

# The Unreasonable Gospel

*Are its demands  
as unreasonable as  
expecting a man to  
leave the security of  
his boat and walk  
on the water?*

**FREE**



## Dear Friends,

We are here tonight representing the communities of the Twelve Tribes. Some of you are here tonight because you are alarmed by what you have heard about us. Others of you are here tonight because you have been challenged by some of our literature and want to hear more.

We are thankful to be here to address controversies and to answer your questions. But most of all, we want to share with you the hope we have received in the gospel. We know there are many gospels being preached today that promise much, but don't deliver a real living hope. There are also a growing number of disillusioned people, including many Christians, who aren't persuaded by what they hear in church, who are not satisfied with the fruit of the gospel they have received in their daily lives.

Some of these disillusioned members of your community and your churches have responded to what they read in one of our freepapers called *The Litmus Test, For Christians Only* by actually coming to see whether our life was real. Based on what they have seen and heard, they asked us to come here to meet with you. The gospel we preach has reached them right where they are at in their everyday lives with their everyday problems, and they want their friends to have the opportunity to see and hear what they have seen and heard. They believe there are others like them who are not content with the gospel they have received.

If you are content with trying to conform the gospel to the accepted norms of this modern society, you might not be so interested in what we have to say, but if you are in search of honest answers to the deep life questions of your heart, and if you are willing to *do* God's will, you might hear something in what we say that will change your life.

We have learned that Yahshua,\* the Messiah, did not present a gospel that fit into the culture and society of the world of His day. He presented a message that was irrational and unreasonable to a person who wants the comforts of this world, such as the rich young ruler in Mark chapter 10. It makes no sense whatsoever to give up all your possessions and risk alienating your family to obey the "hard sayings" of the gospel if you are content to live a "normal" life.

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\* *Yahshua* is the Hebrew name of the Son of God; see *What's in a Name* on page 12.

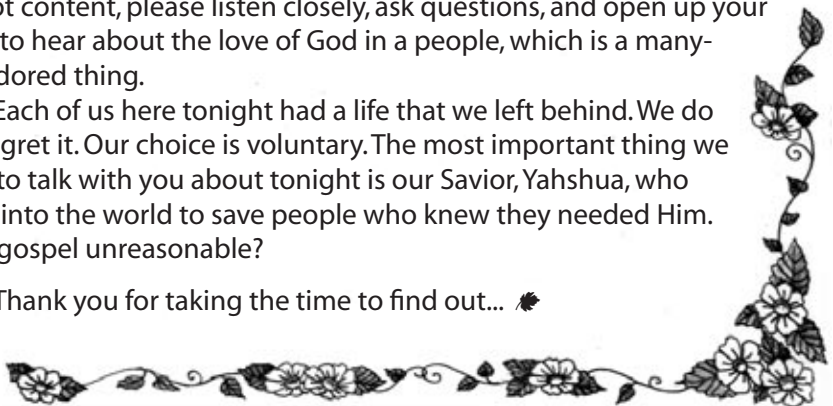
You know... working 9 to 5 to support your family, living in the suburbs, sending your children off to school while you work hard to send them to college, hoping you can make enough money to have a comfortable retirement when you get old, and all the while going to church and trying to assure yourself that you'll end up in heaven when you die. It would seem silly and ridiculous to apply the "hard sayings" of the gospel to your life in a literal sense if you are persuaded that you can live according to the standards of a "normal" life in society and at the same time be saved and on your way to heaven.

Our Master made it clear that a person can't begin to hear and believe unto salvation unless he hates his life in this world (John 12:25). If you sense that there is something wrong with a gospel that allows you to be comfortably conformed to the pattern of life in this world, then your eyes can be opened to the unvarnished gospel of the true Son of God that can disentangle you from the "civilian affairs" of your life and make you a good soldier in His army. His army is together, in complete unity under one Commander and Chief, the Son of God Himself, learning to obey His commandments. It is in this army, and only in this army, that the irrational demands of the words of the Savior make sense. His words are neither irrational nor unreasonable to those who are willing to obey their Commander. They believe that obeying His words will defeat all His enemies and bring about His kingdom on earth.

As you read this pamphlet we made just for you, we would like for you to honestly consider the reality of your life tonight... the condition of your marriage, the purpose of your career, the relationship you have with your children, the hope (or hopelessness) you offer to them, and the effect of society on the people and things that you value the most. If you are content with your life, don't waste your time at this forum. But if you are not content, please listen closely, ask questions, and open up your heart to hear about the love of God in a people, which is a many-splendored thing.

Each of us here tonight had a life that we left behind. We do not regret it. Our choice is voluntary. The most important thing we want to talk with you about tonight is our Savior, Yahshua, who came into the world to save people who knew they needed Him. Is His gospel unreasonable?

