

Irony – Are We In The End Times?

Matthew Vander Els • 2023-10-15 • foundedintruth.com

MAIN VERSES

[Genesis 49:1](#) • [Genesis 49:11](#) • [Genesis 49:12](#) • [Numbers 24](#) • [Isaiah 2](#) • [Hosea 3](#) • [Daniel 2](#) • [Daniel 7](#) • [1 Peter 1:20](#) • [John 18:36](#) • [1 Corinthians 1:18](#) • [Mark 1:15](#) • [Hebrews 1](#) • [Psalm 2](#) • [Revelation 5](#) • [Revelation 3:21](#) • [Romans 12](#)

Greetings and Transition

Shabbat Shalom everybody. It's good to be back together, isn't it? Or would you rather be back at Sukkot and it just not end? I called it out. Oh, we called it out. Immediately, before any more announcements, I want to hand the mic over to Al McCarn. He has a special announcement on what's going on, of course, in the world, in Israel, and how we can actually be a part of helping. And so, Al, please.

You Are Abraham's Seed

Thank you, Matthew. All right. You remember the verse from Sukkot, our theme verse of Legacy? [Galatians 3:29](#), which says: In Christ you are Abraham's seed. Read the whole chapter, [Galatians 3](#), 1 through 29. Paul goes to great lengths to explain how when we place our trust and allegiance in the Messiah of Israel, the son of Abraham, we become grafted into or adopted into his family, which is why he can end that with, in Christ there's no longer male or female, Jew or Greek, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, all are one in Christ, and in Christ you are Abraham's seed. Okay, sounds good. In theory, until it's no longer theory, because something happened last week, seven days ago, that causes us to ask, what does it mean to be part of Abraham's family and who's part of that family? And what do we do when a good part of our kinfolk are hurting? And what I'm talking about is the start of the Simchat Torah war, which is happening right now in Israel. And horrendous things have come about. And I'm sure you've seen some of the pictures and heard some of the reports. Folks, the Jewish people are also the seed of Abraham. They are our kin. And the difference between now and the last time Israel faced an existential threat in 1973 with the Yom Kippur War, also started on a high holy day by surprise attack, is that now there's a network of Christians around the world who understand

who we are and who we're related to, and we are praying and we're working to bring about the peace of Jerusalem as the Lord leads us.

So one statistic here I just want to make you aware of if you haven't thought about it before. 1,300 Jewish children, women, and men were brutally murdered last Saturday, and that is more Jews who were murdered in one day since the end of the Holocaust in 1945. So if you wonder why it is that Israel is now at war, full-scale war against Hamas in Gaza and now escalating into Lebanon and Syria against Hezbollah and those who would destroy Israel, this is why. This is a war of good and evil. This is a war of righteousness and wickedness. Not to say that the state of Israel is entirely righteous because there's a lot of things God's doing already internally among the Jewish people and the Jewish state. But what do we do? All of us who call ourselves Christians or Messianic or Hebraic out here in the world, far, far away from the war zone, what can we do? Well, I want to suggest three things we can do, and the number one thing is to start praying.

If you are not yet connected to a prayer network, particularly a prayer network focused on Israel, let me recommend to you the Altar of Prayer Network. Website is altarofprayer.com. Very easy to remember, altarofprayer.com. Bev Hall and I helped to facilitate a Monday evening watch with the altar of prayer. But this is 24 hours a day, seven days a week, praying for the peace of Jerusalem, praying for the return of the Jewish people to their homeland, praying for awakening to the church to understand our role in this process. So go to altarofprayer.com, register, join a watch. You may be joining a Spanish language or a French language watch. That's fine. You are praying with brethren from around the world. And also, my ministry, our ministry, 10 from the Nations, we've begun a daily prayer call six days a week at noon by Zoom. If you're interested in that, please send me an email at al@foundedintruth.com.

Second thing. You want to contribute materially to the defense of Israel, the relief of suffering? I got one suggestion. Go to 9-av.com. That's our website, 9-av.com. You will see on there on our landing page, help for the defense of Judea and Samaria. You know, since Israel has mobilized nearly half a million soldiers in one week, that means the homesteads are without protection. So those left behind... The older men, the women, the younger folk, they're charged with defense of their homes, their towns, their farms, their vineyards, oftentimes in hostile territory surrounded by Arabs who have been known to infiltrate and execute the most horrendous barbaric terrorist attacks on Jewish people. So if you want to help, we are joined with a number of other organizations such as Hayovel, Christian Friends of Israel, Return Ministries and others, we are helping to equip these farms, these communities with flak vests, with binoculars, with fuel for vehicles, with other things that they would need to help be vigilant and guard their

homes from terrorist attack. If you would like to contribute for other causes, such as the Jewish families who are now willing to take in orphans from last Saturday's brutal attack, we'll find a way. Let me know. Again, send me an email at al at [foundedintruth.com](mailto:al@foundedintruth.com), and I will help you find the resources you would like to be part of.

