are married, and the unbelieving spouse is willing to continue the marriage, divorce is not permitted, but if the unbelieving spouse wants a divorce, the believing spouse is free to divorce. The sister is not under bondage in marriage, so if the brother or the unbeliever departs, let the desires, only in the Lord… Yet if the husband is dead, she is free to marry (1 Cor. 7:39-15, 16, 27-28).

Remarriage

"I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery, and he who marries her when she is divorced commits adultery" (Matt. 19:9).

"But I say to the unmarried and to widows, it is good for them if they remain even as I am. But if they don’t have self-control, let them marry. For it’s better to marry than to burn. But to the married I command—not I, but the Lord—that the wife not leave her husband (but if she departs, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband not leave his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:8-11).

"A wife is bound by law for as long as her husband lives; but if the husband is dead, she is free to be married to whoever she desires, only in the Lord… Yet if the unbeliever departs, let there be separation. The brother or the sister is not undet bondage in such cases, but God has called us in peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?... Are you bound to a wife? Don’t seek to be freed. Are you free from a wife? [Greek NT lysis = to be separated or released; Hebrew NT nifarta = you are separated or released or freed.] Don’t seek a wife. But if you marry, you have not sinned..." (1 Cor. 7:39, 15-16, 27-28).

"Or don’t you know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don’t be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortioners, will inherit the Kingdom of God. Such were some of you, but you were washed. But you were sanctified. But you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Among Bible abiding believers there is rather a great unanimity about the fact that God’s Word gives a believer the right to divorce in the two cases mentioned above: when the husband or the wife commits adultery, or when the unbelieving spouse demands a divorce. But opinions differ greatly as for the right to remarry in any case after divorce.

Adherents of the stricter interpretation think that the divorced may not marry under any circumstance, before their spouses are dead. To justify their opinion they refer to Paul’s teaching that marriage is binding for life, and that if one divorces, they should stay unmarried or reconcile with their spouses.

According to my understanding, and that of many other reliable Bible scholars, this kind of reasoning doesn’t follow the principles of comprehensive interpretation. When the Word of God speaks about the marriage as being binding till death, it is the ideal and a basic principle that everyone should strive to follow, but because of sin “exceptions to the rule” have invaded this “basic law” of God’s Word.

When the Bible is studied comprehensively, we see as early as from the days of the Old Covenant and the law of Moses that when the grounds for a divorce were sufficient, the wife was given a written bill of divorce, and she was free to marry another man (Deut. 24:1-4; Isa. 50:1; Jer.3:1-8).

If the second husband rejected his wife or he died, the wife could not return to her first husband according to the law (Torah). However, the return of the faithless wife Israel to God shows that God’s grace and forgiveness in this matter is greater than the cutting word of the law (Torah) (Jer. 3:1-22, Hos.1:3).

The line of thought in the New Covenant is consistent with the law of Moses, because, as Yeshua says, it is permissible to divorce and remarry in case of adultery (Matt. 19:3-9). Apostle Paul teaches that the same applies to a situation, where the unbelieving spouse demands a divorce. In that case a believer is no longer a slave to the law (Torah), which binds the married couple to each other until death, but a believer has the right to divorce in such a case, and remarry as long as it happens in the Lord. If a believer, as a passive party, is separated from his or her unbelieving spouse who demands a divorce, the believer does not sin, if he or she in these circumstances remarries a believer.

It is advisable to be patient, though, and not to rush into marriage. It is better wait and see, if the unbelieving spouse finds later faith in Yeshua and wants to reconcile with his or her spouse. On the other hand, if the unbelieving spouse finds a new spouse after divorce, reconciliation is no longer possible, and the believer has no reason to keep waiting, if he or she wants to remarry.

At this point let us study more closely Paul’s text about marital issues in his first Letter to the Corinthians, chapter seven. When Paul speaks about marriage, he considers four different groups:

- Parthenos, that is virgins, who are chaste the way the Bible expects from those who have never been married (1 Cor. 7:25; Ex. 22:16; Deut. 22:23-29; This isn’t a particularly popular principle in our world, unfortunately).
- Gegamekosin, that is married people, who live in marriage (1 Cor. 7:10).
- Agamois, that is the unmarried, meaning the divorced, who have been married, but live alone after the divorce – see what Paul says about himself (1 Cor. 7:10-11).
- Kherais, that is widows whose spouses are dead and who live now alone (1 Cor. 7:8).

We can conclude from the text that Paul was either unmarried, that is divorced (agamois), or then a widow (kherais; 1 Cor. 7:8-9; So Paul knew what being married meant and could understand women in this respect). One of the theories assumes that when this zealous Pharisee and persecutor of the Church had his dramatic experience on the road to Damaskus (see e.g. Acts chapter 9), his wife and his wife’s family (probably religious Pharisees) didn’t take it well, but divorce followed (see Phil. 3:4-10).

Paul says that the divorced (agamois) and widows (kherais), like he was, would have the right to remarry, but he recommended living alone, as he himself did, but if they could not control themselves, it was better to remarry than to burn (in sin). Later on in the same chapter he says that the divorced commit no sin if they remarry (1 Cor. 7:27-28).

As a summary we can say both in the light of the Old and the New Covenant the following:

- A believer has the right to divorce only if his or her spouse commits adultery, or the unbelieving spouse demands a divorce. If a believer divorces for other reasons, he or she is guilty of adultery and needs to repent.
- A second marriage is no sin, but
a divorce for wrong reasons is a sin.

* When the Bible allows people to divorce, it automatically allows them to get married for the second time (but no hurrying, see what has been said above).

* The divorced and the widows do well if they stay alone, but if they can’t control their desires, they had better get married.

* Marriage is a serious commitment that is meant to last for the lifetime. Each party has to do their best to make it last till death. The current fashion à la Hollywood with continuous change of spouses and “temp cohabitations” will get God’s condemnation, if there is no repentence. According to God’s Word the biggest abomination are same sex marriages, on which the same judgement will be passed as on Sodom and Gomorrah, if there is no repentence (Luke 17:26-30; Gen.19; Hez.16:49-50; Rom. 1:18-32;1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Peter 2:6-8).

In this connection we should also take a look at a situation, where a person with a past of several marriages, other breaches of promise, or even same sex relationships, becomes a believer. Paul says about them that some of us were like that before, but now we are justified in the name of Yeshua and the Spirit of God. When a person comes to faith, God forgives all past transgressions and does not remember our sins or wrongdoings (Heb. 8:12).

A new and pure path of faith begins in the life of a person who has come to Yeshua. It is only natural that, if it is possible, one should then settle the differences and make amends, perhaps even reconcile and come back together. The believer must do all that is in his or her power so that the original marriage, if it is possible, could be restored.

God is a gracious God, and He forgives all sins, even adulteries and murders, if we repent sincerely and honestly like David did in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam. 11-12). When God forgives, man has no right to condemn the one who has repented. We just need to remember the Lord’s words, “Go, and sin no more!” (John 8:11).

One family of God in the eternity

“Jesus replied, ‘You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven’” (Matthew 22:29-30).

“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:50).

When the Sadducees asked Yeshua testingly, whose wife will be in resurrection a woman who has been wife of seven men in her lifetime, the Lord told in His answer that the institution of marriage in this form is only meant for life on earth. In our future heavenly existence, the institution of marriage is no longer in force, but believers who have obeyed their heavenly Father’s will on earth will form one big family of God (Eph.2:19).

In our heavenly condition the ties of marriage or carnal family relations are no longer valid, but have been replaced by heavenly ties. It is to be assumed that if married couples and family members have served God together on earth, they will serve God together also in the heavenly condition in grace and perfect bliss.
When Yeshua Returns
To Restore The Family of Faith
According To All That Was Spoken By The Prophets

Written by:
Clifford Denton and Dave Hilsley

The Lord of Creation has given us many views by many of His prophets concerning the times leading up to His return. Some of them appear to be more clear and complete in their descriptions than others, yet the Word of G-d saw fit to include them all for our benefit and instruction. The Lord has a purpose in revealing that which He has told us, and yet He has chosen to tell us only parts of the story.

More than that, He has chosen to reveal it in the often mysterious language of the prophets, and has couched it in visions and revelations of the spiritual significance of events and developments, rather than describing them from a human perspective. To understand them, we therefore need to ignore many of the conventions of scholarship and human wisdom, and let the Lord speak to us through them.

