

God's Everlasting Covenant

presents

Preparing the Way of the LORD!

Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful Day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.

Malachi 4:4-6 (NIV)

Did you know that as a follower of Yeshua, each of us is called to prepare the way of the LORD? It is true. The above Scripture teaches us that the prophet Elijah will come back before the Day of the LORD, which is Yeshua's return to the earth. John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah before Yeshua's first coming, but at His second coming, Elijah will actually return to the earth. It is thought by many prophetic scholars that Elijah may be one of the two witnesses spoken of in the prophets, and also in Revelation, chapter 11. Did you also know that the spirit of Elijah is already here? That is what this study is about. We will look through the Scriptures to answer some questions such as: What is the purpose of Elijah's coming before the Day of the LORD? What is the way of the LORD? And finally, what does it mean to prepare the way of the LORD?

Before we begin, we would like to point out that there are others who have done extensive teachings on this subject. One of the best, in our opinion, is Lars Enarson of *The Watchman International*. He is an excellent teacher and has several video teachings on his website that we highly recommend. His website will be listed at the end of this study.

First, let's look more closely at the above Scripture in Malachi. The first thing to point out is that the *law of my servant Moses* is referring to the Torah. This has been discussed in other studies, so we won't go into any depth here. The Torah literally refers to the first five books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy), but the Torah can also refer to all the prophets and writings as well, what most Christians refer to as the Old Testament. In this verse, because it says "the law (Torah) of my servant Moses", we can safely interpret this as meaning Genesis through Deuteronomy. The LORD (YHWH) is speaking here through the prophet and He is commanding us to *remember* the Torah.

It is worthwhile to point out something in the Hebrew. The word for remember is *zichru*. It comes from the root word of *zachar*. It is saying literally, "You remember the Torah of Moses..." The letters, reading from right to left are: *zayin, chet, reysh*. In the paleo-Hebrew, when the letters were written in pictorial form, they were the picture of a weapon, meant to cut or cut off; a fence, which is separation or protection; and the head of a man and represented a person. So remembrance is a weapon (from

God) that protects the head of a person. Isn't that what the Torah, or the Word of God does? The very words have the authority to protect our head, which is where our mind is! And what exactly is God's weapon? It is the "sword of the Spirit." The Torah is indeed God's sword that protects our head from the lies of the enemy, who wants to destroy our minds.

This is a real brain cruncher for most Christians. Why in the world would we be told to remember something that has been done away with? There are literally hundreds of verses in the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) that prove the Torah has not been abolished or discarded. This scripture confirms it as well. It is referring to the Day of the LORD, which we can all agree has not yet happened...And before it comes, we told by God Himself through the prophet to remember the Torah – this means all of it: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy! In the very next sentence, we are told that God Himself will send the prophet Elijah before the Day of the LORD. And Elijah will do something special. What does it mean that Elijah will *turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers*? This is also an extremely important verse that we should look at more closely.

The Hebrew word for turn is *shuwb*. שׁוּב (*shin, vav, bet*) It is Strong's #7725 and it means: to turn back, with the idea of returning to the starting point; to bring back [home], recall, recover, rescue, restore. This is very interesting. It is also the root for another Hebrew word *teshuvah*, which is the word for repentance. The next question is: who are the fathers, and who are the children? In a broad context, this can certainly mean literally a dad and his children. We don't have to look too far to see that in our society, children are estranged from their fathers, and vice-versa. But in this context, our belief is that this is referring to the fathers of our faith...Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. More broadly, it likely refers to the Jewish people, who have preserved the Torah of Moses and prepared the way long ago by preserving everything so that our Messiah Yeshua could come to the earth and live and die as a Jewish man. Paul points out in Romans 9:4-5, "...the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised!"

If the fathers of Malachi 4:6 refers to the patriarchs of our faith and by broader definition, the Jewish people, then the children can be none other than the Christians, who are the non-Jewish believers and followers of Yeshua the Messiah! We Gentiles who believe are the offspring of the patriarchs; we are the children who are now of the seed of Abraham. We believe in the God of Israel and His Messiah, His only begotten Son and are now grafted into the people of Israel! And so the meaning of Malachi 4:6 becomes sparkling clear! The hearts of the Jewish people will turn back to the Christians, and the hearts of the Christians will turn back to the Jewish people! This is one of the proofs that we are indeed in the end times...we are in the last days of the last days for this is exactly what is happening! The Jewish people are beginning to open their arms and welcome the Christians and the Christians are returning to the Jewish

roots of their faith and realizing that they have a great deal to learn from the Jewish people!