Finally, get knowledgeable. There is so much ignorance out there in the world right now. Biblical ignorance among Christians about what is Israel and what's the role of Israel in God's redemptive plan. And there's so much ignorance about the current events and the real issues, which is why we have the most virulent hatred being poured out on Israel now on college campuses in the United States. So get involved and get smart. Let me give you one resource. These are friends of mine and ministry colleagues, and that would be the Israel guys. Okay, just theisraelguys.com. Go to their website. They are on Twitter, on WhatsApp, on YouTube. They'll give you the truth as they see it from right there at the Hayavale base on Harvachah in Samaria. And if you want to know some other resources that I found useful, again, email me at al at [foundedintruth.com](mailto:al@foundedintruth.com).

So finally, if I could just lead us in prayer for a moment. Our Father God, we thank you that it is certain Jerusalem will be a praise in the earth. It is certain that you have set watchmen and watchwomen around their walls. And I would pray right now from among this congregation and from those, our friends who are listening online, that you would raise up more watchers to look over Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and all Israel and pray for the peace of Jerusalem and pray, Lord, that your will be done. Here on earth as it is in heaven. Father, we do pray for wickedness to be destroyed. But we pray also for lives to be saved. And Father, for those multitudes in the valley of decision on all sides. That your spirit would prevail and they would choose life rather than death. Even now, Lord, strive with us to know what we shall do in this hour of our global visitation. As you call on us to step up our game and follow our Messiah, Son of David, soon coming King of all Israel, in whose name we pray. Amen.

The link's up here and some fantastic resources. Thank you, Al, for how you can be involved and actually make a difference and give to something that is effective. So, altarofprayer.com. The ninthof.com, and the Israel guys, great resources. Again, the [ninthof](http://ninthof.com) website is where you can go to figure out how you can send aid. Man, it's just heavy, isn't it? Yes, heavy. All right, Shabbat Shalom, everybody. Again, so good to be back after Sukkot. Okay, I missed Sukkot. Sukkot started getting cold right at like the last day. What is this? It is winter, yes. Next year, I think it's starting, what, another two weeks later, mid-October? Huh? The 16th? It's going to be good. It's going to be good. All right.

The End Times

Well, so I know we have some pretty big, significant world events going on, and I know it looks like I couldn't help but capitalize on that with this clickbait-ish sermon title of Irony, the End Times. And I promise you that there was still one more message left in the Irony series before we had to go to Sukkot, so this was planned. But nevertheless, I think it's appropriate. The End Times. Are we in the End Times or living in the end of days? To which I would say yes. Well, kind of. And we'll see what the Bible actually speaks about involving eschatology.

As I was speaking before, kind of updating us on the severity of what took place in Israel last week, whenever there is a conflict that occurs in the world, whenever there is fear, whenever there's sadness or mourning, we tend or we're trained to forget what our identity is and to put on another mask that represents what the rest of the world is expressing.

And what I mean by that is we are good for four years, all of us. We're good as believers with each other, coming along each other, raise our hands to hear in worship. And then we have a presidential election where everybody gets all buzzed, and all of a sudden we're going to put our identity first. The central identity of a follower of Yeshua orbiting the principles of the kingdom of God, we're going to put that on hold because we have to put on a new identity of a Republican or a Democrat or whatever or a branch off of one of those that is following a candidate around that we will forget about or our children will have trouble remembering their names in school. We put it all on hold so that we can put on another mask or another identity and forget who we are.

And I believe the same thing does happen and is happening even in the midst of these horrible, horrible things that have taken place in Israel and are still taking place in Israel. Lots of people died on Simchat Torah, and it's horrifying to even have to explain that to your kids when they bring it up to you.

And lots of people have died that are in Gaza, and that's horrifying to even begin to have to explain that to your kids when they hear about it. And the first thing that we tend to do is instead of being horrified and mourning the loss of life, innocent life, we begin to be called by the media or by culture to draw these lines in the sand and stand here and put on this identity and forget that people are dying and have died and horrific things have happened. For example, in New York City there was a protest, and this was a war that was instigated between Israel and terrorism, Hamas. And of course, because we love politics and there are issues that are connected to all of this, sometimes we tend to capitalize on that and talk about the issues first and foremost instead and forget to recognize or forget to have any empathy or sympathy to the