For three days in June, about a dozen of us gathered in Yad Hashmonah in order to allow study of many of the prophetic Scriptures. We asked those who participated to be prepared to share as the Spirit might enable them. The following is a summary of many areas of interest that were raised.

The Timeline

We were presented with a timeline approach to the prophetic events leading up to the Lord’s return and the end of this physical creation. The scriptures of Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Matthew and Revelation were placed on this line as a series of overlays, each adding breadth and depth to the picture already in place. Many of these events were viewed repeatedly from different angles by the prophets, and we considered how these could be built into a unified picture, resulting in a composite progression through the events leading from the present to the Lord’s return. The initial focus was on the events surrounding the seventieth “seven” of Daniel.

Repeated Fulfillments

It was often noted as we looked through the different passages that a given prophetic picture could be fulfilled in more than one historical incident. The “complete” fulfillment might include a number of such incidents containing echoes of the full picture, leading up to a final and complete occurrence that would contain the full power of what was foreseen. This is essentially a cyclic view of history; and as these various cycles are overlaid on the historical timeline, giving a historical order to the original prophetic pictures becomes complicated by having to choose one fulfillment which is the “historically representative” fulfillment for that picture.

If we are looking at only one of the multiple fulfillments, we might find that the apparent historical order of the prophetic picture is not preserved with respect to the various fulfillments of other pictures.

The Vertical Line View

The inherent difficulties in knowing which echoes of which prophetic pictures are being viewed from our current historical vantage point leads to an alternate way of looking at expected fulfillments. This view imagines the as yet future fulfillments of prophecy to be held in a divine repository above our current position on the timeline. As the Lord of history determines that the time of various events has arrived, they “drop down” from heaven onto the timeline for their fulfillment.

The echo of a future complete fulfillment can occur at almost any time, and since various degrees of these echoes are what most believers experience throughout history, it is not particularly helpful to know the order of the “ultimate” events. This view would rather focus on the relative priority of the various pictures as they relate to our walk in the Lord and our preparations for His coming, and so would see prophesied events as a prioritized “vertical” list suspended above our location on the timeline.

The Imminent Return

The imminence of the Lord’s return is true for each of us individually. No matter who we are, or where we fit into the Lord’s overall historical timeline, He might require our soul from us at any moment (unless He has individually shown us otherwise). We who serve Him will each be with Him when we leave our physical body, and for us personally that is His “return”. This has certain inescapable conclusions with regard to the conduct of our everyday affairs. Nevertheless, this does not answer the broader question of when we might expect the main events of the prophetic tapestry that will lead up to the Lord’s physical appearance and the destruction of THE false messiah.

The Effect of Disobedience

One person was not able to attend, but felt impressed by the Lord that we should notice the effect that the disobedience of Israel had on their ability to conquer the land that the Lord promised to give them as their inheritance. Because of their disobedience, the fulfillment of part of the promise was delayed indefinitely, since the Lord decided not to drive out the nations that were left in the land when Joshua died. (Judges 2:20 – 3:4; Joshua 13:1-6)

The Effect of Intercession

“Then Moses entreated the Lord... So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.” The Lord loves to be entreated for mercy; and when there is no man to do so, He himself often does so for us. “And He saw that there was no man, and was astonished that there was no one to intercede.” He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, so He can often be turned back from His announced intention to bring judgement through an act of intercession such as Moses’.

There comes a time when intercession will no longer avail. (Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11)

The Effect of Repentance

Unlike Moses with respect to Israel, Jonah was not an intercessor for Nineveh. Yet even without intercession the people repented, and so G-d did not carry out his announced intention with respect to that city: “Behold forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” “Then G-d relented concerning the calamity which He has declared He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.” Jonah was not pleased, and was rebuked for his lack of compassion. The “forty days” were never enforced.
Composite Prophecies

Prophetic pictures are not as simple as they appear at first. Take for example the four-part image in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Has the stone that was cut without hands struck the feet of iron and clay yet? It was suggested that this has not yet happened. However, the physical empire of Rome that those legs and feet symbolized has fallen, as have the other empires depicted in the image. Yet, even if we say that that the gospel resulted in the fall of Rome, it can hardly be said that there is not a trace left of Rome, as in the dream. In fact, we learn from Scripture that Babylon herself perseveres in spiritual form. The final fulfillment of this prophecy can only come when spiritual Babylon is destroyed, and “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Messiah.” The mountain to which the stone grew will then fill the whole earth.

Multiple Prophetic Views

It can be difficult to differentiate between two prophecies that are describing different views of the same thing, and prophecies that are describing similar but different things. Often prophecy and history are like a symphony that builds through variation on a theme. For example, the fourth beast of Daniel 7 has one head, while the beast of Revelation 17 has 7 heads; yet their similarities are so great, and their place in prophetic history seemingly identical, that we ignore this difference. Even so, in Revelation we are told that this beast “was, and is not, and will come”.

It is therefore possible that the picture in Daniel describes what was. Nevertheless, five, of the heads in Revelation are said to have fallen; do these not relate to what was? We might say that the beast in Daniel was only seen with its current king. But if we are talking of a kingdom that “was, and is not, and will come”, then John was not seeing this in current time, since “is not” for Rome had not happened yet. And if we are speaking of historically distinct events, then are these not separate fulfillments, which have a common spiritual foundation?

Israel in Prophecy

There is a level of prophetic fulfillment that relates to Israel, and yet it can meld imperceptibly into prophecy relating to the Church. Sometimes there are explicit unifying factors, such as Messiah; but sometimes these factors are not so explicit, such as with Ephraim and the “fullness of the Gentiles”. (Rom. 11:25, Gen. 48:19) Israel and the Church represent two different covenants that exist in two different domains; nevertheless, there are areas of overlap. In the complete restoration of Israel spoken of by Paul (“and thus all Israel will be saved”), there will be complete overlap with regard to Israel.

We therefore have many prophecies regarding the restored future of Israel which are essentially true for Gentile believers as well. Such prophecies need to be treated carefully, however, so as not to suppress their specifically Jewish elements in favor of promises for the Church. While there is usually no problem understanding the promised return from exile as being for the Jewish people, the “restore all things” which Yeshua declared would characterize the future coming of Elijah is often understood as restricted to a New Covenant restoration.

The Church in Prophecy

The Church’s view of prophecy tends to be less parochial and less from a specifically Israeli point of view. Nevertheless, she should not ignore nor neglect how prophecy affects Israel, lest she lose sight of the fact that Israel is a type of the Church. Much of what was prophesied very specifically for Israel and Jerusalem has been fulfilled in type for the Church, and much more probably will be before the Lord returns. More importantly, if Israel is restored in the end times (Rom. 11:25), and their restoration will be “life from the dead”, those not of Israel stand to gain a great deal by learning from their stand against the Man of Lawlessness.

Prophetic Measures of Time

Specifically when discussing the coming of the Lord, Peter wrote that “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day.” He specifically makes reference to “the day of the Lord” as the thousand year reign, including both “come as a thief” (the beginning of the reign) and the destruction by fire of this physical creation (the end of the reign) in his description of that “day”. Daniel’s “sevens” turned out to be seven years, rather than weeks; and we like to think that his “time, times and a part of time” means three and a half years. In short, prophetic time does not always work the way we think it should when we want to calculate past and future dates.

Start and End Times

Even when we are sure that after the fact we have identified a prophecy as having been fulfilled, timing that fulfillment is not always what we would have guessed that there would be a break between Daniel’s 69th and 70th “seven” which would be several times longer than 70 “weeks of years”?

What versus When

When trying to determine God’s purpose in providing us with prophetic descriptions of the future, it is tempting to think that He wants us to be very ingenious, and to use His partial clues to figure out when our Lord Yeshua will most likely return, or when other major end time events might occur. Scripture itself warns us off such an attempt by telling us that only the Father knows specifically when. On the other hand, we are told to watch and be alert, so that the day will not take us by surprise. In the parable of the ten virgins, they had all fallen asleep. Five, however, were prepared for the possibility that the bridegroom’s delay would be long, and the other five were not. It was the wisdom to prepare for a potential delay that made the difference between those who went in, and those who were closed out. This is an example of the “what to do” of prophecy, as opposed to the “when to do” of trying to be ready by calculating a time for the bridegroom’s arrival.