Thank you for taking the time to find out... 🌿



# The Unreasonable Gospel

*"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions." (Luke 14:26-33)*

Aren't the demands of those hard words excessive? He could not have meant them in a literal sense! They are not *just*, but are excessive, exorbitant, irrational, contrary to reason — senseless demands! Nature provides no environment to live according to such demands, to the point of being absurd, insensible, laughable, ridiculous. Jesus must have been mentally unsound to expect people to obey these utterly illogical imperatives in His teachings, which are directly contrary to reason — unreasonable demands! For example:

*As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." To another He said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:57-62)*

*Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. (Luke 12:51-53)*



*Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (Matthew 10:37-39)*

*Unreasonable* means not rational, showing no sense in demanding things not possible to do, such as giving up all of your possessions. What would you do — freeze or starve to death? It is silly and ridiculous to apply the hard sayings to one's life in a literal sense, which would be extreme foolishness, an absurdity to say the least!

Indeed, the gospel's demands — the "hard sayings" — *are* ludicrous to the natural mind, even preposterous, such as the flagrantly absurd command Jesus gave the rich young ruler in Mark 10:21, "*You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.*"

The gospel is unreasonable to those who are not willing to do God's will.<sup>1</sup> Is God unreasonable? It seems that way to many Christians today, as they are taught that any effort to obey God's word disqualifies them from the free gift of eternal life. Yet Peter said the Holy Spirit is given to

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<sup>1</sup> John 7:17

those who obey Yahshua.<sup>2</sup> And Yahshua Himself said, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."<sup>3</sup> And again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."<sup>4</sup>

The kingdom reign of Messiah is unreasonable to the natural man<sup>5</sup> and unattainable to the carnal man.<sup>6</sup> But to the faithful, the way is very narrow and hard,<sup>7</sup> but not unreasonable, for it is attainable for the spiritual man. For those who see the worth of Messiah and understand the nature of eternal life, it is reasonable to obey the gospel. Nothing less than total surrender of one's life will bring about the witness of His transcending life on the Earth.<sup>8</sup>

If you are satisfied with a comfortable, status-quo, Sunday-go-to-meeting existence, then the demands of Yahshua's gospel would seem unreasonable to you. For it is considered irresponsible by this world's standard to not provide for yourself a good home, nice things, a college education for your children, and a comfy retirement. But it would require great complexities of reasoning to imagine that Yahshua was envisioning such a life when He preached the so-called "hard sayings" of the gospel.

### **The Rich Young Ruler**

The rich young ruler came to Yahshua, believing that He could grant him eternal life. And what is eternal life but to know God and His Son Yahshua whom He sent?<sup>9</sup> And to know Him, you must obey His commandments<sup>10</sup> (otherwise you will prove to be a liar<sup>11</sup>). And to call Him the Sovereign of your life,<sup>12</sup> you must follow Him, in order to serve Him where He is.<sup>13</sup> Only such a one will be honored by the Father.

Yahshua made the demands of following Him very clear to the rich young ruler. It would be impossible for him to go on with the life he had grown accustomed to and be a disciple at the same time. He would have to choose between his own life — everything he had always taken security in — and the eternal life that he knew Yahshua was extending to him.

*And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But at these words his face fell, and he went away grieved, for he was one who owned much property. (Mark 10:21-22)*

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 5:32; *Yahshua* is the Hebrew name of the Son of God; see *What's in a Name* on page 12. <sup>3</sup> John 14:21 <sup>4</sup> John 8:51 <sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:14 <sup>6</sup> Romans 8:5-8

<sup>7</sup> Acts 14:22; Matthew 7:14 <sup>8</sup> Mark 10:17,21,28-30; 3:31-35; Matthew 10:37; 24:14

<sup>9</sup> John 17:3 <sup>10</sup> John 14:21 <sup>11</sup> 1 John 2:4 <sup>12</sup> Romans 10:9 <sup>13</sup> John 12:25-26

What was he grieving about? What great loss caused such grief? He lost eternal life because he loved his own life more. For Yahshua said that one must hate his life in the world, in order to follow Him.<sup>14</sup> He was the One who could give him eternal life and told him what he must do in order to have eternal life. But the rich young ruler did not trust Him, even though he believed that what He told him to do would grant him eternal life. The word *grief* there means *to strike the bosom and to beat the breast as an outward sign of an inward grief*. This is what the rich young ruler was doing as he walked away from Eternal Life.

