

# The 7 Churches, 7 Days of Unleavened Bread, and the 7 Weeks Journey to Pentecost

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Today we are going to cover a subject which we have brought up in many studies of the past but did not elaborate on at the time. It is directly tied to the time setting we currently find ourselves going through, that being the 49-day count, or as we will see; journey to the Feast of Pentecost and the marriage of Christ/Messiah. This was a seven-week journey for ancient Israel, and that journey and time setting holds many lessons for the Church of God/Elohim to understand. Some are positive and should be encouraging, some are negative and should be avoided. We have often mentioned that the lessons taught in Rev. 2 & 3 pertaining to the 7 Churches are intricately tied to these lessons learned and presented to Israel on this journey. So too, are the lessons learned from the 7 days of UB. As we are aware this 49 day count always starts on the Sunday (first day of the week) which falls during the 7 days of UB. To even suggest as some have that there is no relevancy between what takes place in the 7 Churches of Revelation and the 7 days of attempting to be leaven free and the count of 7 weeks to the Feast of Weeks/Pentecost is to deny the spirit of prophecy and a sound mind.

So, today we are going to study just some of these relevancies and patterns in a broad overview of the subject. These scriptures and patterns reveal truths of the Father, and hopefully will help us all gain a better understanding of what God/Elohim expects of us personally and as a body, and why over the millennia the Church goes through so much pain and shortness of critical understanding. For us to gain a better understanding of the lessons we under the Second Covenant are to learn and teach, we must have a sound understanding of what took place with Israel under the First Covenant.

In regard to the subject today, we need to understand 2 very important keys before we proceed with it.

Number 1. We have translated the full meaning of the word *miqra* (convocation) throughout so we can gain a clearer understanding of what God/Elohim is saying. To limit this word to convocation is a great injustice to Gods/Elohim intent. Lev. 23:4-8:

“These are the appointed times of the Lord/Yehovah, holy public rehearsals of sustained communication between God/Elohim and those He has called out by name which we individually as well as collectively shall proclaim loudly at their appointed times.”

That is probably a little different than what’s written in your bible. But that is the meaning and intent of the Hebrew words written here. The instruction given in verse 4 is critical to our relationship with God/Elohim. He is not the author of confusion, the Devil is, and he manifests it in the thoughts and actions of men. God is very clear and direct in what He wants us to do. His instructions to those who are called are the difference between life and death in metaphorical terms.

Christ/Messiah told us He will never leave nor forsake us. That is a promise which has not, and never will wane. He has left a record of what we are to know and do in the pages of the bible. God/Elohim has given us appointed times to meet with Him. Lev. 23 lists them. He has given us the visual means to know when each one of these appointed times are. It is our responsibility to complete the command to proclaim these very specific times of public rehearsal, of sustained communication, at the very time He says to do so. He did not and does not want any mixing of these days or appointed times. He is so specific about this that He actually gives us the month and the specific day of that month that each is to occur on and in its entirety. As far as the weekly

Sabbath goes that travels through every month. He also tells us there are specific things to be done on each of these specific days which were used in honoring and worshiping God/Elohim.

In Lev. 23:37 we read:

“These are appointed times of the Lord/Yehovah which you shall proclaim loudly, holy public rehearsals of sustained communication (or worship) between God/Elohim and those He has called by name, to offer an offering made by fire to the Lord/Yehovah, a burnt offering and a grain offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, everything on its day.”

Here He has clearly told us and warned us that these very special days which He has appointed have very special sacrifices and burnt offerings which must be done on the exact day He has appointed. We mention this at the beginning of this study because of its importance to the called of the Father. We are not to mix the days or the burnt offering sacrificed on their specific day with that of another day.

The next verse we are going to read is very representative of that command, but in the Church today it is a source of much interpretation and pain: interpretation of men and pain to the called of the Father.

Lev. 23:5, “On the fourteenth of the first month at twilight is the Lords/Yehovahs Passover.”

Brethren are now fighting and arguing amongst themselves individually and as groups over which day one must keep the Passover of the Lord/Yehovah. Some say the 14th, some the 15th. There are those who say the 13th and some who say we don't have to keep it at all. Well brethren, we (Linda and I) must be Simple Simons, for we believe what God/Elohim has clearly written. He tells us here, and in countless other scriptures, that the Passover of the Lord/Yehovah is on the 14th day of the first month. Thus, all His commanded functions, sacrifices, and burnt offerings for His Passover are to be conducted on the 14th day period, no other! No mixing with any aspect of it with that of another appointed time or day as verse 37 so clearly tells us.

