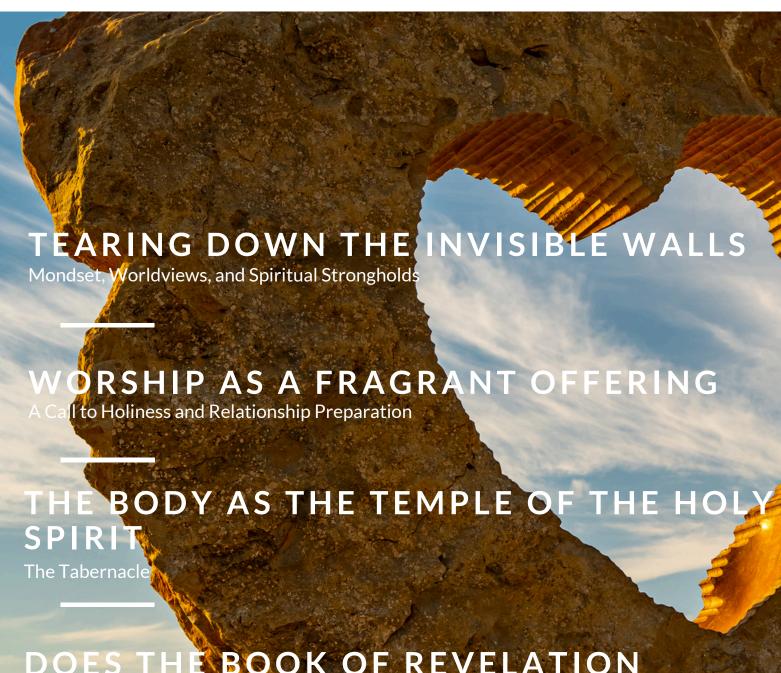


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DOES THE BOOK OF REVELATION ENDORSE REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY?

A Messianic Understanding of Revelation 2:9 and 3:9

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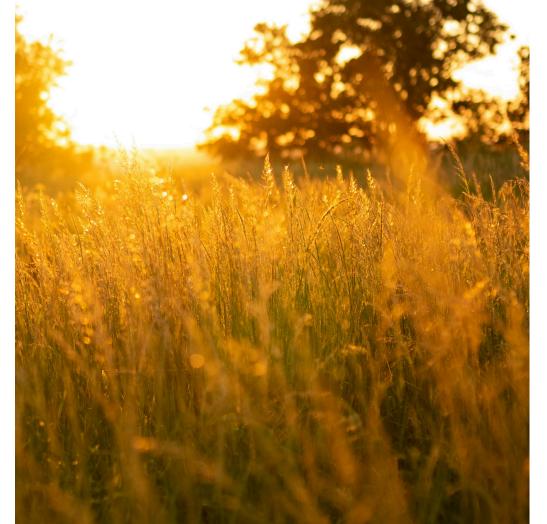


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Restoring a **Healthy Culture BENJAMIN JUSTER**

of Honor



Kingdom Honor is **Value**

Our generation craves authenticity. We long for community, genuine relationships, and spaces where we are seen, heard. and valued. Yet in many spiritual environments, the phrase "culture of honor" has been distorted-used at times to demand blind loyalty, suppress healthy confrontation, or excuse manipulative leadership. I remember hosting leadership gathering where several speakers took time to honor one another—expressing sincere appreciation their ministry impact and sacrificial service to the body of Messiah.

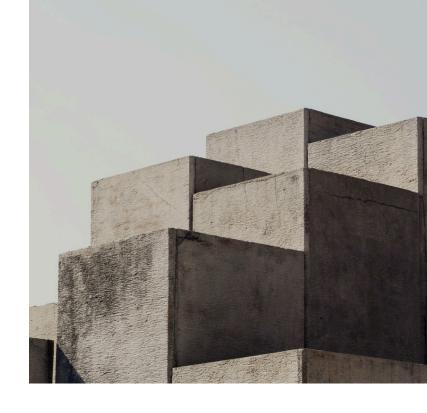
After session. one а participant approached me, visibly uncomfortable with the affirmations being shared. I was surprised, especially since our intention had been to glorify God in His work through these leaders, not elevate them. It made me realize how easily a distorted "culture of honor"—marked by manipulation or abuse—can taint even genuine expressions of gratitude.

True honor, however, is a powerful, Kingdom-centered principle that brings life, not control. Romans 12:10 commands us. "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."

Honor isn't flattery. It's not blind allegiance. It's about recognizing the image of God in every person and them accordingly. As treating Augustine said, "The honor we give to others reflects the honor we have for the image of God in them."

Culture Trumps Vision

Your community's culture will determine who you attract, who stays, what kind of leaders you develop, and even the type of challenges you face. You may have big dreams, but if your environment isn't healthy, your vision will crumble.



