

Emerald City

We have all seen the movie “The Wizard of Oz” once or twice in our lives. Before Andrea and I came to God’s truth, we actually dressed up as characters from the Wizard of Oz with a group of friends for Halloween. One of the wives, who is an impressive cook, is also a seamstress and made movie quality costumes for the whole gang. We had Dorothy, Glinda the Good Witch, a Munchkin, The Scarecrow, The Tin Woodsman, yours truly as the Cowardly Lion and it may be hard to believe but Andrea was the Wicked Witch of the West.

We made a trip to 5th Avenue in downtown Naples and were surrounded by folks who thought we were part of a show. We even won a costume contest at one of the establishments we visited.

The movie itself is an abomination on all fronts to the Word of God. Witches and wizards are not on God’s list of good characters. Not even adding the theme of “there’s no place like home” softens the intent behind the plot.

Deuteronomy 18:10-12- “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that uses divination, or an observer of times, or a fortuneteller, or a *witch*, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or one who seeks oracles from the dead. For all that do

these things *are* an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations, the LORD your God drives them out from before you.”

Coming to know God’s truth and way of life, it was not difficult in leaving these things behind.

Pointing out one scene from the movie, Dorothy and her traveling companions, the Scarecrow, Tin Woodsman, and the Cowardly Lion come out of the woods on the Yellow Brick Road and behold, Emerald City lies grandly before them. Now, at the journey’s end, they can all seek the wizard and have their wishes fulfilled.

In today’s version, Dorothy would be a man in drag and would not need all three companions as any politician would fit the bill for being brainless, heartless and a coward.

Again, you are wondering where this is going. The underlying mission was, they were following a path, seeking someone for preparation and guidance to a final destination.

Granted, we are not on the Yellow Brick Road, but we are certainly on a journey, and we have a road map to make sure we get to where we want to go. Our map is the Bible and the Plan of God He has written in it for mankind. In an overall sense, we do not have a wicked witch after us, but far worse, Satan and his minions will try and detour us along the way.

His deceptions will cause us to miss directions from God and take us off course from time to time. Trials and lack of faith will cause us to wander miles in the wrong direction. Thankfully, we have a GPS (**G**od **P**rovides **S**afety) in God's Holy Spirit, that through conviction and repentance will get us back on the right path.

Each of God's Festivals contains teaching within it that applies to some phase of God's Work, unveiling His plan for us.

Psalm 74:12- "For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth,"

Through His Holy Days, we recognize the pattern of what He is working out on our behalf. Keeping these feasts year after year brings us to a place of greater understanding of the plan unfolding before us. Salvation is but one aspect of His

overall plan. Our journey towards salvation is our training, growing in the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. Achieving salvation in the First Resurrection will bring us to the fulfillment of our preparation during our lifetime. God is going to re-establish His government *on the earth*. We must realize the critical importance of our preparations now for the roles we will have in the future.

John 14:2-4- “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were otherwise, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; so that where I am, you may be also. And where I am going you know, and the way you know.”

This is one of the scriptures so many take out of context and assume it means we are going to Heaven. So many people discard the Old Testament and ignore so many scriptures that clearly tell us what happens to us when we die and where we go. They forget that Jesus told them before He was crucified, “where I am going you cannot come.”

John 8:21-23- “Then Jesus said to them again, “I am going away; and you shall seek Me, but you shall die in your sin. Where I am going, you are not able to

come.” Therefore, the Jews said, “Will He kill Himself? Is that why He says, ‘Where I am going, you are not able to come’?” And He said to them, “You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”

John 13:33- “Little children, I am with you yet a little while. You shall seek Me; but as I told the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ I am now telling you also.”

Jesus is following a plan for the re-establishment of His Kingdom *on the earth*. His plan includes all those that are being called so that we will be prepared.

We have discussed the Plan of God on several occasions and during the Holy Days. Have you ever stopped and thought about what role you may be fulfilling in His Kingdom? If you have, have you been consciously getting ready to step into the position? We are clay, and God is the potter, and He is shaping us.

Isaiah 64:8- “But now, O LORD, You *are* our Father; we *are* the clay, and You *are* our potter; and we all *are* the work of Your hand.”

