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December 2006
Kislev–Tevet 5767

Shalom Haveirim (Greetings of Blessing and Peace to you, my friends)

The Holiday season is officially here- The Salvation Army had its Kettle Kick-off, on Thanksgiving in Dallas Stadium, a game the Cowboys went on to win. The Cowboys and my (former) hometown favorites the Washington Redskins engaged in a parallel strategy- both hired older coaches to revitalize teams, which had become moribund. The Cowboys, Bill Parcells and the Redskins, Joe Gibbs.

FOOTBALL AND BIBLICAL PROPHECY

Now, I am not a great football fan. Living in Baltimore it's hard to ignore a city that goes wild, and a bit bonkers, when the Ravens win, but I have one observation about the 'Skins and the Cowboys', which might be relevant to the Kingdom of God and advancing Yeshua's reign.

Coach Joe Gibbs is a Christian, and is very open about his testimony. As far as I know Bill Parcells doesn't profess faith- Parcells is on a winning streak and the Washington Redskins is slowly being flushed away. Both men are great coaches- in fact Joe Gibbs is already in the Hall of Fame!

But, Parcells is doing something right – he's winning games, and seeing his team advance to the playoffs. At first his method and the distinctives he employed struck me as ruthless- opportunistic. Let me give you an example. The Cowboys agreed to employ Mike Vanderjagt for three years (and pay him \$5.3 Million). Coach Parcells fires the guy in the middle of the season and hires Martin Gramatica off the street to be the Cowboys' Field Goal Kicker. And guess what? –Gramatica came through (at the time I write this) and the Cowboys win.

All this while Joe Gibbs remains constant, and not willing to renege on promises or strategies. Now this is a tough one- since in individual matters we are to "swear to our own hurt- for example- if I agree to do a job for you for \$100, figuring to myself that the job will take me ten hours, and I get into it and it takes me 12 hours- I do the job for \$100- since that what I told you I would do. I swear to my own hurt, and I absorb the extra burden.

This is an individual matter, and here's the difference. Coach Parcell might care a lot about his individual players, but his actions show me that he cares more about the mission he's been charged with accomplishing. He has been engaged to win a pennant to advance his team, and he is going to employ every (legal) means to accomplish this goal- to win the race without being disqualified to achieve the prize.

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WE RUN TO WIN THE PRIZE

Not everyone on the team will be there at the finish line-some will fall, and that is a cost he is willing to accept. However, some will rise beyond what the pundits thought or imagined. Coach Parcells is not only winning football games-i.e, accomplishing his mission, but he is also restoring Terrell Owens (who was fired from Philadelphia last year) to a place of confidence and productivity.

The management styles of these two men differ in their approach. Both need the wisdom to know when to give grace and when to demand total commitment and the best from each player, which leads to victory. There are times when hard decisions have to be made to remove one player so the whole team will not suffer, along with the intent to restore and rebuild the weak player.

MESSIANIC MINUTES

Meanwhile away from the gridiron, *Messianic Minutes* is still in the running for the **best teaching show on Christian Radio**. We've been informed that the judges will be making their pronouncement in January 2007. I ask that you keep praying. Jeffrey D. Miller and I are honored to be nominated! Wow! But, it would be a kick to win.

Men like to win. Ask Coach Parcells, and ask Yeshua. Remember when Jesus, the Messiah, returns to earth- he comes as a conquering King. He comes back to win- to reclaim His rightful throne in Jerusalem and to reign victorious over the entire world.

Even as we consider this season of His birth, remember that He came as an infant, but He is destined for a throne. He ultimately defeated Satan and grabbed the keys of hell and of death- providing the way of victory for all of us- men and women, Jew and Gentile.

JESUS CELEBRATED HANUKKAH

Speaking of victory, this season is the time of Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication, and the Festival of Lights. Jesus celebrated Hanukkah, as recorded in the Gospel of John 10:22, "Then came the Festival of Dedication (Hanukkah). It was winter, and Yeshua was in the temple area, in Solomon's Colonnade."

The Feast of Dedication commemorated an actual historical event. Yeshua celebrated a military victory, which paved the way for his being born into the world. Had the Jewish people lost the war against the Hellenistic Syrian-Greeks- then Jesus could not have been born into the world!

Why is that? Simple: the story of Hanukkah is the story of how the Greek way of thinking and looking at the world challenged and in fact threatened to extinguish the Biblical, Hebraic world-view!

