

Vayera And He Appeared

Torah: Exodus 6:2-9:35

Haftarah: Ezekiel 28:25-29:21

Brit Chadashah: Revelation 16:1-21

Reading: Betty pp. 101, 102 and Psalm 46. Jewish hero Repentant king Manasseh Torah carrier: Mike Taber

Passage: *According to the grace of G-d, which has been given to me as a wise architect, I have laid the foundation and another builds thereon. But let each take heed of the manner in which he builds upon it. For no one can lay another foundation than that which is already laid, which is Yeshua HaMashiach. Therefore if someone builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, and precious jewels or with hay, wood or stubble, the work of each one will be manifest. For the day shall make it known, for it shall be revealed in the fire and fire shall test the quality of each one's work. If the work built by someone on the foundation survives, he shall receive a reward. If the work of someone is consumed, he shall lose his reward; as for him, he shall be saved as if through fire.* (I Corinthians 3:10-15)

Once Paul founded the community in Corinth, he encountered more spiritual resistance with this fractious group of believers than with any other group he had to deal with. They were a lively bunch full of all the wrong kind of zeal and in helping them come to terms with their problems, he wanted them avoid the kind of loss and damage which their conduct was leading them into. You see, every community has the potential to develop a vibrant, biblically based spirituality, no matter what issues they face, as long as their confidence in the kingdom leads them to make good choices and does not allow them to be choked and destroyed by the attacks of the enemy, the world and the flesh.

When people come to faith in our blessed Messiah, He becomes the foundation upon which their new life is going to be built and it is up to us to choose to build with solid materials as they are outlined in the Scriptures in order to make our faith fire proof. In Matthew 7 our Messiah makes a similar statement by encouraging believers to build their lives on the solid rock of the Word so that our lives can withstand the violent weather which will try and destroy our faith. The foundation of the Messiah is built on all the promises found in the Torah, the prophets and the Holy writings and from the outset, we are called to make good spiritual choices as we decide what kind of life we are going to grow into as we walk with the L-rd.

You have often heard me say that authentic biblical faith translates into a dynamic obedience where the works we perform demonstrate the reality of our faith, in much the same way as breathing demonstrates the reality of the life which resides in our bodies. The foundation of the Messiah is the assurance that we possess everlasting life and that we no longer belong to this fading world we are travelling through. Our new citizenship is in the everlasting Kingdom which our Messiah will return one day to establish. This citizenship can either become choked with the carnal works of the flesh or it can become salt and light to lead others out of darkness and into our Messiah's marvellous life.

This passage outlines two categories of life building materials. The first three which are mentioned, gold, silver and precious jewels, are permanent and will not fade or crumble over

time and are in fact fire proof. The second category are flammable and will not be able to stand the final test which is waiting for all believers. In a very real sense, our spiritual destiny is firmly in our own hands and will be based on whether or not we learn to make good choices that will count for eternity or foolish ones which will cause us to suffer great loss.

This passage may be the one which the Catholic church used to develop the doctrine of purgatory, which falsely teaches that believers who have not fully dealt with their sins in this life, will pass temporarily through the fires of hell until all the unresolved issues of their souls are burned away and they are saved, as if through fire. There is a trial by fire which is coming for all believers but it will not determine whether or not we are saved, but only how much the way we have lived our lives in the Messiah will count for eternity.

The issue of our salvation was dealt with by the foundation which was laid in our hearts and souls, when we came to faith in our Messiah. From that point on, we became kingdom bound and we were called to build for the coming kingdom and not allow doubt or temptation or the cares and riches and pleasures of this life to cause us to loosen our grip on the things of the coming kingdom. Paul is using the illustration of good and bad building materials to remind us that how we live our lives in this life, will have an impact on our lives in the life which is come. We will either reap a reward or we will suffer a loss, depending on the amount of authentic biblical spirituality which we fill our lives with on our journey home.

It may not always be evident what kind of spirituality our lives contain, because so much of it occurs deep in our hearts and in how we respond to the happenstances we encounter on a daily basis. We have to be careful and diligent so that we do not allow any hay, wood or stubble to infiltrate what we are building on the foundation of what our beloved Messiah did for us, when He died on the cross, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. In a very real sense, we have to digest what is going on in our lives as we talk things over with our King and learn to live the way He wants us to as pilgrims and strangers in this life.

Everything and anything we have acquired in this life and which we have allowed to become part of who we are and how we live, must be fire proof. This is because, when the Day of the L-rd comes, everything which belongs to this fading world will catch fire and melt away suddenly and completely with great noise. Looking at it differently, anything in our lives which we have not been able to deal with, or bring into submission to the Word of our King, will catch fire when the Messiah returns, because we will not be allowed to bring our unsolved problems with us when we enter the final Kingdom.

What we are unable or unwilling to deal with, will be dealt with for us and whatever we have gathered and built into our lives based on the Kingdom of G-d and His righteousness, will shine forth as a reward we can take with us into the next life. In a very real sense, the degree to which we live our lives as if we were already walking with Him in the next life, will determine how much of how we have lived in this life, will count for the one which is still to come.

Rather than filling us with fear and dread, we need to see Paul's exhortation as an opportunity to make all the necessary changes to avoid losing out in the world which is to come.

