



BENEFITS AND BLESSINGS OF FASTING

Week Three

RELEASE OF REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS:

In Leviticus 16 and 23, GOD establishes the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, as an annual fast to make amends for the sins of his people. Among other offerings given to the Lord, the Jews were to humble or “afflict” their souls through fasting and self-denial as a way to demonstrate repentance and receive GOD’s mercy for their sins.

1 Kings 16-21. When the prophet Elijah came to Ahab, King of Israel, to announce GOD’s judgment on him and his descendants for all his wicked ways, Ahab feared GOD, fasted, and humbled himself before the Lord. As a result, GOD saw his change of heart, forgave him, and extended his days.

When Jonah declared to the king that Nineveh would be destroyed because of the pervasive evil throughout the land, the king demanded the entire city to fast. GOD say how they humbled themselves in fear of the Lord, and he averted their disaster for 100 years.

2 Chronicles 7:14 is a powerful promise and example of humbling or afflicting or corporately denying through fasting and prayer to bring hope to a nation. GOD says, “If my people who are called by name will humble themselves (fasting) and pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear their prayers, forgive their sins, and heal their land.”

RELEASE OF PROTECTION:

Esther’s appeal to the Jews for fasting was for her protection from being killed for coming unrequested to the king. It was law. King Xerxes had already executed his first wife, Queen Vashti, so the precedent was well known. Though GOD is never directly mentioned in the Book of Esther, his presence and protection were very much present.

Ezra 8:21 reads, “There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions.” Ezra could have sought the King’s protection but, instead, trusted in his GOD.





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RELEASE OF INTERCESSION OR STANDING IN THE GAP ON BEHALF OF OTHERS:

In chapter 9 of Daniel, he fasted and prayed for his people, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the temple. He humbled his soul and poured out his heart in great despair for others. The angel Gabriel came to Daniel, and in verse 23 he told him, "As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed."

Both Moses and the prophet Ezekiel humbled themselves before the Lord to plead for GOD's mercy in light of the people's wickedness. Again, GOD averted his hand from utterly destroying them in the midst of their sinfulness.

RELEASE OF REVELATION, UNDERSTANDING, DIRECTION OR STRATEGY:

While Daniel was speaking and praying and confessing the sins of Israel and making requests to the Lord for his holy hill, the angel Gabriel instructed him. In verse 23, Gabriel says, "Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision." And the angel reveals the coming times of the "Anointed One." It's a messianic prophecy or revelation of what was to come.

A beautiful example of worshipping, praying, and fasting for GOD's revelation is found in Luke 2 with Anna the prophetess. The scripture tells us she was a widow who never left the temple. Like Simeon, she was waiting for the consolation of Israel. GOD saw her faithfulness and humble heart and blessed her with her heart's desire - the revelation that allowed her to recognize the child Jesus as the one who bring about the redemption of Jerusalem and all humankind.

In Acts chapter 14. Paul and Barnabas are preaching the gospel among the Gentiles. As the number of disciples was growing, Paul knew there needed to be leadership in these places to keep followers committed and true to the faith while Paul and Barnabas continued their missionary journeys. But rather than trust their own judgement on who to appoint, they sought GOD's standards for leadership by taking time to fast and pray for direction on who to choose. And the early church was established and grew in great numbers.