fact that people are dying and have died. So there was a pro-Palestinian protest that took place in New York City almost immediately after this. And I don't know a lot of details, but apparently the anti-Semitism was so thick that one of the most far-left groups Palestinian supporting Congresswomen of the United States, old AOC, stepped forward and condemned the whole thing because it was so anti-Semitic, because people were not focusing on the fact that innocent people died, because she stands with the people of Israel whether or not she agrees with their government policies, because there are actually people that are getting hurt. And the people at this protest allegedly were trying to focus on issues which are important. But they did not want to acknowledge the severity of the casualties or the children that died. Somehow, they were able to put on another mask and say, you know what? That's just what happens. And we need to move on with that. We need to focus on the issues behind it all. Issues are important. I support Israel. I like Israel. I love Israel. I've been to Israel a couple times. I love the people that live in the Palestinian territories too, Palestinians. I love the people of the land that are there, that are living there now. And we can come to such a place where we dehumanize casualties just so that we can feel like we have a voice or that we're being heard. And that's one side at a pro-Palestinian protest. But the same thing is happening on this other side that's pro-Israel, where they want to say, okay, yes, we need to bomb Gaza, this fully, very densely residential area. Gross amounts of children. And when the reports are coming out that innocent people have died, men, women, and children, I don't see a difference in how they're acting. Because both sides are so focused about what they want the issue to be that they are willing to disregard the fact that innocent people died. You can be pro-Israel and still acknowledge that it is horrible that people are dying and that war is horrible. And I would submit that as a Christian, you should be against war, even if you're forced to go into it. It's a horrible thing. There are children that didn't even know they were Israeli that died. And there are children that didn't even know they were Palestinian that are dead. Issues are great. But I really hope that we can maintain our calling to be the people that stick out and don't forget about the loss of innocent life, no matter what borders they find themselves behind.

Love Beyond the Lines We Draw

There was someone online that was very zealous. It's a good thing to be zealous. A Torah teacher. Nice guy. And he said, you can't love Jesus and not love the Jewish people. And I think that's 100% true. That is some truth. You can't say you love Jesus and not love the Jewish people. And it's equally true to say that you can't love Jesus and not love the Palestinian people, the Arab people. People. We don't need to draw lines in the sand that don't need to be there in order to still care about big issues that are important. Don't forget about just how horrible the

things that are happening are. That's the main message. That's my biggest concern right now among the body of believers, which I guess could go into: are we living in the end times?

Are We Living in the End Times?

It's a good question, and it's been one that has been asked for a very, very, very long time, even before the time of Yeshua, but specifically after the time of Jesus. And so I want to explore it as well as the ironic eschatological view the Bible presents because it's not one that we would expect. And it's definitely not one that is overwhelmingly presented in film or fictional books and media when we talk about the end of the world. For some, what the Bible actually says about the end of times is underwhelming, perhaps even disappointing. Some would call what the Bible talks about being the end times as naive. And for others, how the Bible presents the latter days is something that exalts the promises of God and gives them an unshakable hope to continue on the mission that God has called them on.

Unpacking Eschatology

Eschatology, a big word. That's one of them big Bible words. That's up there with blessed. No one ever says blessed, right? I mean, sometimes you could, if you really want to be like super spiritual, when you say goodbye to someone, you put blessings, blessings, be blessed, right? Of course, that's like a slang for I hate you in the South too, I think, but God bless your heart. Eschatology, it's a big word that's made up of two Greek words, eschatos and logos. Eschatos means the latter, the end, and logos—or ology—is the study of. So it's the study of the end times, right? You could just say the study of end times, but you sound much cooler. Eschatology, right? So it pertains to things of the end times.

The Latter Days Throughout Scripture

The first mention of this phrase, "the latter days," in the Bible appears in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, in chapter 49, when Jacob is blessing all of his sons. And he begins speaking, and this is what it says in verse 1: "Jacob called his sons to him, gather yourselves together, so I will tell you what will befall you in the latter days." And then when he gets to Judah, his son Judah, he says—way back in Genesis, we have this prophecy of this messianic king, this ruler, that is likened to a lion that will come forth from the tribe of Judah. And if you continue verses 11 and 12, describe him metaphorically as having like a vestment soaked in grapes. It's meant to invoke bringing judgment onto the wicked nations. [Numbers 24](#), another reference to the latter days: "And now behold, I go unto my people. Come, I will advertise thee. What is this people

that they shall do in the people of the latter days? A star will come from Jacob and a scepter will arise from Israel, and he will smash the forehead of Moab and strike down all of the Shethites." Smash the forehead of Moab. Same focus as the prophecy in Genesis. Has some skull crusher overtones. Different translations translate that differently, but it's a coming messianic ruler that will come out of Israel, and he will judge the evil nations and exercise his reign in the latter days. [Isaiah 2](#): "and shall come to pass in the latter days. What a glorious day that will be." Hosea, same thing. I don't have a slide for this one, but [Hosea 3](#) also mentions how they will go and this king will come when Israel returns to their land. David will arise, this new messianic king. A king is coming and he's going to usher in his kingdom and he will judge and he will conquer and war will cease to exist. And we will have, it will be to such an extent that we will have no more use for our guns. That's a threat to America, right? We don't like that. We like our guns, right? Our guns will be so irrelevant that it will be more prosperous for us to turn them into gardening tools. I like that. I like that.