Many would love to know exactly just what job or function we individually will have, should we be fortunate enough to finish the race and make it to the First Resurrection.

Revelation 1:6- “And has made us kings and priests to God and His Father; to Him *be* the glory and the sovereignty into the ages of eternity. Amen.”

Of the two possible roles mentioned in Revelation, we tend to think of rulership in the Millennial Kingdom.

Revelation 2:26-27- “And to the one who overcomes, and keeps My works unto *the* end, I will give authority over the nations; And he shall shepherd them with an iron rod, as vessels of pottery are broken in pieces; as I have also received from My Father;”

Revelation 3:21- “To the one who overcomes will I give *authority* to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne.”

Revelation 5:10- “And did make us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth.”

Again, the mention of “reigning” denotes the authority figure of being in charge.

Revelation 20:6- “Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

Another confirmation we are not going to Heaven is in Revelation 5:10 that clearly states, “*we shall reign on the earth.*”

It is also mentioned in 1 Corinthians we will be judges.

1 Corinthians 6:2-3- “Don’t you know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you unworthy of the most trivial of judgments? Don’t you know that we shall judge angels? How much more then *the* things of this life?”

This is definitely something to consider as we may tend to overlook the role of a priest in favor of being a King or Judge. How can one skip over the knowledge and

characteristics of a priest and expect to become a King or Judge? All are a function of leading and *serv*ing.

Matthew 23:11- “But the greatest among you shall be your servant.”

If it is rank you expect, you may want to reconsider. The role and job assignments are generic at this point. Assignments will come later. Preparation for both is set before us. In your present spiritual condition, can you honestly see yourself in either role or position? Me either. I do not believe God will put someone who is a soup sandwich in charge of anything. There is still much work to be done.

God is telling us now where our focus needs to be. He calls us a “priesthood” here on earth. Is He setting the stage for the future by laying a foundation for any assignment?

I Peter 2:9- “But you are a chosen stock, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession *of God*, that you might proclaim His *excellent* virtues, Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”

I Peter 2:5- “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house—a holy priesthood—to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

In the here and now, we have priestly responsibilities. If we are not growing in our spiritual relationship with God and producing fruits of the Spirit, do you think He will use us to fill a critical line of work in the future? It is a sure thing that if we are not focused on these things now, we definitely will not be ready for what lies ahead. Are we governing ourselves under the full guidance of God’s word?

“A man cannot govern a nation if he cannot govern a city; he cannot govern a city if he cannot govern a family; he cannot govern a family unless he can govern himself; and he cannot govern himself unless his passions are subject to reason.” - Hugo Grotius

This is a good quote for self-examination. How does your lifestyle apply to this passage? It exemplifies the exponential importance of preparing ourselves for the greater impact we may have in the coming Kingdom of God.

The function of king and priest will be multi-faceted. Saving, guiding, judging, and *teaching* will all be a part of our future roles. As a priest, we will assist people in

accessing God so they may come to the place of oneness with Him. As a priest, we will become an arbitrator, reconciling people unto God. We will teach His word and build a foundational relationship in a new way of life, God's way.

1 Corinthians 3:16-18- “Don't you understand that you are God's temple, and *that* the Spirit of God is dwelling in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy him because the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks *himself* to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, so that he may be wise *in God's sight*.”

God is expanding and growing His family. Us.

2 Corinthians 6:16-18- “And what agreement *is there between* a temple of God and idols? For you are a temple of *the* living God, exactly as God said: “I will dwell in them and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from the midst of them and be separate,” says *the* Lord, “and touch not *the* unclean, and I will receive you; And I shall be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,” says *the* Lord Almighty.”

Priest comes from the Latin word, “pontiff.” We know the Pope is called Pontiff and is the “pontifex maximus,” the high priest. Pontiff means “bridge builder.” We

too have a High Priest but ours does not wear a fish hat. We know that being a priest requires service. Jesus serves the heirs of salvation as our Intercessor. We can go right to the throne of God because of His sacrifice.