Before joining Tikkun, I worked as one of the Human Resources Managers for Family Enterprises—the largest distributor of Toyota vehicles in the U.S. my leadership roles there. I In witnessed firsthand the power of a healthy organizational culture that honors one another. JM Family didn't call their people "employees" "associates," intentionally fostering a value. belonging. sense of ownership. The founder, Jim Moran, was renowned not just for his bold vision, but for creating a legacy-worthy culture of honor-one that treated people with dignity and endured beyond his lifetime.

What Honor Is — And What It's Not

Biblical honor is a heart posture of respect rooted in God's design. It begins with the understanding that every person carries intrinsic value because they bear the image of Avinu B'Shamayim (Our Father in Heaven).

1 Peter 2:17 sums it up: "Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." Even the commandment to "Honor your father and mother" (Exodus 20:12) isn't based on their perfection and earned respect, but on the role God designed them to carry.

The Mishnah Avot 4:1 asks, "Who is honored? He who honors others."
But honor is NOT:

- Unquestioning submission. Even Paul rebuked Peter publicly when necessary (Galatians 2:11).
- Hiding sin or abuse. Nathan honored David by confronting him (2 Samuel 12).
- Using honor to demand special treatment. Yeshua Himself rebuked leaders who "loved places of honor" (Matthew 23:6).

True honor requires both humility and accountability. As Proverbs 15:33 reminds us, "Humility comes before honor." Rabbi Jonathan Sacks echoes the patriarchs by saying, "True honor recognizes that every person bears the divine image and has a role in the Kingdom."

Honor isn't a leadership tactic. It's a Kingdom lifestyle. It's about seeing the image of God in every person — and treating them like it's real.

The Power of Words — Fueling the Soul or Crushing the Spirit

Encouragement is fuel for the soul. Hebrews 10:24–25 exhorts us, "Encourage one another...all the more as you see the Day approaching."



Encouragement gives people the courage to face challenges, persevere through hardship, and step into their destiny.

On the flip side, a discouraging environment shrinks people. James 3:9-10 warns, "With the tongue we bless our Lord... and curse people made in His image."

Sarcasm, gossip, favoritism — these things poison a healthy culture. Discouragement doesn't just hurt feelings; it steals courage.

Yeshua modeled honor when He restored Peter after he had denied knowing Him. Honor calls out destiny. Shame keeps people stuck in their past.

Cultivating a Relational, Mutual Culture of Honor

Honor isn't a top-down leadership strategy. It's a relational, mutual culture that reflects the heart of Yeshua.

Ephesians 5:21 urges us, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Messiah." Leadership isn't about hierarchy—it's about serving.

Honor must flow in every direction. We honor leaders, yes, but we must also honor the overlooked, the young, and the servant-hearted. In fact, a culture of honor is one in which every person should receive love and feel valued.

1 Corinthians 12:23-24 reminds us, "The parts we think are less honorable, we treat with special honor."



A culture of honor creates safe environments. Safe spaces aren't about soft words or flattery—they are about accountability. Proverbs 27:6 says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." The best leaders foster environments where people can speak up without fear of being shamed or shunned.

But beware the shadow side of honor culture:

- When honor becomes control: People feel they can't ask questions.
- When honor becomes idolatry: Leaders are placed above correction.
- When honor becomes silence:
 Abuse festers in the name of loyalty.

Messianic Perspective — Honor in the One New Humanity

Yeshua's work broke down walls between Jew and Gentile, male and female, young and old. Ephesians 2:14–16 proclaims that He created us to be a "One New Man."

In a Messianic community, honor must extend across every barrier. Mutual respect isn't optional — it's the heartbeat of the Kingdom. Romans 12:3-6 teaches us that honor flows when each member recognizes their unique grace and gift. Unity in diversity isn't just a slogan; it's the soil in which true honor grows.

1 Corinthians 10:24 commands, "Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor."



You have the power to influence your congregation's culture—either one that promotes fear and favoritism, or faithfilled honor. Will you contribute to a community where people feel valued, safe, and empowered to grow? Let's honor up, down, and all around. Let's reflect the heart of our King.

- "Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God." (1 Peter 2:17)
- "Let the greatest among you become the servant." (Luke 22:26)

Here are some questions that can help you to go deeper:

- Where have we seen "honor" misused in spiritual environments?
- How do we create space for truth while maintaining mutual respect?
- What's the difference between confronting in love and dishonoring leadership?
- How can leaders model humility yet still walk in God-given authority?
- How do we show honor to those we disagree with?