The Stone That Becomes a Mountain

While in Babylon, Daniel has a series of prophetic visions on how God is going to come and overtake the world, defeating all of the empires in the latter days. Empires. The Bible says a lot about empires. Empires are nations that form and they use exploitation of weaker nations in order to build their strength up and to build their wealth up and to build their power up and then maintain that power by constantly pushing other nations down. [Daniel 7](#) refers to them as beasts and Revelation collectively refers to all empires as the beast. It is the empire. It's something that the Bible seems to be very much so against today. And antithetical, of course, to the kingdom of God, which will come and knock them all out. But Daniel chapter 2, verse 28, here's some of the things that Daniel says about the last days or the end of days. We get that phrase again. Your dream and the visions of your head in the bed, here they are. And Daniel has this vision of a big statue that's made out of like four different types of metals in different layers. And this huge, magnificent statue is going to be destroyed by like a pebble, a rock. It's going to shoot out like a comet. And the whole statue is going to come crumbling down. And we know the statue represents multiple series of kingdoms, empires, that one after another will come and they will fall. But this rock—verse 28. Read that one. Verse 34. Verse 28. One of the coolest visions in the Bible. This rock that's not carved without hands comes and knocks down this statue. And then the rock begins to grow into a mountain that covers the whole earth. Which, kind of wrap your brain around, I don't know. But it fills the whole earth. And it represents the kingdom of God. It represents the king and the kingdom of God that is going to

come and strike down all of the earthly nations that secure power by pushing others down and exploiting and oppressing others.

The Vision of God's Eternal Kingdom

And not only that, it's going to grow and take over the whole world. I love that. Love that. These kingdoms will be the biggest and the baddest. Lots of wealth, lots of power. And God's going to destroy them all, even the ones we like. Because there's only room for one kingdom in this vision. This is a vision of hope. And the focus of the dream is that at the end of days, in the latter days, the end times, the last and the fourth world kingdom will be destroyed and God's eternal kingdom will be established.

In the latter days, that phrase appears several other places in the Bible, but that's the gist of it. This is the core message of why the latter days is mentioned in all these places because it's referring to the coming establishment of God's eternal rule on earth, his kingdom. Specifically, the kingdom of God that's set up by a messianic king. And as much as we love the end times, always relating to big, sensational, fearful-filled notions of apocalypse and the end of the world, thanks to a series of books released in the 90s, when we actually look at the text of the Bible, that's not the focus at all. The focus is one of hope and justice. The latter days are prophecies that orbit the final defeat of evil once and for all. And that's the central message.

A Messianic King Coming with a Sword

Now, when we read these languages of the latter days, they sound pretty forceful, right? This messianic king is coming, and he's going to crush the skull or the head of Moab. You might get the idea, appropriately so, that this king that's going to come is coming with a big old sword, right? And it's going to be a military conqueror. And he's coming to wipe all these nations out by force and violence. And that's exactly what later Jewish authors perceived from this.

I have a few quotes. How many of you guys know that there are a lot of ancient writings, and not all of them may have been inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore never got in the Bible? But they're still out there. And the reason why these writings are so cool is because most of them were written around the time of Jesus, so that we can actually understand certain concepts of what the Jewish audience around the time of Jesus was thinking and how they perceived the biblical texts that were written hundreds of years earlier.

Ancient Interpretations of the Coming Messiah

So one of them, written around the first or second century, is called 4 Ezra. And it's a much later Jewish apocalyptic writing, and it's not included in the Bible, of course. But it shows us how Judeans or Jews thought during and around the time of Jesus about these scriptures. And this author identifies the Son of Man in [Daniel 7](#), coming in the clouds of heaven, and identifies him as being the same thing as that stone that flies and crushes the statue of empires. Here's what he says. This is how this author interpreted it, and hey, what else would you assume?

In 2 Baruch, another later Jewish writing, it says this: "the last wicked leader of that time will be left alive. So when everything comes, the last leader of the nations. When the multitude of his host will be put to the sword and he will be bound up and my Messiah will convict him of all of his impurities and afterwards he'll put him to death." We have another much later Jewish writing, but still the same concept of what was the perception of this coming Messiah: "He comes from the plains of heaven, a blessed man, no doubt the Messiah, with the scepter, Judah, the scepter in his hand which God has committed to his clasp. And he has won fair dominion over all. And he has destroyed every city from its foundation and burned up all of the families of men who before wrought evil."