Physical and Spiritual Fulfillments

It is not always clear when prophecy is looking at a physical object only as a type of a spiritual reality, and when it is looking at the physical object itself. Babylon has fallen, and Scripture tells us that she will not be rebuilt. However, Babylon figures
prominently in Revelation; so we conclude that there is a spiritual Babylon which has long outlasted the empire of that name, and that Revelation is viewing this spiritual entity. In this case, we have no choice. But in other cases, it is not clear whether we have the spiritual entity in view, or the physical one, or both. Will Rome be reconstructed as a physical empire, or will it, as Babylon, return only as a spiritual one?

The Sealed and the Unrevealed

There are prophecies that have been sealed: the seven thunders of Revelation, and the 2300 mornings and evenings of Daniel are examples. There are also things that G-d has done that were hidden in previous ages, such as the Gospel to the Gentiles.

“The secret things belong to the Lord our G-d, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever.” Since there are things that have not been revealed, we need not build a picture of the end times which pretends that we know everything. The potential of the unknown to change what we think we know is great indeed. “If any man supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know.”

The Challenge

If we are new to the prophetic arena, or to our wonderful G-d, the issues raised here might seem daunting indeed. However, “It is the glory of G-d to conceal a matter, and the glory of kings to find it out.” If we are to be reigning with Him, it is to our glory to find out these things. Let His “day” not steal up on us like a thief in the night; rather, let us be consistent and persistent in our willingness to enter the prophetic realm of the Holy Spirit, and to search these things out.

(This article was first published on the Tishrei Web site “family-restorationmagazine”)

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From Theatre to The Home
From Building Centricity To Family Centricity

Written by: Karl D Coke

Millions of Christians have left the Church since 1960. Why? Today’s Church behaves more like a “Greek theatre” than a living organism. Its members “go to” church when they should “be” the church. These spectators are wearied from fighting, wasting money and trying to fulfill a pastor’s “vision.” Most Christians just want “out” assuming there is no alternative. They leave (intending to never again darken a church door) but soon realize they are missing “the” church. They do not realize they “are” the church.

Still believing in God, His son, Jesus, God’s Word and the power of His Spirit, they wander and search for something real. They have been made sick from the church “competing” with itself! They only wanted relationship, not membership; ministry, not programs; shepherds, not theatre managers; Bible, not buildings!

Ralph Neighbor, in his book, Where Do We Go From Here? says, “During the past 35 years, a new form of church life has spread across the earth. It is estimated that as many as 75 million people are participating in ‘cell churches.’ It is rooted in the New Testament church pattern described in Acts 2:42-46.” The issue is not whether your church has a building. We need to realise that people are abandoning churches which “focus” on the buildings not people. Believers are not abandoning God. In Canada, as pointed out by Reginald W. Bibby in his book, Fragmented Gods, “Catholics and Protestants are abandoning the Church (buildings)”

Why the exodus from today’s church buildings? Are her buildings not ornate enough? Are her publicised intentions not pure? Is her mission statement not clear? Today’s Exodus from the church is about none of these issues nor a thousand more. Today’s Exodus is due to a re-examination of what the Church “is.” Concerned people are reading and doing God’s Word! They have rediscovered that the home should be the centre of their spiritual growth.

Restoration Instead of Reformation

Many church leaders, who recognise that there is a problem, have sought for answers to stem the outward flow of members. Most conclude that reformation is what is needed. They feel if they address the loudest complaints of membership they can stop the bleeding. Saints of God, the Holy One of Israel is not interested in reformation. The Creator wants restoration! Reformation only deals with some of what is wrong. It never completely becomes Biblical. Reformation always allows some Greco-Roman culture to remain in place. The Author of our Bible wants us to be totally orthopractic as well as orthodox! He wants us to do His Word His way!

When I say that the church needs to return to the home, I am not speaking of thousands of “mini-Greco-Roman churches.” Nor am I speaking of “cell” churches. I am advocating the restoration of the home as the centre of each family’s spiritual growth. When we build strong families, then our assembling together will make a strong church, not the reverse!

When we of Family Restoration Fellowship made the transition from a “building oriented” church to being “family oriented,” five things were considered. They were:

1) The home should be the centre of spiritual growth;
2) Church leadership should “pasture” the flock;
3) Tithing should be received from all member families as a transaction which requires a blessing from the pastor;
4) The head of each household must assume the responsibility of spiritual leadership; and
5) A weekly family day of spiritual rest must become part of each family’s lifestyle. These five things were found in the Biblical Judaic family model.

Let’s Make Home The Center Again

We consider firstly the home as the centre of spiritual growth. Children receive parental instruction because it is given in the safety of their home. Proverbs 4:3-4 says, “When I was a boy in my father’s house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, he taught me and said, ‘Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live.’” This passage clearly states two facts:

1) learning took place “in my
father’s house” and 2) the head of the household did the teaching (“he taught me”)

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 says, “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. “Impress them upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” This passage, from the Shema, also makes it abundantly clear that the home is the centre for spiritual growth.

Forget the Theatre

In open contrast, the church is like theatre and has become a world of make-believe to children. Complete strangers instruct them and make the Bible seem like fairy tales. The church, like any theatre in London, Paris or New York, has actors who play out a world of make-believe. The church is merely another act to use archaic Shakespearean language, so, while children are “at” church, they use a different language. As soon as they leave the church building, they will return to “real life.”

I shall never forget the beginning of a church service at which I was the guest speaker. The associate pastor began the service with the words, “lights!, camera!, action!” This was an open admission that their church service was like a world of make-believe. The church is merely another act to use archaic Shakespearean language, so, while children are “at” church, they use a different language. As soon as they leave the church building, they will return to “real life.”

I contend that we need to restore the home as the centre of spiritual life. When mom or dad teach their own child at home, Bible lessons take on reality. Children trust parents who love and nurture them. When Bible lessons are taught in the home, every day language is used.

It should be noted that the Tabernacle was designed after Abraham and Sarah’s tent, not the reverse. All of Judaism teaches this to their faithful. This idea makes an important point. The Church should be modelled after the home, not the reverse.

How About Pastorizing?

Secondly, we consider that church leadership should “pasture” the flock. Most Christians are not pastored, they are controlled. The current church “system” provides little relationship between pastor and congregates. People say they have a pastor, but when you ask them how often the pastor is in their home or they in his, the response is “Oh, the pastor is too busy for that.” The next question is, “how often do you speak with your pastor?” The answer is, “If I make an appointment with the secretary, either he or one of his staff might speak with me.” The plain truth is that most believers have no relationship with a pastor. They only see him on service days, high and lifted up on a platform, preaching at them.

I was the senior pastor of a “building” church. One day, in a grocery store, a woman greeted me with the words, “hi, pastor!” I said to her, “hello, who are you?” With instant pain in her eyes, she responded, “I joined your church nine months ago, don’t you know me?” I was pastoring a forty-two acre church complex with five associate pastors, a Christian school with fifteen teachers, a summer camp located on a lake in the mountains and nearly a one million dollar annual budget. I realized that day I had a relationship with few of the eleven hundred parishioners. I was pastoring buildings, parking lots, staff, school grounds, baseball fields, tennis courts and budgets. I saw that day I had become a theatre manager running a great operation.

God called me back to “pasturing” people with Zechariah 11:4 which says, “This is what the LORD my God says: ‘Pasture the flock marked for slaughter.’” The key word is pasture. When the job description is changed from “pastor” (a noun and title), to “pasture” (a verb and function), what a pastor should do is clearly seen. A pastor is one who provides pasture for God’s flock.

The Flock is Everything

Isaiah and Ezekiel are both right. Isaiah 49:9b says, “They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill.” Ezekiel 34:13b-14 declares, “I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements of the land. I will tend them in good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.” Jesus said to Peter, “feed my sheep” in John 21:16-17. Peter repeated this “pasturer” request when he said to the elders in I Peter 5:2, “Be shepherds of God’s flock.” The Biblical point is that the main function of the man of God is to provide God’s sheep pasture. This is not defined by preaching sermons. It means pastors must go where the sheep are in order to feed them. The pastor must know where good food is and lead the sheep to it according to Psalm 23.

The church has departed from the Biblical model of “shepherd” and “sheep.” It has lost its focus on the task of a pastor. Because of this departure, today’s pastoral candidates are better suited to have a business administration degree. They are asked to be counsellors, financiers, barristers, public speakers and administrators. Churches today require “being managed,” rather than being pastored.

They have buildings which must be paid for, kept in repair, cleaned, heated and cooled. The pastor has been saddled with this responsibility. Pastors are so busy they cannot study God’s Word. Then church members unfairly cry, “I’m not being fed!”

