

THE RECONCILER

REPENT, "T'SHUVA" - TURN & RECEIVE

At this time of the year - between the Jewish Feasts of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur - a season of repentance is proclaimed. Without ongoing repentance we drift off course and lose sight of our destination. The season of repentance ("T'shuva" in Hebrew) is a reminder to all of us to RETURN to the purity and power of the call of God, to turn around and rediscover the Kingdom of God.

When Jesus proclaimed repentance, He called people not only to stop sinning but also to discover the kingdom. *"Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand."* (Mark 1:14)

Traditional Christian repentance has focused almost completely on the issue of sin and has neglected the matter of the Kingdom. What a tragic oversight this is. Jesus proclaimed that the pursuit of the kingdom of God should be *the first priority* in everyone's life. *"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."* (Mt. 6:33)

A revolution is taking place in Christianity - the Gospel Of The Kingdom is being rediscovered and released on the earth as never before. *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."* (Mt. 24:14) A time of true repentance "t'shuva" will call us not merely to receive forgiveness but to seek the rule, life and ways of His Kingdom.

Since the Reformation, *The Gospel Of Grace* has gone to the ends of earth. It proclaims how to get our sins forgiven and become assured of the gift of eternal life. But this is only a part of the message.

The message of Jesus, the *Gospel Of the Kingdom* goes further. It proclaims NOT ONLY remission of sin, (Eph. 1:17); liberation from sin's power by the infilling of the Holy Spirit - a power greater than sin (Romans 8:1-3) the removal of the curse of the Law so we can enter a covenant of blessing. (Gal 3:13) adoption as sons so that we can become heirs with Christ Jesus (Eph.1: 5)

BUT IT ALSO PROCLAIMS: freedom from the world and reliance on the world systems, through direct connection with the supply of heaven for every aspect of our lives, spirit, soul, body. (Phil. 4:19; Mt. 11:28)

The *Gospel Of Grace* gives freedom from sin but the *Gospel Of The Kingdom* gives **freedom from the world as well.**

The Word "Repent"

"Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

(Mark 1:15) This message is the ONLY hope for the

world. It is God's answer to the needs of a world broken by man's stupidity and the works of the evil one. The political and religious systems have failed, but now the kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus, and those who proclaim His gospel, invite people to believe that this kingdom is available

now and we can TURN and RECEIVE its benefits. Ultimately this kingdom will triumph and replace all other kingdoms but it is available now through the gateway of FAITH AND REPENTANCE. John saw the ultimate triumph of God's Kingdom when he wrote, *"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our God and of His Messiah."* (Rev. 12:15)

One of the reasons we failed to recognize the *Gospel Of The Kingdom* is because we did not understand the real meaning of the word 'repent'-(*T'shuva*). We were told it meant, "Stop sinning" or "Change your mind" (the literal translation of the Greek work for 'repent': 'meatanoia') Because of these inadequate translations most believers assume that Jesus ONLY called people to repent from sin and receive forgiveness. However, the word Jesus used "**shuv**" means neither "stop sinning" nor "change your mind" - it means "turn" or "return." It is God's invitation to all mankind to

RETURN AND RECEIVE His care and to His ways. *"Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand"* really means: *"Turn around because God's Kingdom is accessible to all."*

Repent is not a negative word. In fact it will yet be recognized as **the most positive word of all.** It means no matter how much we have messed up or been messed up as individuals or as peoples, we can always TURN AND RECEIVE a new beginning from Heavenly Father because of what He has done in Jesus. Wake up world - the kingdom of God is available! You can 'get a life' - a



new life if you REPENT AND RECEIVE continually. There is always more!

Jesus' invitation to turn and enter the Kingdom of God is something that is beyond any revolution or reform. It is an urgent call to cease looking for meaning, purpose, security, health fulfillment, love, joy, peace from *any* of the economic, political or religious systems of this world, but to look to Him and to the Kingdom of God. He alone is the unfailing, unchanging, incorruptible and faithful one. He *will "never leave us nor forsake us."*

The Called Out Ones

Jesus' followers are those who are "called out" ("ek-klesia") from the world systems with their false values and shaky securities into the true and unshakeable Kingdom of Father, God. Here, through covenant, we look to God for everything, and we look to the world for nothing. We relate to it as agents of love, truth and mercy. Jesus never used the word "church" as we know it today. He used the word "called out ones." The word "church" as used by Jesus is not some super institution that He calls us to 'join'. It is something we are automatically a part of when we turn back to God and learn to trust in Him rather than *any* world system.

To enter and enjoy the Kingdom of God we have to LET GO of all dependence and reliance on the world and the things of the world and TURN (T'shuva) to Him and to His Kingdom. This is why He says, *"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."* (Mt.18: 3)

Most people seek security and fulfillment through the social, economic, political and religious systems of the world. These 'kingdoms' are always tottering, shaking and unreliable. Instead of security they deliver insecurity and anxiety. But God invites us to RETURN (T'SHUVA) to Him and cease looking to systems and institutions for security and meaning. This is the only hope for the world. It is not a New Religion -it is the call and plan of God for all.

Christianity becomes weak when it fails to call us to leave the world systems. When we are no longer "called out" we are no longer "the ek-klesia." We remain a part of the world systems whenever we are not offered God's alternative to them - the kingdom of God. Today, however, there is widespread disillusionment with the financial and political systems that govern the world and millions are ready and waiting to receive the good news of the kingdom.

Many Christians who do not discern the kingdom of God spend their energies in trying reform the present world systems. These efforts have only limited worth and are not our primary agenda. Jesus directs us not to put our trust in these systems at all. Instead He invites us to enter into covenant with God the Father through Him.

"Come to me all you who are heavy laden and overburdened and I will give you rest. Learn of me for I am meek and gentle and lowly of heart and you will find rest for your souls." (Mt. 11:28)

As we loose ourselves from the agenda of the world systems and choose God's agenda for our lives we enter into the kingdom of God. As members of "the called out ones" we see the kingdom of God and have no illusions about the kingdoms and systems of this world.

Called Out Is Not Drop Out

Because we do not look to the world systems for our meaning and value does not mean that we physically withdraw from it. Jesus specifically directed us to live in the world without being a part of it. *"I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one."* (John 17:15) We have to work in the world and mingle with it but we are to look to Him and live to a different set of values and measurements.

We are *"the salt of the earth"* and the *"light of the world"* but if we separate ourselves from the world how can we savor it or illumine it. The revelation of the kingdom is not an excuse to drop out of the world but causes us to enter it from a different perspective. Our citizenship is from heaven but we conduct our lives in the world. We confess that we are strangers and pilgrims in the world and we do not rely on it – thus we become "witnesses" of another kingdom.

Some "called out ones" like Daniel and Joseph may have great influence in the world, but our obedience is to Him and our focus is on His kingdom. We are aware that our identity in the world is not our real identity.

Our real identity does not come from our wealth or position in the world but from our membership of the family of God and our citizenship of the greater Kingdom

Jesus called us out of the world into His kingdom. As we accept this call we are showered with blessings and privileges. We are also given responsibilities to live (through the empowerment of His Spirit) in the ways of His kingdom in a world that ignores God's ways.

The call of the kingdom of God was never so relevant. The world systems are sinking and millions have become disillusioned and frustrated with it. To discover the kingdom of God and to seek it is the ultimate fulfillment, a place of peace and joy, which no company, financial system or political or religious system can deliver.

It is very real, very practical. It is not just for the future ... IT IS FOR TODAY.