When we were last in Israel, we had the opportunity to witness this first hand. We joined in the March for Jerusalem which takes place every year during the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot). This year, they estimated that there were over 70,000 Christian Zionists who participated in the march. Thousands of Israeli's, including Orthodox Jews were lined up along the route of the march, extending their hands, handing us homemade gifts and candies, applauding as we walked by. Many were thanking us for coming to Jerusalem and Israel; many more were shouting, "We love you!" There was singing and dancing and great jubilation. We felt like we were famous celebrities! It was really heartwarming. Personally, I (Debbie) couldn't help but think of this verse over and over again as I shook the hands and looked directly into the smiling eyes of hundreds of Jews that day. My heart was filled with such compassion as I realized how desperate these people are to know that they have true friends in this world that hates them so. As the LORD brought to memory the ancient words of Malachi, my eyes welled up with tears at the realization that this prophecy was being fulfilled before our very eyes – *He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.* And every Christian who marched that day was part of the fulfillment of that ancient prophecy! Wow!

Of course, Elijah has not yet returned in person to the earth. However, his spirit is here and is at work already. This is the biblical pattern with regard to the coming of Messiah. John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah preparing the way for the LORD's first coming, just as the spirit of Elijah is here on the earth now, preparing the way for His second coming. He is doing this by returning the hearts of the Jewish people to the Christians and the hearts of the Christians to the Jewish people. We who are alive today are living in extraordinary times. We are convinced that Messiah's return is sooner than anyone thinks!

Now that we have answered our first question, which is the purpose of Elijah's coming before Yeshua's return, let's move onto the next one. What exactly is the "Way of the LORD?" We need to understand what "the way" is before we can know how to prepare "the way." Let's turn again to the Scriptures. We don't have the time to go into every verse which talks about the way of the LORD, but we will look at a few key verses.

The first time this phrase appears is in Genesis 18:19. In referring to Abraham, the LORD says:

For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him.

In Proverbs 10:29:

The way of the LORD is a refuge for the righteous, but it is the ruin of those who do evil.

And in this well known verse of Isaiah 40:3:

A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness, prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

The Hebrew word for "way" in each of these passages is *derech* דֶּרֶךְ . It is Strong's #1870 and means: a road or path; figuratively, a course of life or action, manner, pathway. The ancient Hebrew language presents us with a word picture of a doorway, a man and a fence giving us a much deeper meaning: there is a doorway or path that a man should enter which protects him. This would be the *derech* or way of the LORD. So what is the LORD's way as opposed to other ways? Let's look at a few more Scriptures.

Isaiah 2:3:

Many peoples will come and say, "Come let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths. The Torah will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

What is most interesting about this verse in Isaiah is that this prophecy has not yet been fulfilled. It is talking about what will be happening during the Millennial Kingdom when Yeshua is reigning on the earth. It says, "He will teach us his ways..." Whose ways? The LORD's! And the very next sentence is "The Torah will go out from Zion." The prophet is telling us that the way of the LORD is that the Torah, what we Christians have translated as "law" and have thought is done away with, will go forth from Zion, which is Jerusalem. Can you see that on one side of the sentence is *the Torah will go out from Zion* and on the other, *the word of the LORD from Jerusalem*. These two statements are saying the same thing, and it is repeated for emphasis. This verse equates Zion with Jerusalem and the Torah with the Word of the LORD! So, why do we Christians believe that the Torah, or the law, has been done away with? Something is not right here, and we can assure you it is not a problem with God's Word. It is a problem with what we have been taught.

Psalms 18:30:

As for God, his way is perfect, the Word of the LORD is flawless.

Psalms 119:1

Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law (Torah) of the LORD.

Psalm 119:33-35

Teach me, O LORD, the way of your decrees; then I will keep them to the end. Give me understanding, and I will keep your law (Torah) and obey it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.

In all these instances, the words that are underscored are the same Hebrew word *derech*. It is clear that the way of the LORD is by following the Word of the LORD, or the *Torah*, which is the law of Moses.

There is an evil way we can follow that is not according to the way of the LORD, or Torah. The Apostolic Scriptures call this “lawlessness.” The Greek word is *anomos*. It actually means “without Torah.” We don’t have time to do a full study of this at this time so will only briefly touch a few verses that show us that *anomos* is the opposite of God’s ways and the way of righteousness.

1 Timothy 1:9

Knowing this; that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers...

2 Peter 2:8

For that righteous man (Lot), living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard.

2 Thessalonians 2:8

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mount and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

Mark 15:28

And the scripture was fulfilled, which says, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

Now let’s look at a few more that will help us to make a connection between the way of the LORD and what the spirit of Elijah is up to in these last days.

Jeremiah 6:16

This is what the LORD says: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, “We will not walk in it.”