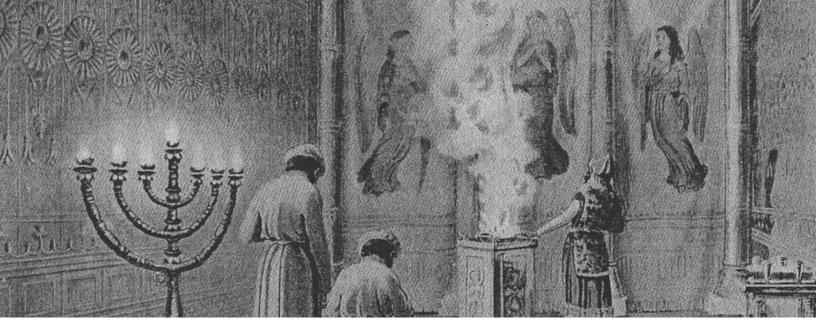
Benjamin Juster Editor in Chief



isn't a leadership tactic.
It's a Kingdom lifestyle.
It's about seeing the image of God in every person.

BENJAMIN JUSTER





WORSHIP AS A FRAGRANT OFFERING

LISA STANCZAK

Sometimes in a service. I hear the prayer, "Lord, let our worship be a fragrant offering to you." Prayers like this evoke imagery of pleasing aromas that filled the Temple in Jerusalem.

I understand this prayer. We want our worship to be pleasing to God. But what are we really asking for?

In Jerusalem, only Levitical priests (cohanim) were allowed burn to Temple incense. In doing so, they acted as intermediaries between God and the people. God required the cohanim to adhere to strict standards of holiness. including ritual and moral purity.

Under the New Covenant, all of us who follow Yeshua are cohanim, aren't we? In his first letter. Peter wrote to the communities of believers in modernday Turkey who were facing

persecution, calling them both a royal priesthood and a holy nation. He reminded them that the nation that Hosea once called "lo ammi" (not a people) were now, by God's grace, a holy people. Adonai chose them to proclaim the praises of the One who called us out of darkness and into a marvelous light.

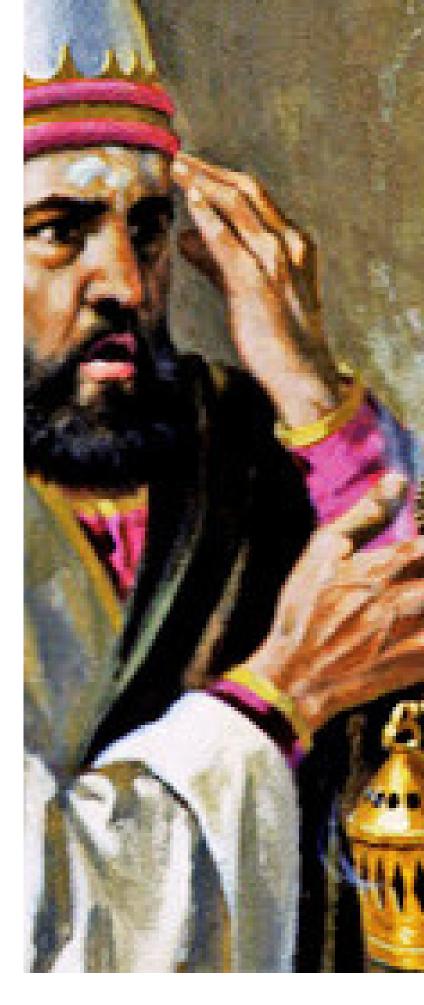
But let's back up. Not all cohanim were allowed to burn incense in the Temple. In Exodus 30:9, God instructed only Aaron and his house to burn the required incense. In Numbers 18:1, God told Aaron that his house's responsibilities would include bearing the guilt for the Sanctuary and for the priesthood. So along with experiencing the sweet aroma, cohanim also carried a burden.

For this Temple ritual, God separated the cohanim even from great kings and leaders. Uzziah, who was not a priest, reigned in Judah for 52 years in the days Zechariah the prophet. Uzziah continually sought God and, like his father Amaziah, did what was right in Adonai's eyes. Uzziah's legacy includes strengthening Israel's military, economy and allegiance to the God of Israel.

But after Uzziah rose as a strong leader, he decided to burn incense on the altar in the Temple. The cohanim whom God had consecrated for this job confronted Uzziah about his behavior. but the angry king raged against them. While Uzziah was still holding the censor in his hand, God inflicted King Uzziah with tza'arat, a skin disease associated with sin. After that fateful day, the king lived in isolation until his death.

God's correction of Uzziah might leave us in fear and trembling. Yet the prophets expound on this theme. telling us that God can regard incense burning as an abomination. Isaiah recorded in chapter 1 that Adonai no longer wanted worthless offerings from his sinful nation, Israel. Ezekiel also chimed in on this topic in chapter 8 after God showed Ezekiel Israel's detestable behavior which included the burning of incense in unholy situations.