Let’s Talk About Tithe

Thirdly, tithing should be receive from all member families as a transaction which requires a blessing from the pastorer. Tithing is God’s plan to fund His ministry. It is not an “optional” clause in Scripture.

What needs to be done is found in Nehemiah 9:38-10:39. It says in summary, “We assume the responsibility of God’s Law to tithe so that the needs of our priests are Biblically provided.” Denominational statistics indicate fewer than one-third of today’s church members tithe. Part of the cause for this embarrassment is the tithe has been improperly received and improperly administered.

According to God’s Word in Hebrews 7:1-10 and Numbers 6:22-27,18:8-32, the man of God should bless the giver when he gives. The tithe should be given directly to the man of God. It should not be placed anonymously in a pan or pouch which passes through the pews. It should have the integrity of an eye to eye contact between pastor and tither. II Corinthians 9:10 or Deuteronomy 28:1-14 should be invoked over a donor each time he tithes.

Furthermore, how that tithe is administered is critical. It should be invested in the people. According to Numbers 18, ten percent of the total tithe of a congregation should be held in reserve. If a family loses their income, that ten percent could then help with household bills until employment is found.

We of Family Restoration Fellowship have seen this work successfully for three years without one family taking advantage of the fund! The Holy Spirit speaks very clearly to the needy family when to ask for help. This has been in stark contrast to any previous “benevolent” fund experiences where people take advantage of the church. Also, I have never had to say “no” to anyone over the past three years, with regard to the amount or the purpose.
The Husband Restoration

Our fourth consideration was the head of each household must assume the responsibility of spiritual leadership for that home. Unfortunately, when a family joins a “system” church, the head of that household passes the spiritual responsibility on to the pastor. Without intending to emasculate the father, the pastor becomes the spiritual head of every joining family. The father stays busy with his work while his wife and family are “pastored” by the pastor. The wife grows spiritually and the children are supervised by church programs, but the father stagnates spiritually.

This is proven by the demographics of pastoral counselling. Most pastoral counselling is to wives. This is due to the pastor having replaced the husband as spiritual head of the household.

The time has come to re-establish heads of households as the spiritual leader in the home. This can be a man or a woman in single parent situations. Spiritual priests must be raised up in the home. This requires that heads of households learn how to eat spiritual food for themselves. People are not going to eat for themselves as long as pastors make attendance obligatory (a mortal sin) and provide so many programs that there is no family time.

Nehemiah 9:38, 10:28-29 says, “In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing ... all who separated themselves from the neighbouring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, ... and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God ... to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the LORD our God.”

Stand Your Ground!

To obey God’s Word and reinstating the head of the household as the spiritual leader of the home is a bold step. It is a step which will meet opposition. The opposition will come from the church “system.” Many who wish to assume spiritual responsibility will under pressure from “Christians.” What is particularly sad is that these “well meaning” Christian persecutors have become defenders of the “system” rather than defenders of the faith. This is due to constant hounding from the pulpit that faithfulness to God is equated with attendance in a building.

Having parents as the spiritual head of the home is prophetic. It is a sign of the coming of Messiah. Malachi 4:5-6 says, “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

Those Blessed Children... And Fathers

Each of our families which has placed the head of the household into spiritual leadership has grown rapidly in all areas. The hearts of the children have turned toward their parents. Parents now know where their children are spiritually. The security of wives has changed from material goods to knowing their children are learning from their fathers. Fathers who were once too busy for their children are now excited about the time spent with them.

The families who have learned to bless their children with Genesis 48:20 (boys) or Ruth 4:11 (girls), Numbers 6:24-26 and Isaiah 11:2-3a are growing closer each week. Husbands who bless their wives with Proverbs 31:10-31 in the presence of their children are experiencing the love of 1 Corinthians 13 for the whole family. The children who are being affirmed by the blessing of their parents no longer desire worldly entertainment. Parents are learning God’s Word at an unparalleled rate because they must study in order to teach.

...And Then There’s The Sabbath

A spiritual day of rest must become part of the family lifestyle. This fifth consideration is extremely important. Yet, due to an explosive anti-Semitism in the church, most recoil at the thought of honouring Shabbat. Ignorance throws away the Shabbat with the statement, “I’m a New Testament Christian, I’m under grace and not the Law!” With that sweeping statement, Believers throw away God’s great gift of Shabbat. A gift which can restore the family.

Shabbat is ineffable. It cannot be fully grasped or explicated through words alone. It must be experienced to be fully appreciated and understood. Jesus said, “Shabbat was made for man, not man for Shabbat.” We do not “grasp” the Shabbat as much as it grips us. Of the many contributions Judaism has made to Christianity Shabbat is perhaps the most important. Moses said, “Ye shall keep the Sabbath for it is holy unto you.” This implies that the Shabbat is committed to man, not man to the Shabbat!

Shabbat is the only ritual mentioned in the Ten Commandments. Shabbat enables a person to experience a foretaste of the Messianic age to come, to return to his ideal state in the Garden of Eden and to celebrate his escape from bondage! Man is in desperate need of the Shabbat today. Through it we can reaffirm the centrality of the family, the home and God in our lives! It brings together every Biblical value – warmth, spirituality, sanctified materialism, family, community, prayer, love, Torah study, singing, longing for Messiah and affirming covenant. Having a weekly family Shabbat centred around the LORD Jesus, our Messiah, will restore what the world extracts.

Many organisational people have shown concern over Christians who have opted to meet in homes. They are quick to quote Hebrews 10:25, which says, “For sake not the assembling of your selves together...” Their only measure of a meeting is the one held in their single purpose building.
The only “official” meeting is the one conducted by the priest at a scheduled time. Leviticus 23:1-3, however, says the most important meeting to God, and, which should never be “forsaken,” is the family home day of rest! I offer one final note. “As spiritual relationships are strengthened, ministry results.” Ministry results from relationships. Ministry is what we do at home for those with whom we have a relationship. As relationships are established outside the home, ministry naturally follows. We now do for others outside our home what we do for those within our home. The pastor’s job is to equip the head of the household who in turn equips the members of his household for ministry.

It’s All In The Family...

Donald Posterski and Irwin Barker in their book, Where’s a Good Church?, list things to look for if you are considering changing churches. While they fail to point in the Biblical direction of being the church, they confirm exactly what we have found and say, “the power of the family is unequalled ....the power of the family is stronger than the leverage of the church.”

The answer is not in finding a new church, it is found in having your family become the church! James Rutz was right when he said in his book, The Open Church.” When we switched from living rooms to church buildings and professionally staffed the church, we lost all momentum. The church became weak and cold.” I say, “Let us invest in people, not in more buildings.”

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Cold Heart, Warm Heart?

“If it’s to be, it’s up to me!”

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Written by: John Garr

(Excerpted from John Garr’s Book Family Worship: Making Your Home a House of God, Publisher: Golden Key Press, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, 2013)

Jesus made the following observation about the age of lawlessness: “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.”

Herein is the root cause of the unrelenting attacks on the institution of the family and home. Evil triumphs because men of conscience say little and do less. As lawlessness, even hatred of God’s laws, becomes more abundant, the love that is the essence of Divine Being diminishes in human hearts and is replaced by an insatiable desire for self-fulfillment and pleasure. The world which once featured much humanitarianism and concern for the downtrodden is ruled by those who think of nothing except self.

When men’s concerns are only for themselves, there is no depth to which they will not stoop. When men are wrapped up in themselves, they become smaller and smaller packages. They are full of themselves, to be sure, but they have made themselves essentially nothing.

Sin Is The Real Critter

Because of sin, the world has become an increasingly cold and cruel place. The very sanctity of the home has been invaded by these sinister forces, making a growing percentage of homes dark, dreary, and loveless places. Society’s heart has been blackened by sin, and love has been crowed out, replaced by self-interest and diverse perversions. Then politicians, bureaucrats, and pundits beat their chest and weep over kids killing kids in schools and on the streets of the metropolises of the West. Then they cite weapons, poverty, and political oppression as the reasons for such violence. As morally bankrupt educators and politicians desperately search for answers to the unthinkable, they blame anything and everything—everything, that is, except the sin that is the real cause of such manifest evil.

Even though iniquity abounds, there is one positive assurance from God’s Word: “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”

God’s grace is always superabundant, more than enough to meet every challenge, more than enough to atone for any sin. It is time for the fire of God’s loving presence to warm the heart of a cold world. It is time for a renewal movement to sweep over the societies of men throughout the world to bring about a restoration of truly biblical models for home and family. The very existence of civilization is at stake.