Even the Qumran community, people who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, had a whole scroll dedicated to the end time battle and how the sons of light would defeat the sons of darkness in real battle with military regulations. This was what was expected during the time of Yeshua. If there was to be a Messiah, he was going to come with a shotgun, and it was going to be a military leader. You don't blame him. That's the language that seems to be used in these prophetic visions. That's how God's going to usher in his kingdom.

Why We Crave God's Violent Justice

And I think another reason we're actually drawn to that type of eschatology is that's sometimes what we want our God to do, right? No, two of us, just lightning bolts. Lightning bolts. I want God to come down and kill all of those wicked people, which conveniently I'm never grouped with. We want Jesus to come back with a shotgun. And the reason why I use that phrase is because that is such a widespread concept that SNL actually made a parody years ago about Jesus coming out of the grave with a shotgun and mowing down the Romans that killed him. And if it weren't such a subconscious ideal among Christians, it would be funny. It would be outrageous. But I think some of us deep down inside want that.

Because when we're living in times of oppression, when we're living in times of death or wickedness, when injustice is unbearable, what else do you want to happen? God is going to

come back and kill all those bad people. It's instinct. When 9/11 happened, I was 14 years old. I didn't have a clue what was going on in the world, but I saw that happen on TV at home. And then we went to school later, and I remember my English teacher was asking us, trying to figure out how to cope or process. I was 14, didn't know what was going on, didn't know how to process anything. But she was asking each class member how they felt. And when she got to me, I don't remember being angry, but I guess I was, 14, emotions. But I just remember telling her we need to nuke them. Because nuke them.

Nuke who? Doesn't matter, right? Like it doesn't matter. Nuke them. Gosh, so filled with rage. And I had no capacity to even begin to process that. Like my brain wasn't even, no. But I wanted to nuke them. Because when we're hurting and we see others hurting, we in turn want to hurt. That's our first instinct because that's what it is. It's an instinct.

Living Under Oppression

In the first century, Judea, Jews had been living under constant foreign oppression for hundreds of years through wars, rulers, constantly paying the price for the greed of others. And in the first century, they found themselves under the oppression of the Roman imperial regime. Most Jews had slave status in the social hierarchy of Rome. Very few rights, if any. No way to ever get ahead. And always had to serve the Romans. When will there be freedom? When will our people rise above this? When will God actually hear our prayers? When? When will this messianic king actually come? This is the attitude.

The Unexpected Messiah

And when Yeshua did come, what happened? He was killed. He was killed. And we have the story of the road to the town of Emmaus where his followers were looking down at the ground, feeling dumb because they thought he was going to be the Messiah, but he was nailed to a cross. So obviously that wasn't the guy. They were expecting him to lead a revolution that would kill their Roman oppressors.

But the New Testament authors declare something very perplexing, amazing, even confusing and ironic. The New Testament authors wrote that they believed they themselves were living in the end times. [1 Peter 1 20](#), speaking about Yeshua: "God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake. Through Christ, you have come to trust in God and you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory."

Redemption Begins Through Spiritual Victory

New Testament authors believed that the redemption had come. Yeshua was the messianic king. Even if he didn't come the way that people thought he should, they believed he came in a better way. And they believed they were living in the last days. In other words, the Old Testament prophecies about the latter days were beginning to be fulfilled—not by overturning the earthly military oppressors, but for the first followers of Yeshua, the end times were beginning through Yeshua's spiritual defeat of the invisible forces of evil.

Just like we discussed earlier in this series about the irony of how God defeats his enemies in the Old and New Testament. Yeshua defeats evil by allowing evil to flex its muscle and drive nails through his hands and kill him. And it is in this ironic manner that the end times begin. Not the most popular message by any means. Not what people wanted to hear in the first century. What do you mean, invisible forces of evil? Like, the Romans are still here. But those who had ears understood the paradox within fighting evil with violence. Instead of a blissful period when all of God's enemies are completely exterminated and his eternal kingdom is established throughout the entire world, the followers of Yeshua seemed to understand this eschatological period they were living in as an ironic time.

I don't really blame people for not subscribing. It seems like foolishness, doesn't it? Fairy tales. Or, what's the big word? Gosh, that's so naive. Anyone else? No? These are things that people told Paul. That's dumb. The Romans are still here killing people, oppressing people. And you're saying that Yeshua is the messianic king and that somehow on the cross he defeated sin and death and now God's kingdom is here and we get to activate in it even though it's invisible to the rest of the world.

