**Being Wise and Bearing Fruit**

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**Last week I touched upon the traditional concept of “soul winning” in Christianity, and how it does not necessarily constitute good fruit.**

**That, of course, flies in the face of popular Christian thought and practice. In fact, the men and women with the mega Churches, large Evangelical outreaches and Television ministries are thought to be the most successful Christians.**

**As a result, I was raised with the notion that saving souls was a mission of the highest order and to get someone to “make a decision for Jesus” was like laying up treasure is heaven.**

**It was quantity over quality for sure. Fruit was not the goal. Just more souls for the kingdom. The notion of Elohim threshing and winnowing the wheat from the chaff, and reducing the numbers was lost in Christian evangelism.**

**The statement by Yahushua that the way to life is narrow and difficult and few will find it is not typically mentioned in Christian Crusades. Certainly not His later mention of cutting down and burning the ones that do not bear fruit.**

**I remember a time when I was in undergraduate school, and I was witnessing to my atheist roommate. I gave him a tract that had a picture showing two trees.**

**One tree was called “the good tree” and had various “good fruits” listed on it. They were primarily the “fruits of the Spirit” found in Galatians 5:22-23.**

**Juxtaposed against the good tree was the “bad tree” with a variety of “bad fruits” consisting of those items found in Galatians 5:19-21.**

**Well, it don’t stop there. It also listed things such as smoking, drinking and dancing.**

**My roommate asked me if the Bible prohibited smoking, and I had to admit that it did not.**

**He then asked me if it prohibited drinking. Again, I had to admit that it did not. What about dancing? Again, not prohibited.**

**That stuck with me as I had to admit that there were things that Christianity classified as bad fruit that was not specifically defined as bad fruit.**

**Could the same be true with commonly held beliefs about good fruit? Are there “many” Christians doing things that they think are good fruits, but the Master views them otherwise.**

**We already saw that “soul winning” is not good fruit if it doesn’t point people to the Covenant path that leads to Yahushua and salvation.**

**There is nothing good about misleading a person into thinking they are going to Heaven simply because they said a prayer, raised their hand “while every eye is closed” or made a decision to “receive Jesus”.**

**None of these Evangelistic formulas or techniques are found in the Scriptures.**

**That encounter, and my subsequent investigation, helped me to better understand the statement of Yahushua that we touched upon last week when He was teaching about good trees and bad trees.**

**Here is the entire passage.**

**“*13 Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. 15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them. 21 Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? 23 And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!*” Matthew 7:13-23**

**I always struggled with the last portion of this passage.**

**You mean that prophesying doesn’t automatically constitute “good fruit.”**

**I went to churches where the “prophets” were the most spiritual people because they had a direct connection to God … supposedly.**

**Well, we must consider that there are many false prophets, so the act of prophesying in and of itself is not good fruit.**

**So, one can even speak a true word, but that does not mean they are in good standing before Elohim.**

**Remember Balaam? He prophesied truth, but he still had a corrupted heart.**

**These prophets are known by their fruits, according to Yahushua.**

**What about casting out demons and performing miracles? Surely that is good fruit?**

**Well, according to Yahushua, that is not necessarily so either.**

**Remember the incident when His disciples talked about someone casting out demons? Of course, it was being done in the Name of Yahushua – not Jesus.**

**Here is the incident. “*49 Now John answered and said, Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us. 50 But Yahushua said to him, Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side.*” Luke 9:49-50**

**So, a person can cast out demons in the Name of Yahushua without actually following Him, or being known by Him.**

**Also, people can perform miracles without being right with Elohim.**

**Remember the miracles performed by Pharaohs magicians? There have been lots of sorcerers and witches throughout history. Likewise, there are many who perform miracles using the Name of Yahushua, but the miracles do not demonstrate a relationship.**

**So, we know that these outward acts are not the fruits that Yahushua is looking for.**

**That is why “many” who do these actions will be told to depart from Him. They may be performing actions that are appear amazing, but He never knew them.**

**The reason why I always had a difficult time understanding this verse, was because I never fully understood the connection between fruit and knowledge. This is despite the fact that the lesson was given to us from the beginning – in the Garden.**

**Partaking of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, also known as The Tree of All Knowledge, had a direct impact upon the relationship between YHWH and mankind.**