Without a doubt, God expects certain preconditions for burning incense. If absent, offering up incense can bring judgment.





On the other hand, the historian Luke tells us about a tremendous blessing that emerged during the burning of incense. One day, the Temple lottery chose Zechariah, a descendant of Aaron, for this task. As Zechariah performed his priestly duties, an angel appeared and announced the unexpected birth of Zechariah's son, Yochanan the Immerser. A joyous Reveal Party took place – not with blue balloons, but while Zechariah was burning the Temple incense.

So when we pray that our worship would be like a fragrant offering, do we reflect on the holiness standards that God requires of his cohanim?

Holiness means being set apart. The truth is that God required not only Aaron's line but all of Bnei Yisrael (the House of Israel) to set themselves apart from other nations through their conduct and devotion to Him. In Leviticus Chapter 11, Adonai concluded his kashrut (kosher) instructions with a repeated command for his people to be kedoshim because he is kodesh. ("Be holy, for I am holy.")

What did God mean by that?

Adonai instructed his people to do different something from pagan live differently, behave people differently - so that they would look more like Him than like other nations. The expectation to live differently undergirded the relationship between his Adonai God and people. embedded instructions for holiness in everyday activities - eating, burning incense in the temple - as daily and frequent reminders for them to live His way. This call to holiness was "relationship preparation."

What does relationship preparation mean?

Let's say that I want to be a figure skater so I hire an Olympic gold medalist to be my coach. If I don't step onto the ice before my first lesson, and if I don't practice in between training sessions. I will not learn all that the coach could teach me. My coach's skill level and teaching ability would not be the limiting factors, nor would my own athletic potential. Rather, my willingness to prepare for the relationship would determine how much I would come to "look like" my coach. If, on the other hand, I train for years, spend countless hours on the ice, enter into various competitions during which I sometimes win and other times fail, and learn to rebound after recovering from injuries, the master skater could more fully develop my aptitude for skating. I would understand my coach's lingo and be quicker to augment my skill set through expert instruction.

Is a coach's interaction with his goldmedalist student different from his interaction with a beginner? Does a closer bond form when an athlete performs at a higher level, and coach and student walk together through the agony of setbacks and the glory of championship moments?

Holiness demands relationship preparation. Behind God's standard for holiness is his desire to deepen our relationship with him and bring us into our full potential. The call to holiness does not burden or restrict. It gives life!



In the end. God will showcase His redeemed people through holiness. Ezekiel writes in Chapter 20:41-42, "As a pleasing aroma I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered. And I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations."

So when we pray that our worship would be like a fragrant offering, do we reflect on the holiness standards that God requires of his cohanim?

LISA STANCZAK

The Body as the Temple of the Holy Spirit, pt. 1 **Zachary Williams**

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul states that as believers, our body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit. Often believers take this idea as a given, as if it is 'obvious' since Paul has stated it in the Scriptures. Indeed, Paul states it as if it is something his readers should know, but where did Paul get it from? With the New Testament at our fingertips, we can often take for granted the advanced teachings of Paul without

considering the depth and context of his teachings coming from the Tanakh (Old Testament). In this 3-part series, I will deeply explore the Scriptures this topic so that we can also apply it to our lives in a deeper way. We are going to use the imagery of the Mishkan (Tabernacle) to better understand what it means to be a Temple of the Holy Spirit.



Using the physical realities commands in the Torah to teach deeper spiritual truths was not new for Paul. Moses did it when he taught about being circumcised in heart - and not just in the flesh (Deuteronomy 30:6). Yeshua. of course. did it consistently, especially in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). In fact, this method of teaching is so pervasive in the Scriptures, that we could miss that it is a required method of interpretation to explain critical theologies like being born again, and the resurrection. Remember how Yeshua spoke to Nicodemus that as a teacher of Israel, he should know about needing to be born again to enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:1-15). It is a very important concept when it is the context John uses in 3:16-21 to explain God's heart for mankind and our opportunity for salvation.

Take the Tabernacle as a picture of what God intended our hearts to be like. While most elements of the Tabernacle were made of wood or gold, the covers of the Tabernacle were made of skins from different animals (Exodus 26:14). So, what is inside the Tabernacle is like what is 'inside' your skin. and what is outside Tabernacle is like what is going on externally within you. Outside the Tabernacle is the courtyard with the altar and the laver. The courtyard had boundaries which kept the common and unclean things out. Notice that none of the offerings are within the Tabernacle - instead, they are always on the altar in front of the Tabernacle.