Our purpose today isn't to badger anyone on what day or for that matter how they keep the Passover. We however need to spend a little time on this subject to show there is a reason why the Passover of the Lord/Yehovah is separate from the seven days of Unleavened Bread. Each has its own significance in the Plan of Salvation and must not be mixed. We are going to offer up a point which very few considered when formulating their belief on this subject of great debate in the Church.

That point is simply this. There is only one offering made by fire on the 14th of Abib. You do not find it listed here in Lev 23. In fact, you don't find it listed in Numbers 28 & 29 either. But you do learn something very educational there as to this sacrifice. In numbers 28 & 29 we find the appointed times for the offerings made by fire. Numbers 28:2 tells us,

“Command the children of Israel and say to them, My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire as a sweet aroma to Me, you shall be **careful** (#8104, *shamar*, keep, watch, preserve) to offer to Me at their appointed time.”

Once again, a very clear warning from God/Elohim not to mix up the times on which burnt offerings are to be made. He goes on to instruct Moses and thus ourselves of the specific burnt offerings and their appointed times. In these verses, He instructs Moses that there are regular burnt offerings each evening and morning. That is 2 of them on each day; one in the evening and one in the morning. That is one after sunset and one after sunrise.

The instruction here goes on to tell us what specific sacrifices were to be offered on the weekly Sabbath, New

Moon, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. On each of these they were also to offer the regular burnt offerings also. Now, no doubt some of you are saying we missed one: Passover! No, we didn't brethren. For in this thorough delineation of which burnt offerings are to be offered at their appointed times we read nothing about the Passover of the Lord/Yehovah except the following:

16: "On the fourteenth day of the first month is the Passover of the Lord/Yehovah."

Now, we hope our minds are swimming in thoughts over this. Verse 16 does not mention any of the regular burnt offerings or any other, does it? But these are the chapters in which God/Elohim gives us specific instructions as to what is, "His food, My offerings, a sweet aroma to Me" at their appointed times.

So why is nothing mentioned here! There is a very sobering lesson to the Church here in these chapters. It is a wakeup call to all of us about the bickering and deceit which has engulfed the Body of Christ/Messiah today in regard to the Passover of the Lord/Yehovah. No burnt offering we can come up with is acceptable as His food or as a sweet aroma to God/Elohim on this day, the 14th of Abib.

It is set aside, reserved for one sacrifice and offering made by fire alone. It is reserved for the Lamb of God/Elohim, the very Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them. That is He who is known as the Word of God/Elohim, the I am, the Son of God/Elohim, Jesus the Christ/Messiah and many other names; but to our salvation He is preeminent as the Lamb of the fathers household.

He is the only Lamb acceptable as a sacrifice and offering made by fire on this day, to the Eternal. Let this sink in deep. It is written for us, the called of the Father, those who are trying to understand His meaning and purpose for these appointed times so that we can worship Him in spirit and in truth. Yes, to us! Who have received the spirit of God/Elohim, so that we can understand the things of God/Elohim. As 1Cor 2 tells us.

It is the word of God/Elohim written right here in the bible, that tells us when and how to keep and proclaim the appointed times, each on its own day. He tells us right here that the Passover of the Lord/Yehovah is on the 14th day of Abib. That means every function of it. It doesn't overlap with any other day, no mixing whatsoever. In fact, we are instructed often that it does not start until after sunset. Let's see why He has done this. There is only one account in the Old Testament/First Covenant which clearly and thoroughly tells us of the Passover of the Lord/Yehovah, its setting, the day, and the sacrifice and offering made by fire of that day. It is found in Exodus 12. Let's read verses 5-10. We will be reading from J.P. Green's Interlinear bible.