**I also never fully understood the word “lawlessness.” I always equated “lawlessness” with my understanding of “bad fruit,” but it has a much more specific meaning. It means disobedience to the Torah – the Instructions of Elohim.**

**So, Yahushua is not looking for people who are doing things that appear wonderful on the outside, but inside their hearts are corrupted. He wants people who have a heart to obey.**

**Remember the Scribes and the Pharisees? They were the religious leaders in the time of Yahushua. They were technically obeying the Commandments concerning the tzitzit and the tefillin, but their obedience revealed that their hearts were not right. All their works they did to be seen by men (see Matthew 23:5)**

**In fact, He specifically stated that outwardly they “*appear righteous to men, but inside they are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness*.” Matthew 23:28**

**Again, lawless individuals are those who fail to obey the Torah. The Pharisees built their own religious construct that eventually developed into the religion of Judaism. In fact, we see the fruits of the Scribes and Pharisees in the religion of Judaism, just as we see the fruits of Roman sun worship in the religion of Christianity.**

**So, it doesn’t matter what you do outwardly if it does not derive from a right heart. It starts with obedience, and being connected to Yahushua.**

**Consider the Parable of the sower.**

**“*3 . . . Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. 6 But when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. 8 But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*” Matthew 13:3-9**

**After speaking this Parable, Yahushua later provided the following interpretation.**

**“*18 Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. 20 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. 22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. 23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty*.” Matthew 13:18-23**

**So, we cannot bear fruit unless the seed falls upon good ground.**

**Yahushua later revealed that we can only bear fruit through Him.**

**“*5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*” John 15:5-8**

**So, we must be rooted in Yahushua to bear good fruit.**

**You need to take root and mature before you can bear any fruit. And then there is the question of how much fruit we actually bear – what is the yield?**

**I have been considering planting and growing a lot over that past couple of years. You need to consider the soil and the size of your plot in order to determine the amount of the yield.**

**Farmers do this constantly as they look at the seasons and the type of crops that they are planting. When is the last time that you considered the yield of your crop?**

**It is amazing how we can meticulously plan for temporal things and approach our spiritual walk haphazardly, leaving things to chance.**

**That is why we see so many “children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” Ephesians 1:14**

**Last week I ended with one of my favorite passages in Daniel**

**“*Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever*.” Daniel 13:3**

**I mentioned the connection between the wise and lights in the heavens. I also commented that the wise would be recognizing the signs and discerning the times.**

**A few days ago, the renewed moon was sighted, marking the beginning of the new month – Month 12. Clearly, we should be considering the renewal of the year, and the harvests that lie ahead - at least this is what the wise will be doing.**

**The New Testament Scriptures mention “wise men” who watched for signs in the heavens that marked the birth of Yahushua.**

**These men were described as “Magi” in the Greek, which is the same as “Hakamin” in the Hebrew. This was the word used to describe the wise men in the Babylon Court that Daniel was ultimately placed in charge of.**

**When these “wise men” arrived in Jerusalem, Herod was oblivious to an event that happened in his own territory.**

**As far as we know, the only witnesses to this great event were shepherds. These men from the east had travelled a great distance, and it surely took some time to get there – possible two years. Nevertheless, they knew that the Messiah was born in the Promised Land.**

**What made them wise? They saw the signs in the Heavens.**

**They were looking up watching. They were anticipating something and their journey and their wealth points to Daniel as the source, but that is an entirely different discussion.**

**They didn’t just come because of curiosity or for their own edification. They came bearing gifts for a King.**

**It is astonishing to see how many people are enticed to “accept Jesus” based upon the promised blessings, abundance and prosperity they will receive. They are often drawn by what they can get, not because they want to give to the King.**

**Of course, this was the lesson that Yisrael was taught.**

**When we are planted in His Garden, protected by His hedge, set apart by His instructions, watered by His Word and bathed in His light, we have all of the ingredients to bear good fruit.**

**When we bear fruit and observe the Appointed Times, we meet with YHWH and that is when we are supposed to be presenting gifts to Him.**

**He specifically Commands: “*Three times a year all your males shall appear before YHWH your Elohim in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before YHWH empty-handed. 17 Every man shall give as he is able, according to the berakah of YHWH your Elohim which He has given you.*” Deuteronomy 16:16-17**