It is important in our lives that we have a courtyard: a place and time in our lives that is set apart for us to bring our offerings of worship to God and to share in those offerings with others. A of fellowship. place worship. repentance, and cleansing. The altar, laver, and the courtyard represents what should be true of our outward actions within this world, the things that others can witness, as well as those things that are the manifestation of the deeper truths in our own hearts. Indeed, this is the foundation to the Jewish practice of praying three times daily at the same time as the regular burnt offerings on the altar.

Our hearts then are to be like the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. In the Holy Place the showbread is put on a golden table near the entrance. This bread is also called the Bread of the Presence, and there were twelve loaves for the twelve tribes that were renewed every Shabbat (Exodus 25:30, 35:13; Leviticus 24:5-9). The bread had so much oil that it was preserved for the whole week in God's presence until it was eaten the following Shabbat.

This perfectly represents how we should present our hearts before God on Shabbat with fellow-believers as the whole people of God - the body of Messiah. The truest fellowship in marriages, families, and friendships is the fellowship with each other and the Holy Spirit. That fellowship is what fills us up with life and preserves us the whole week.



Across from the table of showbread is the Menorah. The light of the Menorah the (Ner Tamid) eternal flame (Exodus 25:31-40, 26:35, 27:20). This is also the presence of the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:10, Revelation 4:5). Inside the darkness of the Tabernacle, the Menorah was the only light. So, it is that only the Holy Spirit can illuminate what is in our hearts. We are to keep the light of God continually lit in our lives (Matthew 25:1-13). Just as the Menorah has become the distinguishing symbol of Israel, the presence of the Spirit in our lives is what distinguishes us from the rest of the world (Exodus 33:15-16).

The last thing in the Holy Place is the altar of incense (Exodus 30:1-10). The incense is our prayers before God (Revelation 5:8). The altar and the incense is to be continually before God (Exodus 30:8), so our prayers should continually be coming before Him.

We are not to offer unauthorized incense nor offer an offering on this altar (Exodus 30:9), so we should not presume that our prayers deserve to be answered or that we can bribe God with something to get what we want from Him. Instead, our prayers should be humble. continually praising God, and beseeching Him for favor and knowing that He answers diligently seek Him those who (Jacob/James 1:5-8).

Finally, within the Holy of Holies - and within our heart of hearts - is to be the very mercy seat of God, the ark of the testimony (Exodus 25:10-22, 26:31-24). The ark contained the tablets with the ten words. or utterances (Deuteronomy 10:1-5). S.o God's commandments are to be written in our heart of hearts (Jeremiah 31:30-33). Just as God spoke to Moses from between the cherubim, He speaks to us from our heart of hearts. Our deepest place in our hearts is also to be the Most Holy place where God dwells. It is the place that Yeshua as our (Cohen Gadol) High Priest will enter once, on the fulfillment of Yom Kippur when He returns.

He will make known what is in our hearts (Matthew 10:26), and bring us into judgement. Will he find the things he said should be there, or will he find idols in that place (Ezekiel 8)?



Indeed, if we follow the model of the Tabernacle, it is a model for our entire lives, both in our hearts and our outward actions. If we purify the Temple of our hearts, trust, and practice the commands He gives us for the operations therein, the glory of God will enter in (Exodus 40, 1 Kings 8:10-11). Then we will have the presence and relationship with God that we so desire. I personally believe that God intended the physical commands, layout, and functions of the Tabernacle to teach us about our own hearts in many of the ways I have described. In the next two parts of this series,

I want to further explore these themes of the Temple, the people of God, and God's glory. Ultimately, we shouldn't just want to study this academically, or with a mere curiosity of interest. Instead, we will study this for the purpose of understanding what it means about our own identities, our hearts, and our relationship to Almighty God.



Our prayers should be humble, continually praising God, and beseeching Him for favor and knowing that He answers those who diligently seek Him

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ZACHARY WILLIAMS

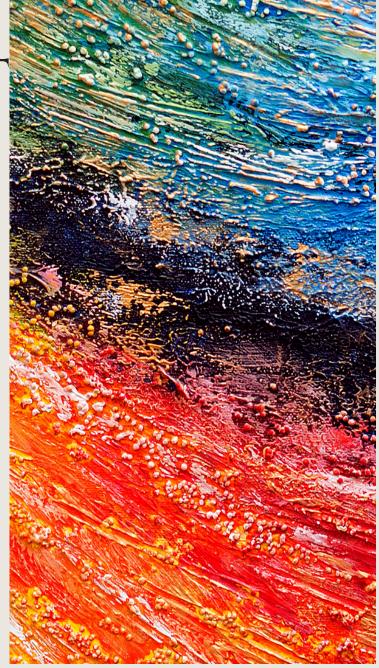
DOES THE BOOK OF REVELATION

ENDORSE REPLACEMENT **THEOLOGY?**

ADAM QUITO

With the spiritual, and even geopolitical climate that it is today, our attention is once again forced on the realities of antisemitism around, and as demonstrated throughout history. One such example is seen in the theological, where for centuries. Jews have been persecuted by professing Christians based on a misunderstanding of the book of Revelation.