Jeremiah 18:15

Yet my people have forgotten me; they burn incense to worthless idols which made them stumble in their ways from the ancient paths. They made them walk in bypaths and on roads not built up.

Again, in these verses, *derech* is the underlined word. What is fascinating here are the words translated as “crossroads” and “ancient paths.” What are these crossroads, these ancient paths that are identified as the good way, and the way from which God’s people have stumbled? What are these bypaths and roads not built up that His people should not be walking on?

The word for “ancient” is Strong’s #5769 *owlam*. It is a word which means eternal the vanishing point, the beginning of the world, everlasting, without end. In other words, it is a path or way we are to walk that is eternal. It never changes.

Since we have already determined that the ways of the LORD are in keeping His Word or His Torah, and we are to stay on the ancient paths and not stumble from them, it seems clear to this follower of Yeshua that the ancient paths in which we are to walk are according to the Torah of Moses. It has never been done away with folks. We are not talking about a salvation issue. We are only made righteous by the blood of Yeshua. This point has been made in previous studies, but it is important to state it again here. Following the ancient paths, keeping the ways of the LORD are about holiness. Holiness means to be set apart for God’s purposes. No amount of good works can produce a righteous standing before God. But following Torah has never been and never will be about righteousness. It is about holiness. It’s about how holy you want to be. Holiness and righteousness are not the same thing. Righteousness is about our nature, our constitution. Holiness is about how we live. One of my good friends and mentors says is this way: How brightly do you want your light to shine. Do you want to be a 40-watt bulb? A 60-watt bulb? A 75-watt bulb? A 100-watt bulb? The more we follow the ancient paths...the more we treasure God’s Words and follow His commands, the holier we become...the brighter our light shines. And why do we want our light to shine? Because we want to glorify the Father of Lights and His Son, Yeshua our Messiah!

As a side note, there is something remarkable in Jeremiah 6:16 above. It is the phrase, “...and you will find rest for your souls.” This is a phrase which followers of Yeshua should be familiar with.

Matthew 11:27-30

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Yeshua is talking about His yoke, taking it upon ourselves, and we *will find rest for our souls*. What is this yoke? May we strongly suggest that it is the good way, the ancient paths. It is the Torah! But, you say, I’ve been taught that the law is burdensome, and heavy and that Yeshua has kept the law so we don’t have to. Nothing could be further from the truth. Why would He say *His yoke is easy and His burden is light* if it is burdensome and heavy? What we really need to understand is that the law or Torah only becomes a heavy and burdensome weight when we try to keep it apart from Yeshua, or when we depend upon it for our salvation. The law was never meant to make us righteous, or to give us right standing before God. The law was only meant to show us how to live holy lives. When we obey it in order to gain righteousness, we fail miserably and fall short because we can’t keep it perfectly. If we fail once, the law condemns us to death. Yeshua kept the Torah perfectly so that He could pay the death penalty we deserved. He took our place, cancelled our debt, and exchanged His righteousness for ours. Remember that Isaiah tells us, “There is none righteous, not

even one.” We can never achieve righteousness apart from Yeshua’s perfect sacrifice. His death makes it possible for us to have a new constitution. We are new creatures. The old has passed away. We are made righteous by Him. And so, taking on His yoke is really about taking on the yoke of holiness. It is being joined to Him in perfect balance. His obedience became our righteousness. His yoke is easy and His burden is light because walking in the ways of the LORD are about discipleship, learning from Him, imitating Him, and becoming more like Him. When we fail and fall short of His commandments, we can run into His arms of forgiveness and start over again. The Torah is our highway to holiness. Keeping Torah is following the way of the LORD.

Do you remember what the followers of Yeshua were called in the Apostolic Scriptures? The Way. Let’s look at Acts 24:14.

However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of The Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

Paul is saying that The Way of the LORD is in agreement with the Law and the Prophets. This is the Torah of Moses and the rest of the Jewish Scriptures folks! This has not been done away with. These are the ancient paths that are the good way and the way in which our God wants us to walk. This is the yoke of Yeshua that He has asked us to put on ourselves as His disciples.

So, now that we understand what the way of the LORD is, let’s look at what it means to prepare the way of the LORD.

Preparing the way for the LORD is about building a highway on which He can return. Let’s go back to our verse in Isaiah 40:3.

A voice of one calling: “In the wilderness, prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

This time, we’re going to look at two different words in this verse, one at a time. Let’s look first at this highway. What does this mean? The word in Hebrew is *mesillah* מַסְלֵהָ meaning a thoroughfare; specifically a viaduct. Let’s go with the idea of a viaduct for the moment. A viaduct is a structure that is raised up off the ground, supported by a series of arches, that carries a road or railroad over a valley. It can also be a water carrying canal, transporting water from one place to another. The Romans were well known for these, and there is a beautiful one in Israel near Caesarea.

