



December 2012

YOU ARE THE LIGHT
OF THE WORLD! MATT. 5:14



Holiday Blessings in Messiah,

Identity!

As we come to the close of the year 2012, the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) is leading us to ponder our identity in Messiah, and His identity, both perceived and real. Our concepts of who we are and who He is greatly affect how we enter 2013. Sadly, there are many in the Body of Messiah who have lost their sense of identity in the Lord. Something has died. The Bible addresses believers like this in Revelation 3:1-3: *"...I know your works, that you have a name, that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."* The chapter goes on to reassure the few who *"have not defiled their garments,"* who will walk with the Lord in white, for they are worthy.

What exactly is God saying? First of all, He is not saying that we are saved by *"works."* Salvation is by grace through faith in the risen Messiah. It is an event, followed by a process (much like marriage). Once the event takes place, the believer in Yeshua ideally embraces the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:17: *"Therefore, if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."*

This is our identity. We are a new creation. *"...we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."* (Eph. 2:10) We must know who we are before we can fulfill our individual purpose, our destiny. It all begins with renewing our mind with the Word of God so that we agree with who He says we are. As we think godly thoughts, godly actions follow. Proverbs 23:7 says it this way: *"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."*

As 2012 ends, we all need to search our hearts and ask the question, "Am I walking in the works that God has already prepared for me to walk in?" This is Messianic *halakhah* (walking out our faith)! You have been chosen by the Creator to fulfill desires of His heart. Pursue Him. Inquire of Him. He will show you your specific identity in Messiah—intercessor, encourager, server, teacher, helper, etc. etc. Ask God to resurrect that which has been dormant—a gift or talent perhaps that no longer has life. Ask forgiveness for allowing the enemy to rob you of your precious inheritance in Messiah, especially the awareness of who you are in Him.

Our Identity in Messiah

Identity is "Who I am," my perception of myself, my value and worth. A couple of years ago, when a Talmud teacher from Jerusalem "just happened" to be seated next to Jamie on a trip to Israel, he said to her, "Who are you?" Her ten hour answer did not focus on her name, her occupation, or her role as wife and mother. Instead, she showed him who she is according to the Holy Scriptures—a beloved daughter of God, cleansed by the blood of Messiah, a child of Abraham by faith, and part of a spiritual priestly bridal company. Loved, Accepted, Forgiven, Treasured, Chosen. This is you too, if you have received Yeshua as your Messiah and Lord. We have been bought with a price (1 Peter 1:18-19). Our value can be measured by the price that was paid—the life of Yeshua Himself. He believed that

you were worth dying for. The bride price (*mohar*) paid for each one of us should solidify in our hearts how very much we are loved and valued!

Our Mennonite friend, Martha, was kind enough to send us her notes from her seminar on "Identity and Destiny" in which she explains that when we don't have identity, we have FEAR. This manifests itself in the following ways: 1) Insecurity, doubting God's love for us, 2) Restlessness, striving, performance and self-focus, 3) A curse that comes because the blessing is cancelled, 4) Mind blocking and darkening because of lies, 5) A locked and hardened heart and 6) A lack of peace since fear pushes the soul out of peace (*shalom*).

The enemy, *hasatan* or satan, tells us a lie in an attempt to steal our true identity. The lie is: "I am loved by what I do." The truth is: "I am loved." Rabbi Saul expresses it beautifully in Ephesians 1:6: "...*He made us accepted in the Beloved.*" Accepted, not rejected. We do the works that God has pre-ordained for us as the fruit of our love relationship with Him, not in an attempt to earn His love. We cannot do anything to make Him love us any more or any less. He is God; His love is not like ours. His love is always unconditional!

Do not allow the enemy to steal your identity. When he tries (and he will) remind him who you are. Let this be your confession:

<i>"I am loved.</i>	<i>I have value.</i>
<i>I am a child of God.</i>	<i>I am forgiven.</i>
<i>I am a new creation.</i>	<i>I am righteous.</i>
<i>I am redeemed, chosen.</i>	<i>I belong."</i>

To have identity is to KNOW and BELIEVE that God LOVES YOU, that you belong to the Lord, that you have VALUE in His sight, and that you are CARED FOR by Him. It is to know that your NEEDS WILL BE MET in Messiah, who gives you HIS PEACE (SHALOM). Picture Yeshua as a model of spiritual identity. At the beginning of His ministry, His Father spoke a word of identity to Him when a voice from heaven said, "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" (Matt. 3:17) Yeshua's relationship, acceptance, value, security, sense of belonging, significance, and knowledge of the Father's love were firmly established as the Father affirmed His identity. He went on to fulfill His destiny.