One example includes a tragedy known as "The Siege of Worms" where a group of crusaders in the city of Worms. Germany attacked a local Jewish community based on the idea that they were the "Synagogue of Satan," a term used by Yeshua in the book of Revelation. (Rev. 2:9; 3:9) Furthermore, many Christian denominations today continue to see the Jewish people as insignificant, or in some cases an opposition to God's eschatological redemptive plan, rather than recognizing that their deliverance is the ultimate catalyst for ushering in the renewed age of the kingdom of God.



On that note, my aim in writing this article is to clarify what Yeshua meant regarding the term "synagogue" in his address Satan" to the Congregation of Smyrna and. reinforce the idea of a One-New-Man in John's book of Revelation

"I know your tribulation and your poverty (yet you are rich), as well as the slander of those who say they are Jewish and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." (Rev. 2:9 TLV)

Without considering a first century context, nor a foundational basis of the original language, this phrase can easily be misinterpreted to say that Jews are of the Devil because they oppose believers and rejected Yeshua at his first appearing. Having said that, the B'rit Chadashah makes it very clear that our battle is not against flesh and blood. Furthermore, John being a Jew himself would never seek to convey such a selfdestructive idea.

In order to grasp the concept of the "Synagogue of Satan," we must first understand the first century idea behind the term "Synagogue." Having not been raised in a Jewish home. I was surprised to find out that the word "Synagogue" does not stem from Hebrew, but is a Greek word from the Hellenistic period, which simply refers to an assembly or community. In fact, when writing to the Jewish believers in exile, James (Jacob) says:

"For if there is one who comes into your assembly (Synagogue) a man with gold rings and fine apparel ..." (James 2:2 TLV)

Notice that in our English Bibles, the Greek word "Synagogue" translated as "assembly" in the Epistle of Jacob because it refers to the community of believers.



Yet, when the same Greek word was used in the book of Revelation in a negative context, the English translators kept it as "Synagogue" with the aim of associating this evil group to the Jewish people. As a result of such biased translation work, many Christians over the centuries have viewed the Jews as enemies, rather than embracing God's idea of a one-new-man. Thus, a proper way of rendering the text should be "the assembly of the adversary" rather than "Synagogue of Satan." With such a simple tweak, the whole dynamic and interpretation of the biblical changes entirely.

Furthermore, the text also states:

"... who say they are Jews and are not." Based on these words, it is very plausible that those who were part of the "assembly of the adversary" were not physical Jews, but proselytes or imposters. This view is further emphasized by a first century Stoic Philosopher from Asia Minor named Epictetus who informs us that many non-Jews in the region of Smyrna sought to adopt the culture of the Judeans stating:

"Why do you act the part of a Judean when you are a Greek? Do you not see how each person is called a Judean, a Syrian, or an Egyptian? And when we see someone vacillating, we are accustomed to say, 'he is not a Judean, but he is just pretending'." (Epictetus, Dissertations 2.9.19-21)

With this in mind, it is clear that John was in no way sticking a demonic label to his fellow Jews. Rather, the synagogue of Satan was simply a gathering of imposters pretending to be Jews and were used by the Adversary to persecute the Lord's assembly, which consisted of Jews and Gentiles alike. This would explain why Yeshua accuses this evil group of committing "Blasphemy." (See Revelation 2:9)

Another argument some have raised is that Yeshua's statement regarding the synagogue of Satan indicates that believers are the real Jews and the Jews after the flesh are of Satan. Those who hold to this view attempt to defend their position by citing John chapter one where Yeshua says of Nathaniel:



"...Behold and Israelite indeed, in whom [there] is no deceit." (John 1:47)

As part of their defense, some also draw from Romans chapter two where Rav Sha'ul (Apostle Paul) states,

"For one is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision something visible in the flesh. Rather, the Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart - in Spirit not in letter. His praise is not from men, but from God." (Romans 2:28-29 TLV)

Although it is true that believers who follow Yeshua and are born of above better reflect the spiritual essence of what it means to be Jewish, this in no way nullifies the importance of Israel in the minds of the Emissaries (Apostles). In fact, Rabbi Paul goes on to write in the same notion of thought:

"Then what is the advantage of being Jewish? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Much in every way. First of all, they were entrusted with the sayings of God." (Romans 3:1-2 TLV, emphasis mine)

Taking these passages into account, it is very clear that the label of synagogue of Satan was not meant to be applied generally to unbelieving Jews. Thus, the B'rit Chadashsh including that of the book of Revelation simply makes no room for such applications or views of replacement theology. As Messianic-beleivers, both Jews and Gentiles, this is vitally important for us to understand as we seek to be a witness for Yeshua unto God's chosen people, Israel!