**Bearing good fruit is something that we should be thinking of constantly. It is built right into the cycle that we are supposed to learn through the Appointed Times of YHWH. They are opportunities to assess your yield, based upon the offering that you are giving to YHWH.**

**We are regularly supposed to be meeting with YHWH, assessing our yield and planning for the next cycle. That is why I write these messages on Shabbat. It is our weekly opportunity to assess our fruit and our yield.**

**I mentioned the Gezer Calendar over the past couple of weeks to demonstrate how the ancients would plan out the year.**

**YHWH wants us to do the same with our lives, through the cycles and the patterns that He has provided us with.**

**The overriding lesson is that He provides is that the wise ones give to YHWH.**

**Remember how Yahushua ended the Olivet discourse that we read in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21? I have mentioned how most of His statements were specifically intended for that generation, and the impending judgment upon the House of Judah.**

**Nevertheless, people take His statements out of context and point them into the future. In fact, so many people get caught up in the potential prophetic aspects that they miss the most important part – the finale.**

**The “Olivet Discourse” was only part of a full day of teaching when Yahushua “summed it all up” – so to speak - before His anointing and death. I urge you to read about that day from start to finish – beginning at Matthew 21:18 and ending in the evening when He returned to Bethany at Matthew 26:6.**

**He had previously ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey with a colt, in fulfillment of Zechariah. He cleansed the Temple and proceeded to heal the blind and the lame – in the Temple. What an exciting and amazing day that must have been in Jerusalem. The city was buzzing, and the religious leaders were in a panic.**

**Amazingly, Yahushua then left Jerusalem, and spent the night in Bethany.**

**The following day He returned to Jerusalem. The first thing that He did was curse the empty fig tree, because it had no fruit. The fig tree represented the House of Judah, and that set the stage for the rest of the day filled with confrontations and the woes being pronounced upon the Scribes and the Pharisees, as well as the impending Judgment upon Jerusalem and the Temple.**

**Why? Because there was no fruit.**

**After all of this, Yahushua warned His disciples how to escape the impending destruction, and then followed with some final teachings, including the parable of the 10 virgins.**

**I speak of this parable a lot, because of the unique context in which it was given.**

**Out of the 10 virgins, 5 were wise and 5 were foolish.**

**The 5 foolish virgins ended up like the ones who were prophesying, casting out demons and doing miracles.**

**They wanted to be in a relationship with Yahushua, and thought that they were.**

**Interestingly, He told the 5 foolish virgins “I do not know you.” Since they were virgins, they were undefiled, but Yahushua still didn’t know them.**

**The other ones, who based their relationship on outward works, He told “I never knew you.”**

**So, there appears to be a distinction that we will examine in another message.**

**The point is that Yahushua ended this important day of teaching by pointing out the difference between wise and foolish virgins.**

**They all wanted to be in a wedding, but half did not make it on time. The wise virgins were asleep, but were ready when they were awoken. The foolish virgins were not ready for the Master.**

**The ones who were prepared were wise, and they were granted entry into the Wedding Feast, because they were ready at the correct time, when the gates were open and entry was possible.**

**Yahushua was sending a very serious warning, that not everyone who calls Him Lord or wants to go to the wedding will actually be accepted and get in.**

**The reason I mention time every week is to encourage people to look up and be aware of the signs. As you see the cycles progressing, you can prepare and make ready for the rehearsals that YHWH has scheduled.**

**By doing so, you will be wise, in a world filled with confusion and you can walk in the light while others fumble in the darkness.**

**The enemy wants desperately to confuse, distract and divide the people of Elohim. Time and the calendar is one of his greatest weapons.**

**I have prepared the Appointed Times 2022 chart for you to use as a guide, but you still need to be looking up and preparing your offerings, if you want to be included among the wise.**

**After Yahushua warned about the foolish and the wise virgins, and how half of them missed the wedding, He then described the fruit that He was looking for in His servants.**

**Next week we will explore that fruit some more, and consider what it means to be known by Yahushua.**

**Berakhot**

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**Shema Yisrael (Hear O Yisrael) are the words that Yahushua spoke when asked what was the First Command.**

**“*The first of all the Commandments is: ‘Hear, O Yisrael,***

***YHWH our Elohim, YHWH is one.”***

***Mark 12:29***

**“*He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*”**

**Matthew 11:15**