Hanukkah is a fun holiday. I love spinning the dreidles and lighting the candles for eight nights, and especially I love to eat potato Latkes. But the holiday is not about gift giving, nor is it about food, nor is it about candles or dreidles. The holiday of Hanukkah, especially as Jesus celebrated it, is a holiday foremost about an armed revolt, which challenged and ultimately defeated the most powerful army in the world!

After Alexander the Great had conquered the known world, his Kingdom was divided into four sections, with a general ruling each. Two portions were in the mid-east: one headquartered in Syria and one in Egypt. Israel was in the middle of both and pressured both militarily and economically to take sides.

When the ruler of the Syrian Greeks, Antiochus, decided to unify his empire and consolidate his political and military strength, he commanded that there be one language, one culture, one world-view acceptable in his Kingdom. That worldview was the Greek view that saw man as the center of all things, man as the measure of all things.

The Israelites accepted one language pretty easily. That facilitated trade and commerce. One culture was a bit tougher, but many Jewish people went along and saw the value of assimilating. Jewish people joined the Gymnasiums, where true to their Greek name, men ran around naked. Homosexuality abounded. Jewish males would even undergo a painful operation to reverse the appearance of circumcision- so they would fit in better to the prevailing culture.

But, it was what we call Greek thought that proved the stumbling block. Greek thought is what we call today, “secular humanism.” It is seeing man as the measure of all things, not God, not the Bible, but man. Today scientific rationalism promotes the same philosophy.

MARY AND JOSEPH WERE RIGHTEOUS BIBLE-BELIEVERS -- NOT GREEK HUMANISTS

Now why was it important to Jesus that Israel not fall prey to this deception? Because had the Greek way of thinking prevailed, then Mary and Joseph would not have been Orthodox Jews- they would not be followers of the Torah. John the Baptist would not have been prophetically active. The society would not have been looking for a Messiah- since you don't need or want a Savior, if you are philosophically opposed to the notion of sin, and the need for salvation.

Jesus' parents would not have been acting according to Scripture. In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2 verse 21: *On the eighth day, when it was time for his circumcision he was given the name Yeshua (Jesus).* Jesus was circumcised! Why, because his parents were observant Jews. Because He was born in the Covenant of Abraham, the sign of which was circumcision. Jesus is the seed of Abraham, through whom all the nations of the world are blessed.

Circumcision had been outlawed by Antiochus 150 years before Messiah's birth. Jewish men were removing the mark of circumcision, the mark of the covenant. Greek thinking

was replacing Biblical thinking. It wasn't rational to be circumcised- it made no sense to undergo this ancient and painful ritual if man were the measure of all things. Only in God's economy did circumcision matter.

Also, had Greek thinking prevailed, Mary would not have gone to the Temple for her purification as required by the Torah (Luke 2:22) and the prophets Simeon and Anna would not have been expecting "*the consolation of Israel- a light and revelation to the nations and glory to your people Israel.*" (Luke 2:31

MILITARY VICTORY

A military victory was necessary to overthrow not only Syrian Greek oppression, but also Syrian-Greek thinking. Jesus celebrated the military victory because it paved the way for a culture allowing everything to be done according to God's Word and righteousness (Matthew 3:15- let it be done this way, to fulfill all that righteousness requires).

The military victory came after a long bloody war. It came after Antiochus erected a statue of Zeus in the Holy of Holies and sacrificing a pig on the altar of Adonai desecrating the Temple. A righteous preacher said enough- and thousands joined the Maccabean Army. Many of those in that army were cut from the team- many died in battle. But the coach, the leader Judah Maccabee, remained faithful to the cause, the cause of Torah over Greek thinking, and ultimately many people were sanctified and restored through that courageous decision.

Friends, today we too are called upon to make courageous decisions. We are asked to take a stand for God, for Biblical thinking and for His Messiah, in a world where such views clash with the humanistic culture. Many are asked to remove the marks of Covenant loyalty and to replace them with cultural homogeneity.

The Hanukkah story is about dedication and about light. It is about standing firm on the Word of God and fighting for Biblical truth. It is a call to sacrifice.

Just as Yeshua remembers a team of fighters for righteousness, and in fact their victory paved the way for His birth, so we too are called to stand firm for truth and righteousness and prepare for His soon return. I believe that as we pray together, as we give to Kingdom advancing ministries like **Favor Zion** and shine with the Light of Jesus, we will see restoration. Together we fulfill prophecy!

Ted

PS: At this time of celebration, I ask that you include a gift to **FAVOR ZION**. Your support encourages and emboldens us to go forth and advance Yeshua's Kingdom.