On the contrary of a defense for supersessionism, or replacement theology, not only does the book of Revelation not endorse such a view, but it very graciously upholds God's redemptive plan for the nation of Israel. For instance, in the seventh chapter of Revelation, we read of the fullness of Israel's remnant symbolized by the number 144,000 with 12,000 coming from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (See Revelation 7:4-8).





Furthermore. in accordance with Ezekiel's vision. John also describes the New Jerusalem as having Twelve Gates each bearing the names of the Twelve Tribes of Israel (Ezekiel 48; Revelation 21:12). He goes on to say that the kings of the earth "the redeemed" will bring their glory into the city and its gates will never be shut (Isaiah 60:11: Revelation 21:24-25).

In other words, the nations will constantly be reminded as they visit God and the Lamb on His appointed feasts that the way of salvation was paved by Israel's Patriarch's through whom came the promised Messiah.

Therefore, as we are approaching the end of days, let us continue to wholeheartedly reject the demonic doctrine of replacement theology and continue to run with the vision of seeing both Israel and the nations come to their fullness. For then, and only then will come our full redemption in Messiah Yeshua!





TEARING DOWN

THE INVISIBLE WALLS

MARTIN BOARDMAN

Have you ever engaged in a friendly debate about whether pineapple belongs on pizza? Some insist it's a culinary crime, while others delight in the sweet and savory combination. Although this may seem like a trivial disagreement, it illustrates a profound truth: the presence of different mindsets that shape how we perceive and interact with the world.

Mindsets are mental attitudes, or inclinations that influence our beliefs, behaviors, and the decisions we make. Over time, these mindsets create a broader framework known as a worldview. This worldview serves as an internal compass guiding how we interpret events, people, and even God. Though we may not be consciously aware of it, our worldview consistently influences our reactions and choices



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More critically, our worldview can be shaped by both divine truth and subtle deception. The enemy of our souls, Satan, recognizes the power of a worldview. He doesn't always attack directly; often, he operates through lies and deceptions that gradually take root in our thought process. These deceptions, if left unchecked, will develop into what Scripture refers to as strongholds.

What Is a Stronghold?

In 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, Paul writes, "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God."

A stronghold, in this spiritual context, is entrenched deeply pattern of а thought based lies on or misinformation. It stands in opposition to the truth of God and can exist within individuals, congregations, and even that of entire cultures. These are not just mistaken ideas but spiritually reinforced deceptions that keep people captive.

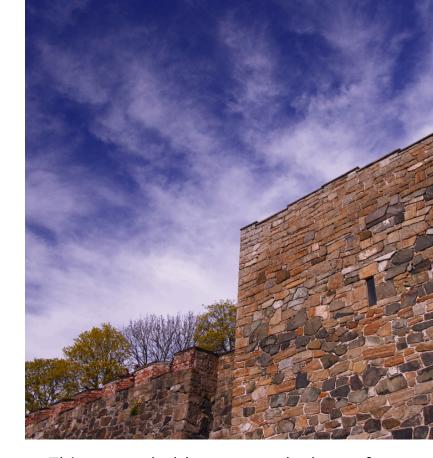
Strongholds manifest in various ways. For instance, the belief that "I'm not good enough for God to use" may appear to be a humble statement, but it contradicts the truth of Scripture and limits a person's willingness to serve. Additional examples include mindsets like "Evangelism doesn't work here" or "Our community is too far gone."

These lies, once accepted, start to shape culture and behavior. If left unchallenged, they affect ministry direction, personal growth, and the ability of congregations and Synagogues to be a transformative presence within the world.

Strongholds in the Book of Acts

The Bible provides vivid examples of how strongholds operate. Consider Acts 14:8-20, where Paul and Barnabas are ministering in Lystra. After healing a man who had been lame from birth, the crowd erupts in joy. However, their response reveals a stronghold: they believe Paul and Barnabas are gods in human form.

Why was there such а bizarre conclusion? worldview Their was shaped by Greco-Roman mythology. The people of Lystra had grown up hearing stories of gods visiting the earth in disguise. Therefore, when they witnessed a miracle, they interpreted it through the lens of that incorrect, and mythological framework. This belief system so conditioned their minds that they could not perceive Paul and Barnabas as servants of the living God.



This stronghold prevented them from clearly hearing the Gospel. Even though Paul and Barnabas tried to redirect their attention to God, the people struggled to break free from their ingrained belief system. Their worldview, shaped by culture and reinforced over time, acted as a barrier to truth.