When our passage says that fire will reveal and test the quality of each one's work, the Latin word for this process is to purge, which is the base word from which the term purgatory is derived. Just as our physical bodies are equipped to purge our bodies from waste and detoxify so that no toxic poisons are allowed to build up in our systems and rob us of health and vitality,

the L-rd wants us to have the same level cleansing in our spiritual lives. This is so that no waste products from this life and no toxic spiritual poisons like the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, will be allowed to rob us of spiritual health and vitality in this life as we prepare for the life which is to come.

He is actually issuing a challenge for us to make the foundation of our Messiah the central focus of our lives and only allow that which is worthy of the kingdom which is to come, to take root and grow in our lives, as we pass through this world on our way to our forever home. How much of what you are building your life with is fire proof and what kind of materials are you building into your life? How we live our lives daily in this world will have a considerable impact on our lives in the world to come.

When the passage says that we will be saved as if through fire, it means that we will not be allowed to take anything from this fading world, in how we have lived our lives, into the life which is to come. Gold is a symbol of the Word of our Messiah as it is outlined in the Torah, the Psalms and the Prophets. How much of this gold are you building up in your life? When we grow in our confidence in the coming Kingdom of our heavenly Messiah, we learn to make good choices and fill our hearts and lives with the treasures of His Word.

While gold retains its glow and does not really need to be polished, silver can be even more shiny, if enough care and attention is paid to it. The loud, raucous world we are travelling through, tends to want to dim our ability to grasp firmly to the things of the world to come and we need to routinely polish our spiritual silver, so that it does not become dull or begin to fade from our lives. How well are you keeping the spiritual silver of your life polished, free from the fading influence of this darkening world?

The breastplate of the high priest was garnished with twelve different precious jewels to show us how precious we are to our beloved Saviour and Messiah. We are each born with a spiritual potential that the L-rd wants us to develop so that we can shine as jewels for the kingdom which is to come. How good are you at discovering and activating your spiritual potential? Each of us is born with a set of desires and abilities, given to us by the L-rd according to His will. Have you found your place of service in the body of our Messiah? We can either shine together as a bright collection of precious jewels or we can let our spiritual potential go untapped as we give our lives to lesser things.

Hay, wood and stubble may be useful temporary ingredients that we need as we examine the practical side of our lives, but if we ever allow our carnal natures to control the spiritual direction of our lives, there will be no room for the materials of the coming kingdom to be built into our lives. Life is full of constant change where things wear and get broken and need to be fixed and replaced, but as believers we have a solid foundation in our beloved Messiah which wants to change us and fix what is broken in us, so that we live for the Kingdom which is coming and not for the world we are just passing through.

The choices we make in our lives as we are travelling through this life will have a definite, permanent impact on our lives in the world which is to come. How much heed are you taking with what you are building into your life? And what materials are you using as you build upon the foundation which is our beloved Messiah?

We should see our hearts and lives like a spiritual suitcase we are packing for our final journey.

One day its contents will be revealed when the fiery presence of our Heavenly Messiah bursts upon this world and all its withering ways are finally burnt away and forever removed. The choices we make will determine the content we take with us when we pass through the fire of His return. The confidence we have in this coming kingdom will also determine how we respond to the happenstances of our lives.

We need to ask ourselves whether we are building kingdom rewards into our lives or are just putting in time waiting for the final loss when we see all the folly we have built on our solid foundation, consumed by the liberating fire of His return. It does not really matter what stage of life you are at. I came to faith as a young man and I have been building ever since on the solid foundation of our beloved Messiah. Last week, I turned 65 and I rejoice that I am closer to the coming Kingdom now, then I was over forty years ago.

I want to be filling my heart with all the gold and silver and precious jewels I can, as I walk according to His Word, filled with His Spirit, daily and regularly surrendering the desires and abilities He placed in my heart, to increase my confidence in the coming Kingdom. We can undo the impact of negative choices and wasted opportunities to build a fire proof heart and a fire proof life, as we remain focused on His coming kingdom.

It will not always be an easy task and there will always be ever so many voices trying to get and keep our attention on things which are not worthy, so that our hearts and lives become choked with so much useless hay, wood and stubble. I do not want to teach you to fear the fire through which we must all pass. Rather, I want us to take the things of the kingdom seriously, so that our spiritual life is healthy and free of the toxic poisons of this life. Part of this seriousness needs to be the realization that time is not always on our side and how we spend our time will one day be made manifest, as the Messiah's return burns away everything in this life which is not worthy of the life which is to come.

We can either prepare our lives to be a big bonfire of shame because of all the hay, wood and stubble we have built into our lives, or we can prepare our lives for the final liberation from the carnal folly of this world which is always trying to pull us back down into the darkness we lived in, before the solid foundation of our Messiah was laid down into our hearts and lives.

Has the solid foundation of the Messiah been laid down in your hearts? Have you given your heart and life to him? There is no other foundation, but how we build upon it is up to us. We either grow in our confidence in the kingdom and make good choices or we clog our lives with the useless things of this world. The truth will one day be made manifest. We have to ask ourselves how much of our lives do we want to see burn and what kind of reward are we preparing for ourselves on the other side of the coming fire of His return. May we be set free to serve Him as we build well on the foundation of His Word, nothing less is worth our attention.