God Works Through His People

And Paul says, yes, yes, because that is how God works in his world. He works through his people. He works through his images to make change. If not, he didn't need Abraham. He wanted to work through Abraham.

My Kingdom Is Not of This World

When evil forces seem to be winning physical victories on earth, the idea is that they're losing a spiritual war. And the irony is when the forces of God appear to be losing physical battles in the world, they're really winning and conquering in the spiritual realm. Man, that's deep. Yeshua said in [John 18](#), speaking to Pilate, and he says, my kingdom is not of this world. He says, if my

kingdom was on this world, my servants would have killed all of y'all. He says, verse 36, my servants would have prevented me from being arrested. But yeah, they tried—pulled the sword out, cut the ear off—stop it. If my kingdom was a worldly kingdom like all of these other worldly kingdoms, I would win playing y'all's games. But it would not stop evil. It would simply continue replicating it.

The Wisdom of the Cross

1 Corinthians 1.18 says this. Oh, I've got a lot up there. Paul responding to people mocking the idea that you could actually live in a way that seemed ironic but actually produced life. To live in a way that was self-sacrificial that would actually bring victory. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But to those who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, the intelligence of the intelligent. I will frustrate. Where is this wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not know him. But God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs. Greeks look for wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified. So radical. So radical.

And people hated Christians because that was their philosophy. It wasn't that they believed in Jesus. Who cares? It was that they refused to operate in a way that the world said is how you operate with power. If someone harms you, you harm them back. That makes sense. It makes perfect sense. That seems just. And Yeshua says, you could do that or you could not take revenge, or the evil that was done to you can stop with you or you don't have to share that pain anymore. Because all that tends to do is replicate it in the world. Matt, that's not fair. It's not fair. It was not fair. It was not fair that Yeshua was falsely accused and put up on the cross. And he says, forgive them for they don't even know what they're doing. But I do. Such a hard thing, the Christian message and mission. It's hard.

Living Out the Kingdom Mission

We have such a privileged Christianity here, don't we? It's so easy to talk about these things, but when or if the rubber ever meets the road, will we stand by the mission? Will we actually believe in what Yeshua has called us to do? How Yeshua has called us to stand out in the world? Just radical. Paul claims that the wisdom of God is revealed through the actions and the message of Yeshua. That Jesus pulling out a gun and shooting the high priest and then shooting Pilate and then leading a zealous Jewish revolt to storm the armory and slaughter all of the

Romans, anyone they could because they're all part of the empire. Men, women, children, that's the whole empire because they're all evil, right? All must be destroyed. Or at best, kill all the men, and if the women and kids die, it's acceptable too, right?

As I was saying before, how we love to justify acknowledging human life during times of war. That's instinct. It's what we want to happen. I remember when we went to Iraq after 9-11. As an immature, underdeveloped teenager, I was okay with whoever died. I had no idea who was dying. I didn't really want to know who was dying. I just wanted to make sure that we were dropping bombs on someone. And we did. We dropped bombs on a lot of people. Too many people. But that's what we want when we're hurt. When we hurt, we want to transfer the pain to others. But instead of making it go away, it just grows into the world.

The Kingdom Has Come

Yeshua says in [Mark 1.15](#), he makes this bold declaration. He says the time is fulfilled now. Yeshua is that rock that destroyed the statue that Daniel dreamed about. He's the rock that's going to grow into a mountain that's going to overtake the entire world. Yeshua said the kingdom of God has come. The same kingdom of God that comes in the latter days. Hebrews chapter 1 also mentions the latter days—another New Testament reference. It says, and he essentially shows that Yeshua is the exact representation of everything God is, Yahweh is. Author of Hebrews is pretty stoked to be living in the last days because he recognized Yeshua as the king. And the kingdom has come.

I believe we are living in the end times, just like Peter, just like Paul, just like John. We just want it to be a little bit more short-lived. Stephen, upon his death, witnessed Yeshua standing in the throne room of God as the messianic king inaugurated, just as [Daniel 7](#) says. In John's vision of Revelation, he saw an open door into heaven, and through it there was an enthroned lamb standing. Yeshua is reigning as king now and has, in fact, defeated sin and death. And some of us would feel disappointed because we don't understand the impact of what that means.

The Here and Not Yet

We conflate the prophetic term of latter days with Yeshua's return as the single event that takes place. And that's not how the Bible speaks about it. The Bible speaks about the kingdom of God growing like a mustard seed into a mighty bush, a mighty plant. It speaks about the kingdom of God being like a little itty bitty bit of yeast rolled into dough. And over time, all of it becomes fermented. God likes to move through his people to make big results. And when Yeshua walked

out of the tomb, the resurrection that was prophesied in scripture had taken place in part. It has begun, even though we are still waiting on a very real return of Yeshua one day. And this is a concept that in Christian scholarship is called the here and not yet. It's the acknowledgement that God has defeated ultimate evil, even if there is physical evil manifesting. It has no power. We can conquer it. We can conquer it just like Yeshua.