What Can I Do?

This is a genuine rallying cry to save the planet. If the insidious postmodernist intentions to destroy the family as it is defined in biblical terms succeeds, civilization as earth has known it will cease to exist, and the world will descend into an abyss of debauchery, violence, and chaos. Without a doubt, it’s time for a revolution of restoration. All that is necessary for this manifest evil to succeed is for the righteous of the earth to remain silent in the face of this deliberately planned, carefully orchestrated assault on the biblical family.

Now is the time for all good men and women to come to the aid of their planet! Tomorrow may be too late.

Everyone must take the position of Hillel the Great: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me, and if I am only for myself, what am I?” and especially Hillel’s dictum: “If not now, when?”

Indeed, each of those who believe in the biblical family must adopt the motto, “If it’s to be, it’s up to me.”

A Call For Renewal

With the profound level of disrespect for authority and the lack of civility and etiquette in large segments of today’s society, particularly in the younger generation, a restoration of biblical models for the home is not only a growing need, it is an indispensable requisite for its continued existence.

If Western society is to survive the challenges of neo-paganism, monism, and secularism, a “back-to-the-Bible” movement must begin at the most fundamental level of society and the church, the family. New Age philosophy and neo-paganism threaten not only the existence of both Judaism and Christianity but also the very fabric of civilization itself.

The Society Stands On Families

Societal renewal begins and continues one family at a time. The nations of the world do not need simply a multi-splendorous manifestation of ecclesiastical triumphalism. And they surely don’t need one more massive political or social monstrosity with billions—yep, trillions—of dollars scattered to the wind of political correctness. As a matter of fact, what is needed is not the politically correct but the biblically correct.

Today’s societies must be rebuilt from the foundation up. Restoring the family is society’s first and foremost need. The world needs millions of Joshuas who will make the resounding proclamation: “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Rather than worrying about the rest of society and seeking to devise strategies to demand societal compliance with biblical morality, leaders are better served by conforming their lives and those of their own families to the...
mores of God’s Word and then witnessing to the decaying world around them by dynamically modeling the success that comes from doing God’s thing God’s way!

Morality can never be legislated. It is a heart issue. Only changed hearts can conform to the image of God’s Son, by “keeping his commandments.”

It Begins From The Mirror

Church and societal leaders should do their best to fulfill their public functions, but they must be as King David, who was focused on “blessing his household” even after leading Israel in one of the most ecstatic exercises of worship in recorded history. Church leaders must focus their attention not so much on their ecclesiastical duties as on maintaining a secure domestic temple full of blessing and affirmation for their own families.

To effect change in society and the world, those who are passionate for God’s kingdom must begin with society’s heart and soul—their own homes. To rebuild battered and ruined cities and nations, each family must restore godliness to itself first.

Take A Look At Nehemia

A workable strategy for world renewal and restoration to biblical morality is the one that Nehemiah used to rebuild the ruined city of Jerusalem: every family was directed to work on the part of the wall in front of its house. When believing families restore the biblical home, the inevitable impact will begin to multiply and resound around the globe.

Grace can abound, love can be renewed, and the family can be restored. The biblical ideal can emerge when God’s family returns to his guidebook for successful living, the Bible. God can and will create in society a clean heart, but he will do it one family at a time. The coming renewal that will sweep across the world will take place only in the context of the restored family temple.

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Together these four leaders composed the leadership of the Jewish people during the return from the Babylonian Exile and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and the House of the Lord. King Darius I of Persia appointed Zerubbabel as governor of Judea. When Darius’ power at home began to weaken due to revolts and unrest, it opened the opportunity for the Jewish leaders to work on rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple.

Zerubbabel And Sheshbazzar

Although the books of Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, and Nehemiah mention Zerubbabel, they do not clarify many details about his life. Nevertheless, one clear fact is that Zerubbabel was related to the family of King David and was even a descendant of the royal line. For this reason Zerubbabel appears both in Matthew’s and Luke’s genealogies for Yeshua.

In I Chronicles 3:19-21, appears the genealogical list of Zerubbabel’s family. “And the sons of Pedaiah: Zerubbabel, and Shimei. And the sons of Zerubbabel: Meshullam, and Hananiah; and Shelomith was their sister; and Hashubah and Ohel, and Bezechiah, and Hasadiah, Jushabhesed, five. And the sons of Hananiah: Pelatiah, and Jeshaiah; the sons of Jeshaiah; Rephaiah; the sons of [Rephaiah]; Arnan; the sons of [Arnan]; Obadiah; the sons of [Obadiah]: Shecaniah.”

Despite Zerubbabel’s ancestry, his ascent to power was not free from controversy. In the book of Ezra, one sees another governor of the Persian province of Judea named Sheshbazzar. Very little is known about him, but Ezra reports that Sheshbazzar was the prince of Judah into whose hands the gold Nebuchadnezzar captured from the Temple in Jerusalem was entrusted. In fact, Ezra 5:14-16 even says that Sheshbazzar brought this gold to Jerusalem and personally laid the foundation of the new Temple.

Yet the words of Haggai and Zechariah give a clear impression that Zerubbabel and Joshua returned the exiles and rebuilt the Temple without any mention of Sheshbazzar.

Politics, Politics...

What then was actually happening in Jerusalem during the Return from Babylon? There were probably several parties involved and several waves of exiles who returned to the Land of Israel, each one with its own leaders who sought supremacy over and credit for all the work of restoration.

Unfortunately, that is how things work here in the Middle East, all the way from ancient times up until today. Even today governments pass laws that no one has any intention to keep and have unrealistic political aspirations that no one can fulfill. In those days idealistic proto-Zionists like Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel, and Joshua had purist desires that were not realistic and were therefore never accomplished.

One of the major projects Ezra initiated was to convince the Israelite men to put away their foreign wives. Ezra was alarmed when he came to Jerusalem and saw so many mixed marriages. The second wave of immigration that came with Zerubbabel had many more men than women, so when there were not enough Jewish women to go around, the men married local pagan and Samaritan women. Ezra legislated that all these women should be put away, but it never happened because the public could not tolerate it.

Heavy Reasons Behind Israel’s Election

The Rabbis also learned later that you cannot legislate something that the general public cannot or will not keep. The conflict between Judaism as a universal faith and race and Judaism as a small, restricted, and sectarian religion is one that is still raging in this land and in the living-rooms of many Jews around the world. One reason God actually elected Israel was because of their spiritual and physical weakness. Nehemiah 8 shows this weakness in its account of the public reading of the Torah to the people who could not even understand it anymore. The people in this story acted as if the commandments...
in the Torah were totally new for them. They had been in Exile for seventy years, and most of them were born in Babylon and did not know Hebrew.

This ignorance of the Word of God was the main cause for their spiritual weakness. Yet on the other hand, they were all full of zeal for the building projects of the walls and of the House of the Lord. They were willing to build, to contribute, and even to fight the enemies of Israel who opposed the return of the Jewish people to the land and the rebuilding of its defenses.

Back Then Is The New Now...

The situation then was very much like our own times. There was and still is a strong sense of secularism and spiritual weakness at the same time that there burns a great zeal and patriotism for the rebuilding of the land. Zerubbabel and the High Priest Joshua/Yeshua were the perfect combination of the politician who represents the nationalistic aspirations and the religious leader that represents the spiritual aspirations of the people.

The artificial separation between Church and State was not a part of the biblical model of perfect government.

We have both bodies and souls, and we cannot separate them without death and destruction. A political body without any spiritual, moral, ethical, and cultural aspirations has no moral basis to rule and impose any moral, ethical, or political rules of law upon the people.

Zechariah the son of Brachia who wrote the book of Zechariah says that Zerubbabel and Yeshua received a special revelation from the LORD through an angel, who said, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts." (Zech 4:6)

One could say that this is not exactly realpolitik, in terms of our world’s normal political struggles and solutions, but this principle was the opening salvo of instructions which God gave them.

This principle is the main weapon the LORD gave them and is intimately connected with the promise given to Yeshua the High Priest in Zechariah 3:8-9. "Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, you and your companions who sit before you, for they are a wondrous sign; for behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the Branch. For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription," says the LORD of hosts, ‘and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.’

The Messiah In The Prophecies

Any prophecy that contains the words “branch,” “stone,” and “my servant” is inherently a Messianic prophecy. The Messianic connection to “branch” is most clear in Jeremiah 23:5-6, “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.”