To NOT have identity is to feel that you don't belong and are not wanted. It is to feel shame and guilt and a sense of worthlessness—that you are a mistake. It is to feel fear, insecurity, and loneliness, doubting that your needs will be met. It is to agree with what satan says about you, and to doubt God's love for YOU. This, beloved, is IDENTITY THEFT. Don't let it happen to you!

Natural Identity Theft

There is natural as well as spiritual identity theft. This year has seen a substantial rise in this demonically inspired activity in our country, and throughout the world. It hit home to us when one of our Jewish Jewels staff members was informed by her income tax preparer that someone had fraudulently obtained a substantial tax refund using her social security number.

This was followed shortly by a personal experience in which we were asked to answer a number of security questions for online banking in an effort to avoid identity theft. Some of the questions highlighted just how easy it must be to rob someone's identity, since only WE know the answers to: "Where did your parents meet?" and "What is the name of your favorite elementary school teacher?"

To minimize the chance of identity theft, we suggest that you never give out your social security number or other personal information to anyone over the phone unless you have placed the call.

Yeshua: Victim of Identity Theft

During the month of December, millions of people will sing songs about the Messiah. Many will call Him Jesus. His mother will be Mary, and His father Joseph. Some will call Him King, but there will be little or no emphasis on the fact that He was born "**King of the Jews.**" The wise know this (as did the "*wise men from the East*") (Matt. 2:2). As least one carol asks about Messiah's identity: "What Child is this who laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping? Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping. This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing. Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary!"

Last month we had at least three Jewish people ask us about the identity of Messiah. Jean, 100 years old, wants to believe, but is having a difficult time setting aside one hundred years of being taught that "Jesus is only for gentiles." The baby in the manger is a totally Christian concept to her, even though the baby was Jewish. Jean wrestles with the truth that the Babe, the Son of Mary, is really Messiah, the Son of God. Please pray for Jean as she was recently diagnosed with cancer, and eternity beckons her. She is reading **A Kiss A Day** and the Bible; we believe that her revelation is soon to happen.

Ellen recently prayed with us to receive Yeshua at a service at our Temple. We have had a relationship with her and her believing brother and sister-in-law for years. She has seen the Jewishness of faith in Yeshua and was clear about His identity. Now the discipleship process begins, as we help Ellen discover her identity in Messiah. Pray that God speaks to Ellen through His Word.

Stan, the son of Holocaust survivors, asked to come visit us at our home to learn more about Yeshua. A Christian woman who works for him has been sharing with him about the Lord, but he could not relate to a "Christian" Messiah. We did in our home what we have tried to do since 1980 on television and in personal ministry engagements—put a talit back on Yeshua—restore Him to His original Jewish identity, so that our people can recognize Him as their Messiah. Remember Joseph who was sold into slavery by his brothers and became second to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt? He was not recognized by his Jewish brothers because he looked like an Egyptian, a foreigner, spoke a foreign tongue and was called Zaphnathpaaneah. Joseph is a type of Yeshua whose "brothers" see him as a Gentile. The GOOD NEWS is: Just as Joseph revealed his true identity to his brothers and they lovingly embraced and reconciled, Yeshua is revealing His true identity to His brothers, the Jewish people, and many are receiving Him.

History of Spiritual Identity Theft

It is an unfortunate historical fact that the "Church" has been largely responsible for stripping Yeshua of His Jewish identity. In his excellent novel, **Identity Theft: How Jesus Was Robbed of His Jewishness**, Ron Cantor lists some of the bizarre and unscriptural doctrines that the Church fathers taught their followers: • God hates the Jews. • It is your duty to hate the Jews. • The Jews are cursed and will never return to be God's people. • The Church is the new Israel. • The Jews must suffer as a nation for the killing of Jesus and • No one can be both Christian and Jew.