The word for straight is *yashar* and means to be upright or right. In the Hebraic mindset, a straight way depicts a person who is on the right path that leads to God. A crooked way would be referring to someone who does evil and is moving away from God. The prophet Isaiah is telling us to build an elevated roadway, one that can be plainly seen that points people to do what is right, leading them to a relationship with God. Notice that it is elevated – people can see it because they can look up. It won’t

be blocked from view as would something that was low on the ground. Lifting our eyes is also symbolic because it can mean we are looking up from the earth and the ways of men, searching for God and the truth.

Let's go back to the idea of the viaduct which is carrying water for a minute. This really paints a great picture...the highway should actually be an elevated canal, carrying water. What can the water represent in the Scripture? The water is the refreshing of the Word of God which washes our minds from our crooked ways, helping us to see the straight way. To continue our illustration, it also fits well with the fact that the prophet tells us that this waterway is to be built in the desert. The desert is a parched and thirsty place. The word in Hebrew is *Aravah*, a dry area that runs from the Jordan Valley to the Dead Sea. This is the area where Ezekiel the prophet explains..."This water flows toward the eastern region and continues down to the *Aravah*. When it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant water, [the Dead Sea] its water will become fresh. When this happens, swarms of all kinds of living creatures will be able to live in it wherever the streams flow; so that there will be a vast number of fish; for this water is flowing there, so that, wherever the river goes, everything will be restored and live." (Ezekiel 47:8-9)

This water in Ezekiel's prophecy is none other than the living water that proceeds from the Temple that will be built during the Millennial reign of Messiah, the living water that flows from the sanctuary that will produce life, including the trees that will grow along its banks that will produce leaves that will be healing for the nations. What is this living water? It is the very same water that Yeshua spoke about during the Great Feast (Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkot) when on the last day, which is known as Hoshana Rabbah, He said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him keep coming to me and drinking! Whoever puts his trust in me, as the Scripture says, rivers of living water will flow from his inmost being!" (John 7:37-39) Yeshua is the living water from which His thirsty followers must drink. And He gave us His Spirit. We literally have His living water flowing out of us whenever we imitate Him, whenever we follow what He commands, whenever we keep His Word and His ways. This is what it means to prepare the way of the LORD. This is how we build a highway in the desert, which is really the dry, thirsty place where men's souls reside without knowledge of the Son of God. When we follow God's ways, we are elevating the way of righteousness, we are raising up the highway above the ground so to speak, for people to be able to look up and see the way to God. What do they see? Yeshua, the living water that will quench their thirsty souls; they see the water that will restore them to the purpose for which they were created, to worship, serve and love the God of Israel. The elevated highway is the place where the water flows that will bring them back from death to life! Our lives following God's ways, keeping the Torah, are that highway!

Let's look at another scripture which now will have new meaning for us.

Adonai, my strength, my fortress, my refuge in time of trouble, the nations will come to you from the ends of the earth, saying, "Our ancestors inherited nothing but lies, futile idols, completely useless." (Jeremiah 16:19)

Dear friends, we have inherited a bunch of lies. The truth has been hidden from us due to a separation that occurred within the body of the believers of Yeshua about 1900 years ago. There is both scriptural and historical evidence that the Gentile believers and the Jewish believers once worshipped and fellowshiped together. Sadly, for the last nearly 2,000 years, we have each gone our separate ways, neither benefitting from the other as God intended. Christianity has lost the Torah and the Jews have lost the Messiah. But in these last days, God is restoring us both to the truth! Praise His Name! Christians are returning to the ancient paths, to the Torah. And Jews are coming to know Yeshua as their Messiah!

There is much for us to learn. Our mentor and friend, Pastor Mark Biltz, has eloquently put it thus: “Christians have much to learn from the Jewish people, and the Jewish people have much to learn from Christians. Whichever group humbles themselves first and learns from the other wins!” We couldn’t agree more! Let’s each humble ourselves and answer the beautiful prayer of our Master Yeshua in John 17:20-23:

“I pray not only for these [the Jewish believers] but also for those [the Gentile believers from the nations] who will trust in me because of their word, that they may all be one. Just as you, Father, are united with me and I with you, I pray that they may be united with us, so that the world may believe that you sent me...so that they may be one, just as we are one – I united with them and you with me, so that they may be completely one...”

Let’s be a unified people who prepare the way of the LORD!
Even so, come quickly LORD Yeshua!

For further study on *Preparing the Way of the LORD*, please refer to www.thewatchman.org.

For further study on the Torah being for all of God’s people, please refer to www.elshaddaiministries.us. Click on any of the Torah portion or Torah Club teachings.