

What Are We Really Doing?

by J.K. McKee posted 22 November, 2005 www.tnnonline.net

Since the beginning of this year (2005), the Messianic community has been in a very “interesting” position. This has been a transitional year for many of us, and for many Messianic ministries. But what people have been *transitioning to* is a big question mark. Things have happened doctrinally in the Messianic movement that have caused some serious problems, and have divided many people. When issues like these arise, we are all forced to reevaluate what we believe, and wonder if we are doing something wrong. We are all forced to wonder *what we are really doing*.

Throughout the James Bible study that I have been teaching with our online audience, I have been emphasizing that spiritual maturity is a continual theme of James’ epistle. In most Bibles’ the term is rendered as either “perfect” or “perfection,” but the theme is maturation and being all that you can be. James himself writes, “But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law of liberty*, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does” (1:25). This kind of maturity can only be produced by the Holy Spirit, and it is to enable us to do things that ordinary people cannot do. It is to permeate all aspects of our being so we as Believers can perform our Father’s tasks in the world.

One of the reasons that each one of us is called to a Torah observant lifestyle is that we are to each be sanctified by the Lord. When we received Yeshua into our lives and were forgiven of our sins, our new life in Him began. The process of sanctification requires that our old nature be continually put to death in favor of our new nature. While we may not be completely “perfect” this side of eternity, we nevertheless should and must be pursuing such things. This kind of “perfection” is impelled by the Holy Spirit, is not a forced work of the flesh, and results in the fruit of the Spirit. Not only does it cause us to obey the Lord, as He writes His commandments on our hearts, but also goes beyond what the written Torah says. A maturing Believer not only obeys God, but also desires to have a relationship with God.

This is the challenge for many people who enter into the Messianic movement. Many fail to enter into a Torah obedient walk of faith because they are sincerely pursuing God and want to know Him to the best of their ability. **They enter in for reasons other than growing spiritually in their personal walk of faith. They enter in so they can “be better” than others.**

It is hard for many to realize, but our motivations for doing something can result in either positive or negative fruit in what we do. If one is to truly succeed in a job, you must have your co-workers’ interests in mind every bit as much as your own. If a person is in the military, one succeeds and advances by being a team player and looking out for one’s fellow soldiers or sailors. Spiritually, while we must be concerned for ourselves, we also have to keep in mind that the example we demonstrate in the world is a testimony to others.

In the past year some very controversial teachings have circulated around the Messianic movement. Early in the year some teachings regarding the so-called Hebrew Matthew were released. Later on, teachings relating to what the correct “Biblical calendar” is hit the air. Now, we are facing some additional viewpoints that challenge the inspiration of additional books of the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament). While I would sincerely like to see some of these things stopped, my sentiment is probably just wishful thinking. But what I do know is that they have caused spiritual havoc among the brothers and sisters. And I know that these teachings have not been released in a genuine spirit of people wanting to grow and mature in their faith. They have instead been released in spirits of pride, vanity, false knowledge, and often hatred toward our Christian brethren.

The way that I have largely combated some of these teachings is getting our focus on Yeshua and in emulating His example. I have asked people in my audio teachings, “Do you truly know why you are doing what you are doing?” I can easily say now that if you are not pursuing a Torah obedient lifestyle because you love Yeshua, because you want to live like Him in all respects, and because you want to be a positive spiritual example to others in the world—then if you are not careful you are going to end up like some of those who promote the heresies that we are going to have to address. Unless you have a sound and secure foundation in your walk of faith,

tempered by the Holy Spirit and the proper motivations for doing what you are doing—then be prepared for a rough ride.

Throughout our James Bible study I myself have learned how I need to be conscious of my Messianic testimony in the world. I know that I need to watch my attitude, but also that I need to be discerning and forthright at times. I also have seen how candid James is to his largely Jewish audience. They have forgotten the basic, fundamental principles that govern the spiritual world. And if they have forgotten those principles, how on Earth can they expect to be used by God when it comes to “the big things”? If we cannot police our own thoughts, behavior, attitude, and speech, how can God use us to the fullest extent? I have seen James’ words hijacked many times by Messianics to say that the only works that he is concerned about is whether or not we keep the Sabbath or the appointed times. While James’ message is not opposed to these things—**he speaks more about our ethics and morality than anything else.** And I can tell you, if you do not have a sound morality, any outward works are meaningless.

I would like to expel more and more time digging into some of the depths of God’s Word. But we are in a season right now where we must focus on who we are as God’s people and that we have a secure foundation in our faith. I have probably spent more time in the past year doing things that *I have not wanted to do in ministry*, versus things that I have wanted to do. This is certainly not to say that things always get to be “my way,” but I do believe that some in the Messianic community have been so damaged by certain teachings that if they do not see an alternative point of view they may fall for even worse things that the enemy may throw at us. At times, I exhibit the same frustration that the author of Hebrews writes about to his audience:

“[Y]ou have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God’s word. You need milk, not solid food” (Hebrews 4:11b-12, RSV).

This is a reflection of a Bible teacher whose instruction on “the elementary truths of God’s word” (NIV) was not being heeded. **I do wonder sometimes if the convictions that I have as a Bible teacher are being heard.** Are we checking ourselves to see that we are in the faith? Are we asking God to convict us every day? Is our outward Torah observance guarded by a sound inward morality? Have we asked ourselves the honest question of why we are Messianic?

Beginning in January 2006, I plan on taking us through the workbook *Torah In the Balance*. Of all of our workbooks, this text will be the most challenging for some of you. We will not only address why we should be Messianic—but how we are to be loving, fair-minded Messianics, who have been given a great responsibility that we have largely squandered in the past year.

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