

Irony – Heaven on Earth

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MAIN VERSES

[Genesis 1:28](#) • [Isaiah 11](#) • [Isaiah 11:6](#) • [Isaiah 11:9](#) • [Matthew 6:10](#) • [Hebrews 11:1](#) • [Isaiah 25](#) • [Hebrews 11](#) • [Hebrews 11:39](#) • [James 3](#) • [Matthew 23](#)

Welcome to Worship

Messianic Shabbat Shalom, everybody. Welcome to Founded in Truth Fellowship. Amazing time of worship. Heaven on earth. What an irony. What an irony. We're continuing our series on irony, a literary theme and tool, and how the biblical authors and God use it throughout the entire story. The Bible has a lot of ironic images in it, a lot of inverted scenarios. Most notably are examples such as the younger serving the older or the motif of the weak prevailing against the strong.

Joseph becoming all but the king of Egypt is a duplicated, mirrored blessing. Moses and Pharaoh. Irony of the great reversal. We have Yael and Sisera, David and Goliath. The list goes on. Esther and Haman fail. These occurrences are considered ironic because of the visible reality we see—the world is ruled by people with power, people with influence, people with privilege, people that can hurt others. And the biblical imagery turns all of that on its head and says that is not what gives you true strength in the eyes of God. And that's a bold statement from an ancient text.

God's Strength Revealed

The Bible, God's word, continuously and consistently objects and says no. The word of God says our God shows strength a different way. And his strength will conquer, has conquered, and is currently conquering. And one day, one day the full governance and the rule of our God will be manifest throughout the entire world and the knowledge of who God is will cover the earth. That's what it says. This is known in the New Testament as the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven or as in John, eternal life.

The vision is cast that in the beginning God created a good, good world where he wanted to participate in a community. That's where we come in. So he forms his images known as mankind and gives them authority to rule over his good creation with him, where they are to reign over the animals and tend to them, where they are to reign over even the plant life and tend to them. They are to take care of the earth and everything in it. That's [Genesis 1:28](#).

The Fall and the Promise

But we know the story. We chose instead to determine good and evil for ourselves by eating the fruit. And the world has turned into the product of what we created it to be by implementing what we think is good and evil instead of relying on the life-giving wisdom of God to guide us. And the story, the Word of God, tells us that despite our injection of violence and judgment of others, grasping of power, despite our own pursuits of sin toward greed, Isaiah gives a prophetic vision in Isaiah chapter 11 that Zach read during Torah portion. That was neat.

And the vision that Isaiah gives is a petition of hope to the people of Judah who found themselves in exile in Babylon. They had hit rock bottom completely. And they were starting to feel like God had abandoned them. This is the God that brought you out of the land of Egypt, brought you into the land, built the temple for you, saw the magnificent display of fire coming down, and now He had allowed the enemy, the Babylonians, to come in, ravage the land, kill, destroy his temple, and carry you out into a foreign land where you're now an exile.

Judah began to lose hope, and Isaiah began writing that God is not done. He speaks of a coming king, a shoot that will come up from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a branch that will bear fruit. And then he paints this picture to describe the sense of peace that will be coming in the future.

The Vision of Peace

And when we get to verse 6 in chapter 11, we have this magnificent scene. This is what the prophet says. I love that. Thank you. That's such a familiar vision that we hear so often that I feel like we take it for granted. Like, have we ever just stopped and meditated on what that looks like? It's almost fictional, like something out of fantasy. And Isaiah is putting this forth—listen, this is the power of God. This is the peace of God. This is the world that God is going to implement despite everything we do to try to light it on fire with hell.

This is what the rule of God looks like when it overtakes the world. The wolf will lie down with the lamb, the calf and the lion, the leopard and the goat, and the child will lead them, just like

in the beginning. It's Eden language. The children will reign over the animals in a way that demonstrates stewardship. The cow will feed with the bear, and the lion will eat grass like an ox. This will be a time when no living creature on the earth will live at the expense of another. That's the point. That's the message of what God's kingdom looks like. And it's beautiful. Talk about shalom.

How could that possibly happen? The bear and the lion will go vegan. There's a point behind the image. And a weaned little child will play in the viper's nest. Danger noodles no more. How could this happen? What launches this? What launches this future earth that has now been united with the heavenly realm and peace of God. Verse 9 tells us, why will all this be happening? Because the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

The Arc of Hope

There is something about hope that drives us. Messages of hope instill optimism. Hope is what motivates. Hope is what encourages us. Hope is missional. Hope causes action. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke and said that the arc of time leans toward justice. He basically puts forth this vision: his actions probably won't change the entire world all at once, but he's going to begin nicking away at the injustice that has taken over the world. He's going to stand for what is righteous. And if we continue to lean into that vision, then we will bend the world towards righteousness, slowly but surely. That's the hope. That's the vision. That is the faith that you put your energy into.