The Jewish tradition of interpretation on this verse is very interesting, so here are a couple of examples.

Rabbi David Kimchi (RADAK) said on this verse, "A Righteous Branch. This is the Messiah, and He is called a Branch because He came into the world like a plant of the field that has multiplied and became a multitude. And He is righteous; my people will become righteous."

Another great Jewish commentator, the Malbim, says about verses 4-5, "And I will raise upon them (Israel) shepherds, in the Second Temple period because there were no real kings only shepherds... I will raise to David a Branch of Righteousness— as Isaiah says, ‘There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.’ For this reason He is called a Branch, that by his righteousness He will reign as King. He will not be a shepherd, but He will be a great King... and in his days, ‘Nation will not raise a sword against nation’. In his days, in the days of the Messiah, Judea will be saved."

The Term ‘Messiah’

Both the Radak and the Malbim interpret this passage as speaking about the Messiah. This is the reason why according to traditional Jewish textual interpretation, Zerubbabel and Yeshua the High Priest foreshadow the Messiah. The revelation that it was not by might nor by physical strength that salvation would come to Israel, but by the Spirit of the Lord was true both in the time of the Shirat Zion and now.

The term Messiah, mashiach, which is translated into Greek as christos or “Christ” in English, is used in the Bible for priests, kings, and, of course, the Messiah. Messiah means “anointed,” and every office that God authorized and ordered was inaugurated and authorized by the ceremony of anointing with oil. For this reason The Bible calls many different people “messiahs.”

Here are some examples from the Scriptures. Leviticus 4:3 says, “If the anointed [mashiach] priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned a young bull without blemish as a sin offering.”

In 1 Samuel 2:10 it says, “The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces; from heaven He will thunder against them. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to His king and exalt the horn of His anointed [mashiach].”

Later it says, “And he [David] said to his men, ‘The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD’S anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed [mashiach] of the LORD.”’ II Daniel 9:26 says, “And after the sixty-two weeks messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.”

In the New Testament, let us take some examples from John. “He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah [christos].’” IV Then later in John 4:25, “The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming,’ (who is called Christ). ‘When He comes, He will tell us all things.’”

Zerubbabel is called the mashiach, as well as King Saul and the priests from the family of Aaron, because priests, prophets, and kings were all anointed with the anointing oil. Of course the MESSIAH Yeshua was ultimately above all the other figures. The eschatological figure of the MESSIAH was supposed to embody in his nature and character all three of these anointed offices and to be a priest, a prophet, and a king. Yeshua is the only one who is actually anointed to be all three.

The Torah Pearces Hearts

A complete understanding of what was happening during the Return to Zion is hard to attain, but Zerubbabel and Yeshua were obviously engaged in a great struggle for the return of the Jewish people to their homes. This struggle involved outside neighbors, like Sanbalat the Arab, and also internal problems such as the people’s ignorance and the contradictory aspirations of the different leaders. Ezra, Nehemiah, the priests, and the Levites came up with one solution for the ignorance of the people, which was to read the Word of God to the public and let it wash, convince, and convict the people of their sins and motivate them to turn to God and do his will. Nehemiah 8 relates that this was exactly what happened. The leaders gathered all the people and
set up a reading platform so that the masses could see and hear the Word of God. As they read the Torah aloud, the leaders also explained, interpreted, and commented on the text since most of the people did not know Hebrew. When the people heard the Word, they became so sad that they cried. Ezra and the other leaders then told them not to cry but to celebrate because, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Neh 8:10)

From that day the people started keeping the commands of God. The first command they undertook was to keep the feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles), and they did it as it had not been done for many generations. There is a clear principle of restoration in this story. There was a physical restoration to the land along with the physical rebuilding of the city and the wall, but there was also a spiritual restoration of the souls of the people through hearing the Word of God, repenting, and committing to do his will.

Teamwork, Teamwork…!

The first thing we learn from the partnerships of Zerubbabel with Yeshua and Ezra with Nehemiah is that working with others and not alone is crucial. The executive branch and the priestly branch needed to work together in partnership. Zerubbabel was from the royal Davidic line, and Yeshua was from the Aaronic line. They worked together to accomplish what was good and right for the people on multiple levels.

It is not enough for the Jews to return home physically; we must also return home spiritually before that restoration and return is a true re-establishment of God’s rule in Israel. When the leaders read the Torah publicly, the people heard, repented, and changed. The power of the Word of God cannot be underestimated. The power is not in the preacher; it is in God’s Word. Ministers need to learn to work two by two in teams, just as Yeshua the Messiah sent his disciples out in the First Century. This is a lesson that is important to me personally because I worked alone during most of my ministry, and it is only in the last few years that I started to learn to work with others in partnerships. Zechariah also teaches the lesson that God is always zealous for Zion and for the fulfillment of his promises to his children.

Zechariah 8 promises that God will return to Zion and dwell in her, and whether one understands this text as literal, modern day Zion or as the Heavenly Jerusalem, it will still be Jerusalem. God’s faithfulness to keep his Word is beyond reproach.

One of the most important Messianic prophecies in the Bible is found in Zechariah 12:10-12, which predicts how Israel will come to faith in Yeshua the Messiah. “And I will pour my Spirit upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication, and they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves.”

Rabbinical Comments

Here is what some Jewish Rabbinic commentators say about this text:
Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra (12th Century) says, “I will pour out a spirit of grace and supplication on the citizens of Jerusalem.” Before this happens, first there will be trouble because the Messiah son of Joseph will be killed, and the Almighty will destroy all the nations that are coming to attack Jerusalem. This is what it means ‘and they will look upon me...’ At that time all the nations will look upon me to see what I shall do to those who pierced the Messiah son of Joseph, and they will mourn for him.”

The Malbim comments on this passage, “I will pour out on the house of David a spirit of grace and supplication” - For by this they begged God for grace and mercy, and they received grace and supplication from God.

For by this they saw the Messiah who is a precious Spirit fallen in the war, and they will wake up in repentance and prayer. ‘And they will look upon me whom they have pierced.’ They will look and respond and see that He died for the sins of the generation.”

The period of the return of the exiles was one of great tumult and changes in the makeup of the Jewish nation. Those who returned to Jerusalem hungered for the salvation of the nation no less than we do today. Additionally, the leaders then were far from being perfect people, and they had their problems from within and without. Zechariah 3 describes Yeshua son of Jozadak as having unclean clothing that needed to be changed. This text reveals that God can use us even with the limitations and the sinful character that trouble all of us.

The Stone In The Word

Despite all these problems, the Lord calls Zerubbabel greater than a major mountain and a cornerstone that will be praised. The Rabbis even say that anyone who thinks that he is greater than Zerubbabel in his mission to restore the people of Israel to their land will be humbled and brought low. Referring to a person as a stone is another Messianic motif that springs from Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 28:16.

“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not be dismayed.’” This motif became a parable for the Messiah in Jewish Second Temple literature and in Qumran texts. The stone that had been rejected became the cornerstone and a foundation in Zion for those who believe. Zerubbabel’s identification with these metaphors also makes him some kind of “messianic figure.”

Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra says about Zerubbabel and Yeshua the High Priest in his comments on Zechariah 4:14, “For he is the messiah (anointed one) sitting on the throne of Israel for it is written, ‘He shall rule from his throne.’ Yeshua is anointed because he is a High Priest. It is written that, ‘There will be a counsel of peace between the two, and there will be no jealousy between them.”

What Goes Around, Comes Around...

Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and those who returned after seventy years in Babylon were very much like those who returned from the 2,000 years of Exile in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Each one came with his own baggage of Diaspora culture, and if they spoke Hebrew, it was with a Babylonian accent. Each one came with his own understanding of what should happen and how things should develop for the good of the nation.

Zerubbabel led the political wing and emphasized the administrative side of rebuilding the civil authority in Judea. One could equate him to David Ben-Gurion or Menachem Begin in that era. Ezra and Yeshua were much more like Rabbi Kook, who established the national religious party in Israel and emphasized both the physical and spiritual restoration of the land and the people.

We can learn much from the return from the first Diaspora in Babylon that would help us deal with some of the stumbling blocks we face today in the return from the second Exile after 2,000 years.

www.netivyah.org
Yeshua Fixed Them Breakfast
The Way Of Reconciliation Is The Way Of Restoration

Written by: Paul Sumner

You’re in shock. Your hopes are collapsing under pounding storm waves. You’re disillusioned about the central person in your life who made promises that have, apparently, all died—with him. But have they? Did he?