A Modern-Day Encounter with a Stronghold

Strongholds aren't confined to ancient times; they are alive and active today, even within congregations. I once encountered a stronghold during a congregational meeting focused on outreach. As we discussed ideas for evangelism, someone casually remarked, "Evangelism doesn't work here."

At first glance, this might seem like a simple observation. However, it was a revelatory moment. That statement had become a foundational belief in the congregation.



No one questioned it; it was simply accepted as fact. Consequently, the congregation had not made any outreach efforts for years, and ministry had become inward-focused, and growth had stalled.

Upon deeper reflection, it became clear that this belief was a stronghold. At some point, possibly after a failed outreach or rejection from the community, the enemy had planted a seed of doubt. Over time, that doubt solidified into a mindset and then a worldview. Eventually, it became a cultural norm that shaped that church's decisions and hindered its mission.

Recognizing and Dismantling Strongholds

The first step in addressing strongholds is recognizing them. This often requires discernment and revelation. Prayer is our most powerful weapon in this context. When we ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the strongholds in our lives or ministries, He is always faithful to respond.

For example, the comment "Evangelism doesn't work here" was a revelatory moment that illuminated a hidden stronghold. It provided us with a starting point for prayer and strategic intercession. Once a stronghold is revealed, it can be dismantled through a combination of prayer, truth declaration, and obedient steps of faith.

This process involves both spiritual and practical work. Spiritually, we must renounce the lie and replace it with the truth of God's Word. Practically, we need to take steps that challenge the stronghold. In the case of the congregation I mentioned, this meant initiating small outreach events, sharing testimonies of God's work, and creating space for evangelism to become a regular part of church life once again.

Personal Strongholds

Strongholds aren't only found in congregations or within communities; they also exist within individuals as well. Many of us carry mindsets that limit our growth and effectiveness. These may relate to identity ("I'll never be enough"), trust ("God won't provide"), or calling ("I'm not qualified").

These lies often stem from painful experiences, cultural conditioning, or misinterpretations of Scripture. Regardless of their source, they must be confronted with the truth. The journey of transformation begins with a simple prayer:

"Lord, show me if there are any strongholds in my life."

God is gracious and gentle. When we permit Him to search our hearts, He reveals what needs healing and transformation. Through confession, repentance, and the renewal of our minds, we can experience freedom and restoration.



Cultural and National Strongholds

Strongholds can also exist at a societal level. Cultural norms and values. while evil. inherently can become not strongholds when they contradict the truth of God and His Word. Consider how materialism, individualism, and relativism dominate many modern ideologies societies. These shape people's worldviews and often work to oppose the Gospel.

In such contexts, ministry requires more effective iust programs; than insight demands prophetic and intercessory prayer. When we recognize the larger spiritual forces at play, we can authority with greater pray and discernment. Asking the Holy Spirit to reveal the strongholds in our communities can lead to breakthroughs and open doors for effective ministry.

Building a Mindset Aligned with Truth

The goal is not merely to tear down strongholds but also to replace them with Godly mindsets. Thus, Romans 12:2 urges, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." As our minds undergo renewal by the power of the Spirit, our lives will begin to reflect the values and priorities of God's kingdom. Building a Godly mindset requires immersing ourselves in Scripture. spending time in God's presence, and fostering accountability within community. It likewise involves asking questions like, 'What does God say about this situation?' What truth from Scripture counters this lie? And, am I thinking with the mind of Yeshua the Messiah?



Conclusion: Living in Freedom and Truth

Strongholds are real, but they are not permanent. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the truth of God's Word, they can be identified, confronted, and dismantled from our lives. As believers, we are not called to live in bondage to lies; but instead, we are called to walk in freedom, boldly advancing God's kingdom with renewed minds and transformed hearts.

Whether in our own lives, our congregations, or our communities, let us be people who recognize the invisible walls and strongholds and partner with God to bring them down. When strongholds fall, the Gospel flows freely, lives are changed, and God is glorified!

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MARTIN BOARDMAN

Our Congregations



BETH MAYIM CHAYIM bethmayimchayim.org

YESHUA HA'MASHIACH yeshua-hamashiach.org

BETH EMANUEL bethemanuelaz.org

California

BETH DAVID bethdavidmc.org

BETH SHALOM bethshalomcorona.com

Colorado

OR CHAIM or-chaim.com

Florida

BEIT HALLEL beithallelocala.org

ELIM CONGREGATION ElimMessianicCongregation.org

BETH YESHUA, HOUSE OF THE RISEN SON bethyshua.us

Illinois

NEW JERUSALEM HOUSE OF PRAYER newjerusalem.net

Kansas

KINGDOM LIVING kingdomlivingkc.org

REMNANT OF ISRAEL shalomwichita.com

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EL SHADDAI escfrederick.com

ROSH PINA roshpina.life

New York

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