Faith in the Unseen

The Polynesians have an oral tradition concerning their origin story. Anyone ever seen the Moana movie? Moana, right? Hey, hey. Okay. Neat little movie. But it tells the Polynesian origin story. Their story speaks of how they crossed thousands of miles of the Pacific Ocean in open-air raft crafts to find a better land, a better country. Their promised land. I believe it was pronounced Oteora—or Oteoroa. Otherwise known as New Zealand, right? And in their origin story, it says that they saw a long white cloud way off in the distance. And every day while all the other clouds moved around, this one white cloud stayed static.

And so they determined that what they were seeing was a promise of land, not just any land, but their land, good land, the promised Garden of Eden-like place. And so with that faith, they got into their boats and canoes and they paddled. Just because they could not see the land didn't

mean that it wasn't coming. And they understood that if they chose to believe that there was no land just because they couldn't see it, they would not find it. So they put their paddles in the water and they made a choice—they made a commitment to have a new vision, not based on what everyone's telling them, not based on their circumstances. That's kind of neat. It's a little familiar, right?

Our Faith and God's Promise

Do we have such faith in the promises of our God? Do we have such hope that we are willing to say to the world, just because you don't see it doesn't mean it's not working, doesn't mean it's not coming, doesn't mean it's not already here. Do we have such faith that we would dare say to ourselves, I don't have to keep these things in my life that the world tells me I should. I can make a commitment to get in a canoe and paddle. I can leave this old world behind and move towards something better.

Because that's what Yeshua taught us to pray, the Lord's Prayer, right? Father, you're holy. You are in heaven, your place of sovereignty. May your kingdom come and your will be done where? On earth as it is in heaven. That's what that prayer is about. The whole prayer is about, God, I want your kingdom to fully engulf this world so that the knowledge of Yahweh will cover the earth like the waters of the sea. [Isaiah 11](#). That's the prayer that we pray daily, I hope. The Lord's Prayer. That's the point. Your rule come. Your promises come so that earth becomes synonymous with heaven.

Living the Kingdom

And then how do we start this progression? Lord's Prayer tells us, repent. First step, forgive me, God. Forgive me. Cleanse me. And then allow me to forgive everyone else. The reason why forgiveness is so important is because if you choose not to respond to evil with evil, then you are stopping evil from spreading across humanity. That's what forgiveness is all about. Yeshua absorbs the offenses of others so that they stop. And he's teaching us to do the same. And that is some hardship to endure. But that's the calling.

It doesn't mean that you don't call out evil. Oh, don't ever. No. Your job is to stand in the way of evil. Your job is to stand in the way of sin. If hellfire is taking over the world, then your job is to stand in the way of it and not let it progress and push it back. But when offense comes toward you, when harm comes toward you, Yeshua says, guess what? You have the power and authority

that I have given you to do to them as far as forgiveness and mercy and grace go. What an amazing opportunity we have been given by the grace of our God.

But that's what we want. For your kingdom come. Repent and now forgive others. How does the Lord's Prayer continue going? Lead me around the temptations. Be my navigator so I won't be overtaken. Keep my eyes focused on you, for yours is the kingdom.

The story of the Bible is the story of heaven invading earth through the rule and the reign of a king named Yeshua. The king that inaugurated this new creation at his resurrection gives us power and authority with the power of the Holy Spirit to be his ambassador in doing the same. And while we know the kingdom has not fully engulfed the world yet, we understand that it is still a reality right now. It is here and not yet. And we have a choice to live out that faith, that hope. That's what our hope does. It reflects the reality of Christ as our king now.

And that was such a radical thing for the first believers. What do you mean your king lives? Yeah, man. Where is he? He's in heaven. Okay. Where is his kingdom if he's a king? Man, I'll tell you a secret. You want to know where it is? Where? It is among us now. Right here. Right now. I don't see it. That's the problem. You're looking for it over there and over there and over there, and it is among us now.