Living as Kingdom Bearers

We love to think about our generation being the last generation though, right? Anyone grew up with that? Everyone does. Everybody wants to be the last generation conveniently when they get older. I mean, that's my observation. I don't know. It's hard to know how to live as a kingdom image bearer of Christ in a world that never, ever wants to submit itself to such a reign. There is a day when Yeshua returns and physically reigns over the earth. I see that clearly in Scripture. And he will have to defeat any other physical enemies that are here, somehow, somehow.

The Messianic King: Psalm 2 and Revelation

[Psalm 2](#) speaks of the messianic rule on earth in verse 7. It says, Yes! Right? Two things here in this psalm. The Messiah will rule the entire world one day, and he will have to defeat his enemies before he does that. And he does it in like the most American way, like with a rod of iron. Right? That's [Psalm 2](#). That's the message. I mean, right? That's our culture. We are very... no? Okay, maybe. I'm exposing myself for my upbringing, watching action movies and stuff—G.I. Joes.

John and his vision in Revelation also references [Psalm 2](#). He says it a little bit differently, though. And he says it in a completely different context, kind of. Here's what John says in his vision, his apocalyptic vision in Revelation. Yeshua is speaking here to one of the churches—to his believers—and he says this: But hold on to what you have until I come. The one who is victorious—it's the same word for conquer, Nike, like the shoe Nike—who is victorious and keeps my works to the end, I will give him authority over the nations.

Do you notice a difference? Yeshua is speaking to believers. And what's he say? Hold on. If you are victorious. And then Yeshua quotes [Psalm 2](#) about the scepter and smashing. And he says that about you. He's already started fulfilling [Psalm 2](#), but now extends it to his followers if you are faithful and loyal to follow him and keep the ways of his kingdom. But look at the difference here. I love this. And there's debate about this, but I don't think it should be a debate because I

think John was intentional. Here is the difference: how John speaks about [Psalm 2](#) versus how [Psalm 2](#) itself speaks. You see the difference? [Psalm 2](#) says, and you shall break them with a rod of iron. But in Revelation, the word there is to rule, not break, but to rule or shepherd. Shepherd.

The Shepherd's Rod

In [Psalm 2](#), the Messiah is the shepherd who has the authority to wield the iron staff. And here in Revelation, we see the Messiah has received the authority to do that from the Father, to take up his staff. And you can even say there's more irony, right? Because this staff of iron that crushes the heads of God's enemies also protects those that he shepherds. That's what the cross does. I like to think that's what John's doing. He illustrates this concept further in [Revelation 5](#) when he depicts Yeshua as the inaugurated king in the throne room of God, but he depicts Yeshua as an itty-bitty little lamb with his throat cut. It's [Revelation 5](#). Behold the Lion of Judah. It's this little lamb. Because this is how Yeshua defeats evil. This is how Yeshua establishes his kingdom. And this is how we are invited to join him in reigning and ruling if we are victorious in following him.

One day, I believe scripture is clear, Yeshua is going to return and conclude the latter days that started the moment he walked out of the tomb. And at his return, he will defeat all earthly enemies once and for all. But that is not the focus of the New Testament.

The Focus Is the Cross

It's something to look forward to. But the focus is what took place on the cross. The focus is seeing the world differently than everyone else in the world. The focus is choosing to embody the most radical king ever to live. The focus is how we defeat Satan, sin, and death, and we do it spiritually by following what the king said to do. And sometimes it doesn't look glamorous. And sometimes it looks stupid to the world. And sometimes it looks naive. But that's hope. But that's the calling and example that Yeshua gave.

You want to be in my kingdom? You must follow me. So deny yourself and pick up your cross and follow me as I show you what to do with it. This is not a faith or a religion or whatever you want to call it for the week. It's not. But this is how evil is defeated.

The Meek Will Inherit

The meek will inherit the earth. Irony. How is that going to happen? And Yeshua says, watch and see. Do not repay evil with evil. Irony. Someone tells you to carry their stuff, carry it twice as much. Someone hits you, show them that you are not going to perpetuate their evil actions. Forgive. End the cycle and lean into the sovereignty of God. And that's hard.