Hebrews 4:16- “Therefore, we should come with boldness to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

We do not need a priest, a saint or statue to pray to. Our admission price was paid at the Highest cost. What are spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God? God wants us to serve one another. *Serving* can be a sacrifice through the giving of our time and effort to others. Many times, sacrifice is misunderstood as dying. In death, we cannot serve. We can sacrifice ourselves in service to others by setting our time aside for the needs of others. By our actions, we are offering sacrifices of ourselves to God that will increase our fellowship with Him.

2 Corinthians 4:15-17- “For all things *are* for your sakes, so that the abounding grace may cause the thanksgiving of many to overflow unto the glory of God. For this reason, we do not lose heart; but if our outward man is being brought to decay, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. For the momentary lightness of

our tribulation is working out for us an immeasurably greater *and* everlasting fullness of glory;”

If we genuinely want to grow in our fellowship with God, we must renew it day by day. How many of us can relate to being on a spiritual roller coaster? Trials and conflict can drain our faith, relationships can be taxing, and our love, peace, and joy can increase or decrease.

Here is another major point you may be tired of hearing.

Psalm 51:15-17- “O LORD, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Your praise, For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a ***broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart***, O God, You will not despise.”

The humble and contrite spirit God desires in us must be visible to those around us. Pride and contentions are not God’s Way of unification. Periodic self-checks to see where we are at with respect to bearing fruit is a fantastic way to stay in line. We must not act out of the flesh and remember, we are “last in line.” We could end up having the door shut in our face.

Praise and prayer are additional examples of sacrifice. Both utilize time. Nobody likes to give up their time. By our very nature, our flesh will resist our efforts to do spiritual things (**Romans 8:7**). Prayer is an effective way of demonstrating sacrifice. God see us setting aside time to pray for someone in need. If we are in the right standing and our prayers come from a contrite heart, He hears us.

James 5:15-16- “And the prayer of faith shall save the sick one, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess *your* faults to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. *The* supplication of a righteous man prevails much, being effective.”

If you want to renew your relationship daily, remember **1 Thessalonians 5:17**- “Pray unceasingly.”

Romans 12:1-2- “I exhort you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and well pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service. Do not conform yourselves to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind in order that you may prove what is well pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God.”

We all have various parts within the Body of Christ but caring for each other will increase the unity and love of the brethren. Bearing fruits of the Spirit will be the result. With every right, godly, selfless act, we promote unity in the church and unity with each other. This is a complete biblical attitude because when we act in accordance with the mind of Christ, we draw closer to God.

Learning to serve now as a priest and how our sacrifice will enable us to fulfill *any* role in the coming Kingdom. Living our lives in service to God, we will be following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. The highest rank anyone can achieve is *servant*.

Colossians 3:12-15- “Put on then, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, deep inner affections, kindness, humility, meekness, *and* longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so also you *should forgive*. And above all these things *put on* love, which is *the* bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you were called into one body, and be thankful.”

When we edify each other, we demonstrate the love of God in us for our family. When we speak words of encouragement and share joy, we cannot help but to improve our relationship with God and with those around us. It is just one of the

side benefits of doing righteousness, that we grow closer to one another when we act with that outward godly love toward them. It just automatically happens. Goodness unites people. Our facial expressions should reflect the joy we have been given.

Romans 14:17-19- “For the kingdom of God is not a *matter* of eating and drinking; rather, *it is* righteousness and peace and joy in *the* Holy Spirit. Because the one who serves Christ in these things *is* well pleasing to God and acceptable among men. So then, we should pursue the things of peace and the things that edify one another.”

1 Corinthians 14:12- “In the same way, since you are desirous of spiritual gifts, seek *them* that you may abound for the edification of the church.”

We are not on a Yellow Brick Road. We may see a witch or wizard take a plunge into a lake of fire, but we already know, we are not in Kansas anymore. Our journey is more clearly defined than anything Hollywood could dream up. Even Emerald City is a ghetto compared to New Jerusalem (**Revelation 21:1-2**).

Revelation 21:19- “And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;”

As with any role or part we are given in God’s Family, we must be performing to His expectations and in His way. Our earthly requirements must be completed to God’s design in order that we *make it* to the First Resurrection. We have the rest of our lives to prepare us to accomplish this for whatever role God has in store for us. We are truly blessed! Amen!

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