What do you guys think the whole born again thing was all about? That whole cryptic language that Yeshua always seemed to use. Why do I need to be born again? Because you need to be born into something new, a new reality, a new world, a new dimension, however you want to phrase it, a new creation. Yeshua dared to call and invite his followers to live out an alternative reality that the world couldn't see. But because we know what took place on the cross at Calvary, we have new lenses through which we see the world. We have new lenses of everything that's happening. We have new lenses of why people do things. We have new lenses of who our enemy is and who isn't. We have new lenses of who is taken captive by sin and who needs freedom and who needs prayer. It's a whole paradigm shift. And that's exactly what [Hebrews 11](#) is all about.

Heaven Invading Earth

How does [Hebrews 11](#) begin? Verse 1, Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not yet seen. Whew!

We have such a bad habit of talking about faith as if it's just an opinion, if we can kind of make it blunt. We talk about faith as if it's the same as an opinion that we have, right? Like I have an opinion that Yeshua is king. I have an opinion about the Bible. I have an opinion about God.

And opinions that you're zealous about are great. They're fantastic opinions. But that's not at all what Yeshua was interested in. Even the demons have opinions about God. This is what the Pharisees were interested in.

Yeshua was interested in an obedience that leaned on God so fully that it was as if you were living in that alternative reality and you acted like God's kingdom was actually real. And the way that you treated everyone was a reflection of you living in a world where Yeshua's love and faithfulness and mercy and grace and peace were actually a real thing that you claimed to believe in and live out. And here, the pastor who wrote Hebrews, because it's a sermon, says that faith is living in a way that produces the substance, the reality of what your hope is based on. That's your faith. It's an action word. It's not just an opinion or your thoughts, but it's actualized evidence of a kingdom rule of God that exists and is powerful and is working and is life-changing and is what extinguishes the hell we create in this world and it extinguishes the hell we create within ourselves.

Are we providing the world with evidence that the kingdom of God is real despite them not being able to see it? That is your calling as a follower of Yeshua. That's what being born again is all about.

The Kingdom in Action

Hebrews is trying to encourage a community who has become weary. They have become exhausted. They have slipped back into the mindset that this is it. It's good. Maybe they are having some doubts about stuff. That's completely normal. But the pastor here, he says, no, keep running the race. Don't stop yet. Keep paddling. Keep paddling toward the cloud. Do not give up. Keep your faith. Keep knowing the love of God and keep living out the future world you know is coming right now because you've experienced it and you are experiencing it now because of your relationship with Christ.

Because that's what Jesus did. Why do you think he did all those miracles? To prove who he was. Of course. Of course. But so many of those miracles, very specific. I mean, the lame will walk. The deaf will hear. Right? The blind will see. Right? Those were miracles from Isaiah's visions of the future world when God's rule and reign would manifest among humans. The kingdom of heaven on earth. And despite the world being a reflection of wickedness, evil, sin, hell, here comes Yeshua and everyone that came with him, right? I mean, just imagine there's a guy with a withered hand and Yeshua's like, I can fix it. And they're like, no, it's God's Sabbath. We're supposed to rest here.

Well, what is God's Sabbath supposed to reflect? What does it represent? It is symbolic of something greater. We see that through the prophets. It is symbolic of the eschatological coming of God's kingdom when the Sabbath will never end. The eschatological jubilee where freedom and liberty and rest will overtake creation forever. That's what Sabbath is a sample of. And Yeshua says, you know what? In my Father's kingdom, people are complete. So we're going to fix this hand because that's the true reflection of Sabbath. It was an example. Pharisees didn't like that at all because they had trouble visualizing and seeing what he was doing.

She's a sinner. You wouldn't be sitting next to her if you knew what she's done. In the kingdom of God, there is a banquet table so large that everyone has a seat that they're invited to sit at. [Isaiah 25](#). All nations, all cultures, all languages. There is a seat for everyone. If you choose to sit down, come on. It is a place for the sick to come and experience what true healing looks like. So yes, sinners are welcome. You can't eat with him. He's a chief tax collector. He is the oppressor of our people. He is the most disgusting political figure that we hate. This is ancient Judea, first century Judea. And Yeshua says, I'm going to break bread with him and I'm going to show him how to be a healer instead of an oppressor. Because he doesn't know he can live out the kingdom of God now. And I'm here to show him.

Remember what Zacchaeus did? Man, I'm going to pay everything back and more. Because his priorities changed from the goal of empire, which is wealth and power, to the goal of the kingdom. And he understood that one was going to conquer the other. That was the message of Yeshua. His core message was about bringing the rule of heaven and crashing it into earth in a way that was so disruptive and ironic. And the thing that separates heaven and earth is the captivity to sin. And do we believe that Yeshua conquers sin? So what is holding us back?