Could the rich young ruler go to the Father any other way, except through Yahshua, the One of whom he asked what he must do, in order to be able to go to the Father?<sup>15</sup> Certainly he must have believed in Yahshua, or he would not have asked Him what he had to do in order to have what he wanted. Somehow he knew that he must *do* something more than just believe, for he asked, "What must I *do*?" But at hearing the "unreasonable demands" of the gospel, he was full of dread, heaviness, and sorrow. For he had his mind on what he would have to give up — all those things which he could not carry with him to follow Messiah as the other disciples did,<sup>16</sup> who had left their employment, family, friends, possessions — everything that would hinder the journey.

The gospel of the Kingdom of God begins and ends with obedience, but the rich young ruler was more concerned with keeping his own life than obeying Yahshua's commandment of what it would take to follow Him. He had bent his knee, but not his will; bowed his head, but not his heart; wanted heavenly possessions, but would not give up his earthly possessions. He knew what he needed, but would not forsake what he wanted. Yahshua asked him to sacrifice the present for the future, but he did the opposite. He was being called to be an apostle, but he chose instead to be a miser.

The Good News of the Kingdom does not make sense to one who does not see salvation as a pearl of great price, or as a treasure hidden in a field,<sup>17</sup> which is unattainable without doing what one must do to attain it. And then one must go on after baptism to attain to the kingdom reign of Messiah.<sup>18</sup> The unreasonable demands of the gospel make the Word of God seem unreasonable, and the Father unreasonable to expect anyone to have to *do* what the gospel says one must do in order to trust the Savior for his salvation. All who see Him and His Word this way will walk away sad just like the rich young ruler.

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<sup>14</sup> John 12:25-26    <sup>15</sup> John 14:6    <sup>16</sup> Mark 10:28    <sup>17</sup> Matthew 13:44-45

<sup>18</sup> Philippians 3:10-13; Revelation 2:11; 3:21-22

The rich young ruler was not just sad, but *grieved*, knowing that the heaviness and dread that came upon him was keeping him from drinking the water of life Yahshua offered him.<sup>19</sup> The word *cowardly* in Revelation 21:8 signifies *dread*. Why would it say *dread*? Why would the rich young ruler be so dreadfully sad after hearing the good news, as Yahshua called him to follow Him? Why is trusting required for believing?

*And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:6-8)*

He proved to be *cowardly*, filled with dread, when he heard the good news of what it would take to drink of the water of life offered to him, and his failure to obey proved his *unbelief*. As John the Baptist said, "He who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but he shall incur the wrath of God."<sup>20</sup> (Remember, Revelation 21:8 says *all liars*, such as those in 1 John 2:4 who claim to know Him, but do not obey His commandments.)

### **The Normal Outcome of Obeying the Good News**

But those who trusted Yahshua and gave themselves to actually obey what He said were gathered together into an abundant life with all the others who put their trust completely in Him:

*Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47)*

*Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who*

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<sup>19</sup> John 7:37-39; John 4:14; Revelation 22:17    <sup>20</sup> John 3:36

*lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. (Acts 4: 32-35)*

This was a life where nothing was held back, everything had to go — every attachment to this world, which is under the sway of the evil one and which will soon pass away.<sup>21</sup> This life was a witness of the coming kingdom that Yahshua will establish on the earth when He returns. It was the proof that the love of God had actually been poured out into people's hearts,<sup>22</sup> causing them to love one another just as Yahshua had loved them,<sup>23</sup> to the point that they laid their lives down for one another daily.<sup>24</sup> Without this witness, the Kingdom will never come.<sup>25</sup>

Jeremiah, the prophet of the New Covenant,<sup>26</sup> foretold the witness of the kingdom that would be established on the earth in the last days:

*Their children will be as in days of old, and their community will be established before me; I will punish all who oppress them. (Jeremiah 30:20, NIV)*

The Hebrew word translated *community* is *edah*, which also means *witness* and *swarm* or *beehive*. This word vividly portrays the way a group of people (like a hive of bees) live and work together with a common identity and purpose. Bees live a selfless life of devotion to their hive. They have no concern for themselves, but only for the hive. So it is with those who are in the communities of God. That is what Yahshua, who spoke Hebrew, had in mind when He said,

*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)*

So when you see what it takes to create the Body of Messiah, which is the community of believers,<sup>27</sup> then the "hard sayings" of Yahshua no longer seem unreasonable, but make perfect sense. For it takes a *community*, you know! At least the first disciples knew, and so did the Holy Spirit.<sup>28</sup> To *believe* in John 3:16 is to live as one who believes lives, as in Acts 2:44, quoted above. Then it all makes sense!