You go home. Pick up the remnants of the life you had aban¬
ned to follow him. For now, work staves off depression and despair. Physical labor outside, all night, with good friends, keeps the mind occupied, diverted.

Then at dawn, when you’re most depleted in body and soul, you see the unexpected: That One himself is standing there in the dim twilight, like the bright morning star telling you that night is ending soon. Resurrection of the sun is coming.

So it was for Peter (Shimon Bar-Yonah), the fisherman from Ca¬
pernaum on the shore of the Sea of Kinneret in the northern region of Galil. He had followed Yeshua of Nazareth for about three yea¬rs. He was convinced he was from God: “You are the Mashiach, the Son of God ... you are the Holy One of God” [Matt 16:15; John 6:69].

But then Yeshua was arrested, illegally tried in two courts then executed by a military death squad. How could this happen to God’s Mashiach?

Peter couldn’t endure. He publi¬cally denied knowing Yeshua. He wasn’t whom he thought he was. Three days later, in a secret meet¬
ing place in Jerusalem, Peter and the other disciples saw Yeshua, apparently raised from the dead. Was this merely a vision or mass hallucination born of desperate hope that he had not died?

Believe It Or Not, But Believe

Thomas came late to the gath¬
ering. When they confirmed to him, “We have seen the Lord,” he didn’t believe them [John 20:18-25]. But when he tangibly encountered the resurrected Yeshua, he believed for himself. And yet, we readers of these ac¬counts notice that uncertainty still plagued the disciples.

Because some days later, they fled the heavy, threatening Holy City for their homes in the north and their previous life of fishing on Lake Kinneret. On these very waters they had seen Yeshua’s divine power [John 6:16-21]. But doubt hovered over them. Had God’s divine power truly raised their Lord?

So here, again, by these waters, Yeshua chose to “manifest him¬self” to them—not as Lord over their Lord, but as their Servant [Mark 10:45].

In the pre-dawn light, he stood on the shore and called out to them in their boat [John 21:1-13]. He called them “children,” not men. The one known as the Beloved disciple said, “It is the Adon, the Lord himself.” Quickly, Peter jum¬ped in the water to swim toward Yeshua, about 110 meters away. The others rowed as hard as they could.

When they arrived, they found an unbelievable scene. On the beach was a fire roasting a fish [singu¬lar] and handmade pita bread [v. 9]. Yeshua was the cook. He told them to bring some of their catch, perhaps to add to his pre¬pared meal.

A subtle parallel appears here. Days before, while Yeshua was being tried and abused in court, Peter was outside, huddled around “a charcoal fire” [anthrakia] to keep warm, among Temp¬tle staff who may have abused Yeshua earlier [John 18:18].

But this morning, on the beach, Peter was offered food by the hand of the one he betrayed—food cooked over “a charcoal fire” [anthrakia] [John 21:9].

Yeshua uttered a most heart¬melting invitation to Peter and all the soul-battered, bewildered children:

“Come and have breakfast.”

As the host, Yeshua “took the bread” (as he did at their last Pas¬sover Seder), broke it in pieces and gave it to them, with the fish. We aren’t told more about the meal, but we expect he offered thanks to God for it, as he always did [Matt 15:36, Mark 8:6, John 6:23].

The Humble Servant

While serving them, we hear no rebuke from him for their earlier fear, unbelief, and abandonment. We wonder: How did Yeshua do all this, and before dawn? He caught and cleaned the fish, mi¬xed the bread flour (with olive oil?), collected pieces of wood, ignited a fire to make charcoal, then roasted the fish—all so that everything was ready when his disciples arrived.

Why would he do this?

Fellowship meals for God’s peo¬ple in the presence of the Holy One were observed in ages past and were deemed prophetic of ones to come.

* When Moses, Aaron and seventy-two elders ascended Mount Sinai “they saw the God of Israel” and “ate and drank.” We assume they did this “before God,” as they had on a previous occasion [Exod 24:9-11; 18:12]. To eat and drink in God’s presence signifies intimate fellowship with and ac¬ceptance by him.

* The angel of the LORD found Elijah collapsed under a tree in the wilderness where he had fled in terror from Jezebel. The angel baked bread for him “on hot stones,” set a jug of water nearby, and let him sleep [1 Kings 19:4-8].

* The prophet Isaiah foresaw a grand Future Meal to be hosted by God on Mount Zion: The L ORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain. [Isa 25:6a] Note here that God himself will participate in the meal. What will he eat? “He will swallow up death for all time” [v. 8].

* At a marriage festival in the vil¬lage of Cana, Yeshua blessed the newlyweds and guests with his presence and a miraculous gift of wine [John 2]. Here was a human covenant ceremony honored by the very keeper of the “eternal covenant” himself [Heb 13:20].

* The Cana event and Isaiah’s prophecy foreshadowed the fi¬nal marriage banquet in honor of the “Lamb” [of God]—a cere¬mony open only to those who are “invited” guests, who accepted the call to come, where they will be greeted as his “wife” [Rev 19:7-9].

To his eleven disciples who stood with him during his trials, he made a profound promise: Just as my Father has granted me a king-
dom, I grant you that you may eat
and drink at my table in my king-
dom... [Luke 22:30]

In that consummate fellowship
meal, it’s implied that God, as
father and host, will provide eve-
rything for Yeshua’s “children” at
the banquet. It is not a potluck
dinner. They cannot contribute
to this celebration. They can only
accept the gracious invitation—
and observe the new dress code
[Rev 7:9; 22:14].

The Way Back To Family Unity

We notice five features of the
breakfast scene on Kinneret’s
shore:
1. The simplicity of Yeshua’s invi-
tation: “Come.”
2. The timing: the hour of resur-
rection when the sun returns to
dispel darkness, disappointment,
and despair.
3. The simple nourishment: fish
and bread.
4. The forethought and prepara-
tion of the Host: he collected the
food and built the fire with his
own hands.
5. The forgiving silence of the
Host toward his fearful, uncertain
disciples: “Children ... come and
have breakfast.”

This private fellowship meal on
the shore of Kinneret gives us
hope when we consider what
Yeshua’s spirit is toward these
men.

Projecting beyond that moment
in time, there is an unspoken invi-
tation that draws “all peoples” to
him—specifically to come to his
banquet on Mount Zion [Hebrews
12:22], which even now is being
prepared for the future.

Until then, Yeshua hosts quiet
dawn breakfasts for weary, bro-
en-hearted disciples who will
come ashore to him—even today
and here, wherever and whoever
we are.

www.hebrew-streams.org
Prophetical Perspectives
Restoration Of Family Relationships

Written by: Keijo Lindeman

“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part” (1 Cor. 13:9).

“Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded to him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and ordinances. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Yahweh comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:4-6).

“Jesus answered them, “Elijah indeed comes first, and will restore all things” (Matthew 17:11).

“He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children’, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17).

“Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, so that there may come times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Christ Jesus, who was ordained for you before, when heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God spoke long ago by the mouth of his holy prophets” (Acts 3:19-21).

When the Apostle Paul, some 2000 years ago, was speaking to the Jews who were gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Shavuot, i.e. Pentecost, he said that all things would be restored for the coming of Yeshua the Messiah. This restoration concerns e.g. God’s Church, Israel, the creation, the day of rest, i.e. the Shabbath, the feasts of the Lord, and obedience to God’s Word, and the Lord’s commandments, etc. In the days previous to the Messiah’s coming, the Spirit of Elijah, i.e. the Spirit of Restoration poured out by God, will cause all things to be restored. In this process of restoration God will use many of His servants, over whom He will pour the Spirit of Elijah, and they, for their part, will work as His tools of restoration in God’s Church and in Israel, for instance (2 Kings 2:9; Luke 1:17).

This time we live in, the End Time, is also the time of apostacy, the time of the evil and adulterous generation (Matt. 12:39). God created man male and female, but this truth is becoming more and more ignored, and in many cases role patterns based on gender are no more accepted (Gen. 1:27). The traditional biblical concept of marriage between man and woman is being looked down upon and replaced by a gender neutral concept of marriage. The sins of Sodom in the days of Lot have invaded the society and, tragically, also the Church of the Lord to some extent, which according to Yeshua would be one sign of His return (Matt.24:12; Luke 17:28-39; Gen. 19:5; Rom. 1:24-32). We should be aware that the sins of Sodom bring the judgement of Sodom, but the Church of the Lord will be saved from under the fire and burning sulphur at the Messiah’s return and the rapture, just as Lot was saved from under the burning sulphur that rained over Sodom.