The Cloud of Witnesses

The pastor of [Hebrews 11](#) continues and lists what the chapter was dubbed. The hall of fame of faith, right? He lists the major figures in the Old Testament and how they are examples of faith. Even Abel. He starts, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain by which he obtained witness that he was righteous. God testifying of his gifts and by it, he being dead, yet he speaks still. I never read all of those details in the Cain and Abel story, but I'm glad he has them because he's making a point to the audience he's speaking to. Abel was the first to offer sacrifice. The more excellent sacrifice to God. And his voice still speaks even today to us.

By faith, Enoch was translated that he should not see death and was not found because God had transferred him because of his faith. By faith, Noah, being warned of God of the things not yet

seen, moved with fear, prepared the ark. By faith, Abraham called out of a place to enter the land of his inheritance. By faith, he sojourned into the land of promise. And so the pastor continues listing more and more and more iconic ministers of the faith in the Old Testament. Isaac, Moses, Rahab the harlot, Barak, Gideon, even Samson makes the list. All who lived their life in faith.

Why? In [Hebrews 11:39](#), it says that's what faith is. You live out the future promise now. You move toward it. You don't stay stagnant. The pastor goes on to say that everyone who died didn't actually receive the promise that they had faith in, but their vision was aligned toward it. They were like gradual stepping stones and they understood that. And then you keep reading and we have the letters of Paul where he asserts that we do have it. Everything that possessed Abraham to leave his country, everything, we have that. For Daniel to look into the lion's eyes, for Samson to pull down the pillars, everything that possessed Moses to raise his staff up at the sea, and Joseph to stand strong in the prison. Everything they had faith in, seeing it from a distance.

Hebrews says they didn't receive it, but you have obtained it if you have faith and hope in the King Yeshua. You are witnesses of the conquering of sin and death once and for all. You are witnesses of a peace that is nostalgic of the garden. You are witnesses of a grace so heavy that it would even allow you to forgive others.

And that's what's so beautiful about this chapter is that that's the calling. But there's also something ironic here in this call of these examples that are supposed to encourage us to keep our eyes locked on the king, understanding what power is there and understanding his kingdom. The beautiful thing in the nuance of this chapter is these are not great mentors to follow. Matt, you're not allowed to say that. No, it's just true. Noah, the drunkard. Jacob, the con man. Moses, the murderer. I can deal with all of those. Can I share my weakness with you? My flesh. Samson. Really? This is why I was not chosen to write the book of Hebrews. Because I would have not. He ain't making it in here. No way. Put someone else in there. Someone else. Give me Phineas. I mean, give me someone. Samson. Samson, the womanizer, the serial murderer. His party life is exactly what we warn our teenagers not to participate in. Every day. Every day. And he made the list of those who had faith. They had their eyes on the promise while they struggled through this life, just like we all do. While they struggled with their own imperfections, while they struggled with sin, while they doubted, while they found themselves alone at times, they had their eyes on the mission of God. And that's not a hall pass for sin. It is a calling to you today that even if you find yourself like Samson, you are not too far away from the promises and the hope and the healing of Yeshua.

Living Heaven Now

Before the chapters and verses were put into all the books of the Bible, the next verse would have been, That means he's sitting on the throne now, right? So he's king now, right? So there's a kingdom now, right? Amen. Amen. What is so ironic about the king that we serve and the mission he invites us into? It's the irony of living in this world, but seeing heaven, living heaven, being an ambassador of heaven right now, because that is what faith is. Faith is the substance that there is a reason to have hope. Faith is the evidence that we provide for the world of another way of living, an eternal life. That heaven is real. And it's not simply some magic place that you go after you die. That's such a small scope. In fact, there's hardly any biblical backing for that being the trajectory of the gospel.

The Kingdom of God

We have distorted the gospel so much, and I don't know why, to be this thing that's like, okay, if you're really good now, then after you die, you get to heaven. No, heaven is real. Heaven is real, but it's synonymous with the kingdom, rule, and sovereignty of God. And in a world where the influences of evil have infiltrated God's good creation, casting darkness across humanity, we have the opportunity to be a light in that darkness, to be the city on the hill, to be the salt of the earth. We have the opportunity to live out another reality, the reality of Yeshua. And it starts with embracing the promises of God.