It *still* takes a community to obey the Gospel! The community is made up of all those who obey the Gospel of the Kingdom. 🌿

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<sup>21</sup> 1 John 5:19; 2:17    <sup>22</sup> Romans 5:5    <sup>23</sup> John 13:34-35    <sup>24</sup> 1 John 3:14,16,17

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 21:43; 24:14    <sup>26</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-34    <sup>27</sup> Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23

<sup>28</sup> Acts 5:20,32

# “Upon this Rock”

*Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:16-18)*

Many have quoted this verse to prove the impossibility of the gates of Hades (the realm of the dead) prevailing against the church. They assume that regardless of the spiritual and moral condition of the church, God has never withdrawn His Holy Spirit from her, for a body without a spirit is dead, and that would mean the gates of death had prevailed against the church. But this is not what Yahshua was promising to Peter that day.

What Yahshua confirmed in Peter was that he was hearing from the Father — receiving revelation — not merely repeating what other men might have said. Peter had heard in his heart that Yahshua was the Messiah, and that revelation caused him to pledge his utter devotion and obedience to Him. Now that was something Yahshua could work with — people who could hear from His Father and obey what they heard. Upon such revelation He could build an eternal dwelling place for His Father’s Spirit, for that, after all, is what the church is supposed to be.

The Master said things like this to His disciples many times, such as in this familiar passage:

*Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. (Matthew 7:24-27)*

*Hearing and obeying* is the foundation of the house that will endure all that comes against it, and wise is the man who builds on that rock. But foolish is the man who builds his house on those who hear but do *not* obey. That house will not withstand the test. The floods of deception and the shifting winds of doctrine will prevail against that house.

So was Yahshua the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, a wise man or a foolish man? Was He contradicting Himself by saying that the house He was building would endure *regardless* of whether it was built on the foundation of hearing and obeying His words?

Many years later, in the waning days of the first-century church, the writer of the book of Hebrews said these words to the church:

*But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house — whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. (Hebrews 3:6)*

The Greek word translated as “confidence” literally means *freedom in speaking; unreservedness in speech*. It is an outspokenness that comes from the confidence that one is hearing and obeying Messiah’s words. Such outspokenness characterized the gatherings of the early church, as in 1 Corinthians 14:26 and 1 Peter 4:11, when they were devoted to the apostles’ teachings, but as the first century drew to a close and the churches were drifting from the simplicity of their first devotion, their gatherings degenerated to rote ritual and a professional clergy. That is the record of history. So were they still “His house” in spite of Hebrews 3:6?

Here is another promise the Master made to His disciples:

*He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will reveal Myself to him... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. (John 14:21,23)*

Those who truly love Him obey Him, and He reveals Himself to them, which causes them to love and obey Him all the more. It is with such as these that

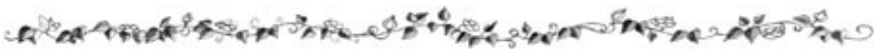
He makes His home. He went on to say, “Whoever does not love Me does not keep My words.” What can be said about them? Are they also His dwelling place? 🌿



# WHO WE ARE

**THERE IS A PEOPLE** who woke up this morning with one thing on their minds — to love their Creator with all their heart, mind, and strength, and to love one another just as He loved them. Being just ordinary human beings, we are far from perfect in our love, yet, in hope, we persevere. Our goal? That the kingdom of God would come on earth as it is in heaven, so that love and justice can rule on the earth.

Sound impossible? It would be, were it not that the Son of God came to earth to redeem mankind, to set us free from the curse of sin, and to enable us to love. Because we have come to see His worth and our own desperate need, we have surrendered everything in order to follow Him. He has won our hearts and brought us together as a people to demonstrate His love and care in the midst of a collapsing social order. Our hearts and our homes are open night and day to any who are interested in our life or are weary of their sin and want to know the purpose for which they were created. 🌱



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119 Third Street, Ithaca, NY 14850

☎ (607) 272-6915

### Community in Cocksackie

5 Mansion Street, Cocksackie, NY 12051

☎ (518) 731-7711

### Oak Hill Plantation

8037 State Route 81, Oak Hill, NY 12460

☎ (518) 239-8148

### Common Sense Farm

41 N. Union Street, Cambridge, NY 12816

☎ (518) 677-5880

### Community in Hamburg

2051 North Creek Road, Lakeview, NY 14085

☎ (716) 627-2532

### Community in Island Pond

P. O. Box 449, Island Pond, VT 05846

☎ (802) 723-9708

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☎ (802) 463-9264

### Community in Rutland

134 Church Street, Rutland, VT 05701

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☎ (617) 282-9876

### Community in Hyannis

14 Main Street, Hyannis, MA 02601

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35 Warren Avenue, Plymouth, MA 02360

☎ (508) 747-5338

### Community in Lancaster

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☎ (719) 573-1907

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☎ (540) 668-7123

### Community in Vista

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