The logical consequences of these statements and attitudes is the purging of the Jewishness of Yeshua, His followers, and the New Covenant Scriptures. You might even call this effort an "ethnic cleansing" of the faith, so that The Good News appears altogether foreign to a Jewish person.

For example, in 364 CE, at the Council of Laodicea, the Church formally declared Sunday as the Lord's Day, the day of worship and rest, changing the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Believers who celebrated the Sabbath on Saturday were excommunicated from the Church and "anathema from Christ." Believers in Jesus were commanded not to worship as the Jews, which resulted in Passover being changed to Easter, and a day selected to honor the Savior's birth (Dec.25) that had pagan rather than Jewish roots. God's calendar, and His holy days, were dismissed as being no longer relevant.

Identity and Stolen Names

Satan, whom the Brit Hadasha calls "the thief," has been very successful in stealing the identity from the central figures in New Covenant history through changing their original Hebrew names. Yeshua is the first to be a victim of this kind of identity theft. His real name was not Jesus. Yeshua's name is especially significant since it clarifies who He is and what He came to do. An angel of the Lord said to Joseph, "... you shall call His name Yeshua, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21). Literally, His name is to be "salvation" because He will 'yoshia' (verb form, save) His people from their sins. By using this English name, the Jewishness of the New Covenant is obscured, communicating incorrectly to Jews that the New Covenant is not Jewish. His mother had a Jewish name, *Miriam*, which when translated from the Greek to the English became Mary or Maria. "John the Baptist," was actually *Yochanan*, and not a Baptist. We led a Jewish woman to the Lord many years ago who was shocked to find out that John was Jewish! The same with Peter (*Kefa*). As Ron Cantor points out: Your average Jewish person has no idea that the man Christians call Peter is actually Jewish. Jacob, who wrote a letter *"to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad"* and was the physical half-brother of Yeshua, became "James" in translation. Who changed his name? It is speculated that since King James authorized the English translation of the Bible, translators did this to honor him. Regardless, the change from Jacob to James lessens the perception of the New Covenant as a Jewish document. These are just some of the name changes that obscured the Jewishness of the Gospel message.

Stolen Roots

The New Covenant was originally promised to the House of Israel and the House of Judah (see Jer. 31:31). Rabbi Saul (Paul) tells us that theirs is the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises. The Jewish people also gave us the Messiah (Rom. 9:4-5). WOW. Those are some very rich roots! And yet, ignorant or uncaring that Yeshua's last meal with His disciples was a Passover Seder, there are still churches that serve leavened bread for the Lord's Supper. The enemy has stolen the Jewishness, and richness, of Communion from the Body of Believers at large. They are missing the beauty of seeing Yeshua as the sinless Messiah, the Unleavened Bread of Sincerity and Truth.

What about the Law (Torah)? Satan has certainly tried to steal its true identity by making popular phrases such as, "We're no longer under the Law." But in Acts 21:20 we read that there were thousands of Jews who believed in Yeshua and all of them were zealous for the law. This was considered something good. In Yeshua, the Law had gone from the outside to the inside, from tablets of stone to the heart of man (Ezek. 36:26-27). We believe that the Ten Commandments are still *"holy, just and good"* (Rom.7:12). They show us how to live, and reveal our inability to actually keep the Law fully, showing us our need of a Redeemer.

Other victims of identity theft include the concept of "priest" (originally a Jewish concept), "baptism" (still a very Jewish practice), "Jews" (when it really is Judeans or The Jewish Leaders). This final example of stolen identity has resulted in the centuries old charge of deicide against the Jewish people. The entire Jewish nation has been blamed for killing Jesus, when in reality a small group of jealous, politically oriented leaders and a manipulated crowd were to blame. The deeper truth is that Yeshua gave His life of His own free will—for all of us—Jew and non-Jew alike (Jn.10:8).

We know that, you, our Jewish Jewels family, know much of what we have shared this month, but our Jewish people do not know that there has been spiritual identity theft with tragic, eternal consequences. Thank you for making it possible for us to share the truth with them.

Love in the King of the Jews, born of a virgin, the prophet's Messiah.



Neil & Jamie

PLEASE PRAY ABOUT AN END OF THE YEAR GIFT TO HELP US CONTINUE TO PROCLAIM THE "TRUE IDENTITY" OF YESHUA, KING OF THE JEWS!