Co-creators of Hell and Heaven

We have become so accustomed to being co-creators of hell that we don't even realize we do it. James chapter 3. Gosh, why you got to be so, James. James, he's like, guess what? The most malicious thing, tool, weapon that you have is not the size of your muscles, your pecs, how fast you can swing a sword. It's this flapper inside your mouth. What you can do when you speak to and about other people and to yourself. And he says that the tongue in your mouth has the ability to take the fires of hell. Where the devil did all the hell. Hell, whatever you want to conceptualize, hell. And it spits the fire out like a Mario character. And he says that you have the ability to light God's good creation on fire with hell, and you do it so often. You are a co-creator of hell on earth, according to James. When Yeshua is criticizing the Pharisees in [Matthew 23](#), in his big rant, oh, whitewashed sepulchers. He tells them that you guys go far and wide all over the world to make one disciple, one protege. And you end up creating double the child of hell that you are. You can create sons of hell by evangelizing wrongly. We are the creators of hell on earth. We are the creators of the hell within ourselves.

Called to Extinguish Hell

And Jesus calls us to say, hey, you see how I put out the fires of hell. Follow me and you can do it too. That's the calling. That is what faith is. It is living out that substance and reality that hell can be extinguished wherever you see it. But you have to understand that there is a kingdom that has the power to do that. And you're called to be a soldier of Christ. You're called to be an ambassador of that kingdom. You're called to create little pockets of heaven everywhere you go while the world is filled with darkness and on fire with hell, so that people actually see the peace of God and the power of God manifest. That's what faith is. It is the evidence of that. Substance of things hoped for, it's coming one day completely, but we get a taste of it now.

Pick Up Your Paddle

So if you're here today and you feel like you are too far from God, I've just become so stagnant, or I've gotten very comfortable in a place, or maybe you're in a place of discouragement in your life, because that never happens. Or you find yourself feeling comfortable and at home in a place where you don't feel like you're worthy of love. I want to tell you about the promises of God and a king named Yeshua that knows you. And he knows your name and he loves you. No matter what you have done, no matter how much you have embraced the lies of the world, he loves you. No matter if you are at a place where sin has taken you captive and the chains are heavy, so much so that maybe you find yourself accommodating it in your life. He loves you and he doesn't see you as an enemy. He sees you as the child of God. But in all of those things, you have a choice. You can remain dependent on the visible things of the world—the reality, the foe—that is being presented to us. Or you can pick up that paddle and you can put it in the water and you can start following the cloud to a better promise that you know is there.

Come Forward and Commit

And so I want to give you the opportunity today to make that first step if you find yourself in that place, holding a paddle but not knowing what to do. That first step in declaring to God and yourself that you're going to start living out your faith in a way that looks like Yeshua, as an ambassador of the Lord, a life of faith providing the substance and reality. And so if that's you today, I would invite you during worship to come up and you can kneel at the altar here, and you can make that your testimony and commitment of moving forward. And if you need prayer today, man, do we have people that want to join you and pray with you and pray for you. We'll have a prayer team on either side of the stage. And you don't need to wait on an invitation. You don't need a special sign to be like, okay, I guess it's my turn. You can just walk up to them.

They're pretty friendly. And they want to pray alongside you. You don't need to be waiting for a sign of what to do with the paddle that you're holding in your hands. This is it. Make the move.

Keep Going, Finish the Race

And maybe you're still paddling in the waters and you're still following the cloud. Man, the book of Hebrews was written to you. Getting a little tired. Keep going. Finish the race because you are joining the ranks of Hebrews chapter 11. The chapter I don't believe has ever stopped being written. It has all of your names in it. Keep going because one day... The earth will be filled with the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the land. Be the evidence to others of the hope that they can have in Christ. That is the message of the Bible. And that is the upside down ironic kingdom that Yeshua rules over that conquers all.

Closing Prayer and Blessing

So please stand with me as we enter into a time of worship. Avinu Malkenu—our Father, our King—Father, we thank you for this opportunity to once again dive into your word to embrace the reality that may be unseen but is not unfelt, that you would allow us to utilize the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that raised Yeshua from the dead, that you say is within us even now—that power and authority and confidence, that understanding that would allow us to be a people of faith, that we would be the ambassadors of heaven on earth, and that people would see the power of God work through each and every one of us in our own lives, in the things that are dominating our hearts, and as a witness, as a light to others, that God's peace, God's love, God's mercy, and God's forgiveness are infectious. We thank you, Father, in the name of Yeshua, our King, we pray. Amen. Shabbat shalom. Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance towards you and give you peace. Hallelujah. Shabbat shalom. Go in his peace. Go in his rest this week. Hallelujah.

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