As for family relationships, their destiny in this End Time is not so tragic: as the Messiah’s return is approaching, family relationships will experience restoration. The hearts of the fathers will be turned to the children, and the hearts of the children will be turned towards their fathers. This means restoration of family relationships back to what the Lord had intended in His Word, the Bible. You can read more about these issues concerning family relationships and marriage in another article in this volume of Yovel, and learn about the principles upon which marriage and family relationships are based according to the Bible.

Family relationships in Israel and other nations are restored

“... who are Israelites, whose is the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service, and the promises; of whom are the fathers, and from whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God, blessed forever. Amen” (Romans 9:4-5)

“For I don’t desire, brothers, to have you ignorant of this mystery, so that you won’t be wise in your own conceits, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and so all Israel will be saved. Even as it is written, “There will come out of Zion the Deliverer. And he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. This is my convenant to them, When I will take away their sins.’ Concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But concerning the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sake. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Romans 11:25-29).

“I have other sheep, which are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will hear my voice. They will become one flock with one shepherd” (John 10:16).

“Now he didn’t say this of himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but that he might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad” (John 11:51-52).

When the Bible speaks about the turning of the fathers’ hearts to the children and the children’s hearts to the fathers, it speaks not only of the restoration of normal family relationships, but it has a broader prophetic meaning. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, speaks about the fathers of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jakob, etc. They represent the faith the God of Israel gave them. During the days of the early Apostolic Church this faith of Israel’s fathers was represented by Jews who believed in Yeshua. The message given to John the Baptist promised that the anointing of the Spirit of Elijah would cause the fathers’ hearts to turn to the children. This promise came true, when the Jewish Apostles of the early Church, and Paul, Apostle of the Gentiles in particular, preached this faith of Israel’s fathers to the spiritual children of gentle nations. That is how restoration was accomplished by the power of the Spirit of Elijah in the early days of the Church.

Now in the End Time, as the Lord’s Day draws near, the hearts of the fathers turn once again to the children, but this time the hearts of the children turn to the fathers, too. Which means that there will be a Messianic bridge of unity between believing Messianic Jews (Israeli believers), representatives of the faith of Israel’s fathers, and the believers from other nations. The Spirit of Elijah poured out by Yeshua the Messiah will bring about that Jewish believers in Yeshua and believers from other nations will be united as one flock. World-wide Christendom has been separated
from its Israeli roots and the faith of Israel’s fathers, but in the End Time all dispersed Messianic believers of other nations will return to their roots and to the teaching and practise of the early Apostolic Church. Through His atoning work Yeshua tore apart the dividing veil of enmity between believing Messianic Jews and Messianic believers of other nations, and believers of other nations will be part of the family of God’s Israel (Eph. 2:11-22). There will be one flock and one Shepherd, Yeshua. That is God’s plan that He will implement through the process of restoration of the End Time. The restoration of the people of God will become reality in a wonderful way for the Return of the Messiah. The Church Bride will be prepared for the Return of the heavenly Bridegroom, Yeshua the Messiah.

The Wedding of the Lamb

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the assembly, and gave himself up for it… For this cause a man will leave his father and mother, and will be joined to his wife. The two will become one flesh.’ This mystery is great, but I speak concerning Christ and of the assembly” (Ephesians 5:25, 31-32).

“Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give glory to him. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready. It was given to her that she would array herself in bright, pure, fine linen: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he said to me, ‘Write, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ He said to me, ‘These are true words of God’” (Revelation 19:7-9).

In the Bible the marital relationship between man and wife is compared to the relationship between Yeshua and the Church. In the beautiful biblical language, rich in images, Yeshua the Messiah is the heavenly Bridegroom who, one day, comes to take His Bride living on earth, His Church Bride, up to the wedding of the Lamb (John 3:27-30; 14:1-5). The Church of God, those who have followed Yeshua, will then be eternally with her divine Bridegroom in the Father’s house. According to the prophetic revelation in the book of Isaiah the Millennial Kingdom of the Messiah will be a continuous “wedding banquet”.

The Kingdom of Canopy And Tabernacle

“It will happen that everyone who is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up from yar to year to worship the King, Yahweh of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tents (or Tabernacle, Hebrew OT: חֳסֶּף ha-sukkot). It will be, that whoever of all the families of the earth doesn’t go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, Yahweh of Hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt doesn’t go up, and doesn’t come, neither will it rain on them. This will be the plague with which Yahweh will strike the nations that don’t go up to keep the feast of tents. This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations that don’t go up to keep the feast of tents” (Zechariah 14:16-19).

“In that day, Yahweh’s branch (i.e. the Messiah) will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the beauty and glory of the survivors of Israel. It will happen, that he who is left in Zion, and he who remains in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even everyone who is written among the living in Jerusalem; when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from its midst, byt the spirit of justice, and by the spirit of burning. Yahweh will create over the whole habitation of Mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will a canopy (Hebrew OT: חֵפְעָה =chuppah = wedding canopy, wedding, shelter). There will be a pavilion ( Hebrew OT: תַּבְנִי tabernacle), for a shade in the daytime form the heat, and for a refuge and for a shelter from storm and from rain” (Isaiah 4:2-6).

The resurrected Church will return with Yeshua the Messiah to save Israel from destruction, to judge the ungodly world, and to establish the Millennial Messianic Kingdom, where the Messiah reigns with His resurrected saints (Zech.14:1-5, Jude 14-15; Rev. 20). Jerusalem will be the world’s spiritual and political centre, where the nations will gather to learn and to bow before the Lord of Hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16-19). That is when also the seventh of the feasts that God gave to the people of Israel, the Feast of Tabernacles, will have its prophetic fulfillment. The Lord will then provide a cloud for the day and flames of fire for the night over the great assembly gathered on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. The tabernacle, Sukkah (sea of mist around the earth), will give protection against sunshine, rain, and storms. The Millennial Messianic Kingdom of Peace will be “the Kingdom of Tabernacles”, the prophetic fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles.

(The additional eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles, which is not part of the actual feast, is a shadow of the eternal new heavens and new earth.)

Isaiah speaks about a “Chuppah”, a Canopy, over all the glory. What does it mean? It means that, with all probability, the Millenial Messianic Kingdom will also be the time of the wedding of the Lamb. It is obvious, in my opinion, that the wedding of the Lamb will begin here on earth in the form of ultimate revival. When the Messiah returns, the Church will be taken up in a rapture, and with the Messiah, she will judge the nations and establish the Messianic Kingdom of Peace on earth. Thus the Millenial Messianic Kingdom of Peace, in its entirety, will be a time of the Lamb’s wedding banquet. It will be the Kingdom of Sukkah, i.e. Tabernacle, and of Chuppah, i.e. Canopy.

According to the understanding of several scholars there will be a separate wedding banquet in the heavenly halls in the house of the Father, before the Church returns in her resurrected condition on earth with the Messiah. It remains to be seen and experienced, how long this possible wedding banquet in heaven will last, before the Church returns on earth with the Messiah. Another school claims that there will be no separate wedding banquet of the Lamb in the heavenly halls, but the believers will return on earth after the rapture with the Messiah to judge the enemies of Israel and of the God of Israel. According to this interpretation the wedding and the wedding banquet of the Lamb will not be fulfilled until in the Messiah’s Kingdom of Peace. In any case, the table will be set for banquet in the Millenial Messianic Kingdom, “the Kingdom of Canopy and Tabernacle” (Matt. 8:11-12; 22:1-14; Luke 13:28-30. Matthew often uses the expression “Kingdom of heavens” instead of Kingdom of God, because he did not want to write the holy Name of God in his gospel, which was mainly intended for the Jews.)

Yeshua taught that the Kingdom of the Messiah is like a huge tree grown from one tiny mustard seed, or a pinch of yeast that works all through the dough. These parables describe in a figurative language how God’s Kingdom and the Messiah’s dominion will take over and fill the whole earth (Dan. 2:27-45). In that Kingdom of God, where the Messiah reigns and rules the earth with the resurrected saints for thousand years, people come from the four corners of the earth to dine in the Messiah’s Kingdom, the Kingdom of Tabernacle and Canopy. It is prepared for all who have given their life to Yeshua the Messiah and followed Him in this life on earth. My friend, won’t you also be in that great family gathering?

(English Bible texts from World English Bible)
"...that all of them may be one (echad)..." Joh. 17:21