Yeah, Matt, what about justice? What about justice? You're just going to ignore injustices? No. You fight for justice. You fight for justice hard if you claim to be a follower of Jesus, Yeshua, as your Messiah. And you betray every single relationship and political affiliation and expectation to do it. Every time. Every time. Betray it all. That's the calling of a follower of Yeshua. Carry the cross and never stop.

The Promise of Revelation

And if you are victorious, even unto death, you will wield the shepherd's staff like Yeshua. [Revelation 3](#), 21, Yeshua is still speaking, and it's one of the most uncomfortable verses because we don't know how to form our current theology around it, but I love it all the same. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my father on his throne.

When mankind was created in [Genesis 1](#), I always got a touch on [Genesis 1](#), they were created to be God's images, to rule over creation with God. That's what it says. John is tying that back to the beginning. That's always been our calling, is to reign with the justice and righteousness of God as his ambassadors for his kingdom.

Guys, I say all that to say I believe the Bible is clear, that even though we await a final conclusion and enactment of the kingdom of God on earth, our focus should be on it reigning now through us, that we are witnesses to that future today. Because how we demonstrate it now.

Ambassadors of the Kingdom

Ambassadors, deny yourself and follow me. Present your bodies as living sacrifices acceptable unto God. This is your spiritual service of worship. That's what Paul says. And never pay back evil with evil. Do not overcome by evil, but overcome with good. [Romans 12](#). That's our calling.

And again, people call it foolishness. People call it naive. Some people call it woke foolishness. Peace loving, you can't just, no. No, this is what got Christians killed in the early days of Rome. When Christians realized the injustices of the Roman empires and they were soldiers, they

threw down their swords and walked away from their posts. No, I serve another king now. I serve his army. I won't participate. Killed.

Standing Against the Beast

It was when Christians would not respond to Rome's pressure to get them to instigate to fight them. No, we won't do that. And there's nothing you can do to us that's gonna make us. That's what the entire book of Revelation is. It's a book of hope that no matter what the world does to you or threatens you with or takes from you, they can't take anything from you because you have your faith in God.

What are they going to do, kill you? That's John's radical. What are they going to do? Because God has you. Because you know there's going to be a resurrection. Because you know God has his arms around you. What are they going to take from you? There's nothing. So watch it as the beast tries its hardest to do what the beast does and is defeated. It's a book of hope.

I Have Hope

And because we have hope in the prophecies of old, because we have hope in the prophecies of Isaiah, when the king will come and the guns and the swords and the knives and the bombs will be so utterly irrelevant that we will have them as lawn ornaments and gardening tools. I have hope in that one day. I have hope that there will be peace. I have hope that there will be such a world of forgiveness that evil can't survive. I have hope that my king is going to reign forever and ever. And everything that Eden was supposed to be about will be a reality. I have hope in the ultimate justice of God. I have hope in all of that.

Living Out Hope Now

And as a follower of Yeshua... We live out that hope now in the most radical and world-thwarting way possible. And it's hard. It's hard.

And so I want to encourage you today to remember who you are. Stand for the right issues. Stand strong for the issues that are important. But don't lose focus on who Yeshua loves. Don't lose focus on who you're called to love.

I have a quote here from a brilliant New Testament scholar, Gregor G.K. Beale. And here's what it says. He says, When he returns for a second time. No, it is going on right now where we live.

We're living in the end times right now. So maybe we should act like it and remember who we are in Christ.

A Time of Worship

And so please stand as we conclude services with a time of worship. And during this time, I ask you to meditate on the word, pray, worship. If you need prayer for something going on in your life, guys, we have a prayer team. Prayer warriors on either side of the stage, take advantage of that. If you have something in your life that you realize shouldn't be associated with the kingdom of God that is readily present with a reigning king, you can also leave that here today as well. We have an altar available that you can symbolically leave that at, and it's appropriate to do so.

Alvina Malkano, our father, our king, father, we thank you for the opportunity today to be a part of your radical kingdom, but we ask that the Holy Spirit, the life-giving breath that you say raised Yeshua from the dead and now resides in us, that it will strengthen us, that it will give us wisdom, that it will give us boldness to stand against injustices in the world, that it would give us the words to speak to make an impact for your kingdom, that through us the world would see hope that through us the world would see you, that through us the world would see a love that defeats the darkest of evils. Father, give us wisdom through perilous times. Give us wisdom. We thank you for the hope that we find in your Son, Christ. Amen.

The Blessing

Sing the Shema. Shema Israel Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. Now may the Lord also cause you to increase and overflow in love for one another and for all people in order to strengthen your hearts as blameless in holiness before our God and Father of all and the coming of our Lord Yeshua with all his Kedoshim. And may the Lord bless you and may he keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you and give you his peace. His Sar Shalom, Yeshua, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and the Prince of peace. Amen. Amen. Shabbat Shalom, family.

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