"A flock animal, a male without blemish, a yearling, shall be to you. You shall take from the sheep or from the goats. 6: And it shall be for you to keep until (that is the Hebrew word *ad* which means; up to, or even to) the fourteenth day of this month. And all the assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it between the evenings 7: And they shall take from the blood, and put *it* on the two side doorposts and on the upper doorpost, on the houses *in* which they eat it. 8: And they shall eat the flesh (My food) in this night, (which night? The only one ever mentioned in the bible, the 14th of *Abib*.) roasted with fire, (start of the offering made by fire) and they shall eat it with unleavened *bread* and bitter herbs (Hebrew: with bitterness). 9: Do not eat it raw, or at all boiled in water, but roasted with fire; its head with its legs and with its inward parts (edible organs). 10: And you shall not leave any of it until morning. And you shall burn with fire that left from it until morning. (the finish of the offering made by fire)"

We have just read Gods/Elohim account that took place on the night of His Passover. Here is the offering made by fire of the 14th of Abib. We are commanded not to mix up, confuse, or swap these commanded things to another appointed time of God/Elohim in any way, shape, or form. These sacrifices and appointed times of

God/Elohim are very important to our understanding of the Plan of Salvation and the Church's participation in it.

These scriptures tell us that on the same night the lamb was killed, it was eaten, and made to be an offering made by fire. All on the same night.

Verse 11 tells us it is the Lord's Passover/Yehovahs. All in the same night, the 14th. He is not the author of confusion, the devil our adversary is and he has caused many to openly stumble in the simplicity of Christ/Messiah. They follow men devoid of understanding rather than the simple Word and Patterns of God/Elohim. On the night of the Lord's/Yehovahs Passover Israel was not to leave the household of their fathers. If the firstborn did, the blood of the lamb would not protect them from the death angel which was to pass over at midnight. Verse 22 tells us,

“And take a bunch of hyssop and dip in the blood which is in the basin. And apply some of the blood in the basin to the upper doorpost and to the side doorposts. And you shall not go out anymore from the door of his house until morning.”

Without this sacrifice of the Lamb of God/Elohim we would not have received His shed blood on the doorposts of our mind which allows the spirit of God/Elohim to be available to us which then leads us in the process of trying to maintain the unleavened state we have received from Christ/Messiah. The Passover of the Lord/Yehovah sets the stage for us to thus come out and participate in the process of unleavening and maintaining that state for 7 more days.

That unleavening is very instructive to us, the Church. The very specific appointed times for it in the scriptures are the 15th through the 21st of the first month. We must not confuse the lessons of this unleavened bread with that of the unleavened bread of Passover. One was done on our behalf by the Lamb of the Fathers household, the other is done by us the Church in trying to maintain that state made possible and given to us by Christ/Messiah after living as a perfect man, so we can attain to the measure of His stature and fullness.

Let us play the fool to some of you for a moment. To us the 15th of Abib represents the start of the 7 days of Unleavened Bread, and the start of our individual march away from sin and maintaining that state by remaining vigilant as to sin's presence and its ability to hide. We read in Duet 16:1 that Israel started out of Egypt by night.

1: “Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the Lord/Yehovah your God/Elohim. For in the month of Abib the Lord/Yehovah your God/Elohim brought you out of Egypt by night.”

Israel started their journey out of Egypt on the night of the 15th of Abib. How do we come up with this? We know this cannot be the Passover; for Israelites could not come out of their homes on the night of the Passover of the Lord/Yehovah but according to the 7-day combined festival of Passover and UB of Judaism they could. Only one is correct and the scriptures simply and clearly tell us which one. So, this night talked about here in 16:1 cannot be the Passover. We further read in Numbers 33:3:

“They departed from Rameses in the first month on the fifteenth day of the first month; the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.”

Now let's sum this up. They came out of Egypt on the night of the 15th of Abib. Thus, that is not the Passover, for on the Passover of the Lord/Yehovah they had to kill the lamb, put the blood on their doorposts, roast the lamb, eat it, burn its remains, and yes, not come out of their homes until morning. (*Boqer*, sunrise or dawn)

Now that has to be the 14th just as God/Elohim says throughout the bible. So, God's/Elohim word does not mix any of the things of one appointed time with another just as He says. There is no confusion from Him on this point. He does not mix His appointed times or the required sacrifices or functions to be conducted on each. When an annual Holy Day or New Moon falls on a weekly Sabbath or any combination thereof He clearly delineates that in Numbers 28 & 29. All this is very important to be able to understand the intended spiritual lessons we are to function in, under the terms and conditions of the New Covenant.

With this said let's go back to Lev 23 to see what the second important point is before we get into the pattern of the scriptures about 7 days of UB, 7 weeks count to Pentecost, and the 7 Churches of Revelation. Let's start in verse 6.

“And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the appointed time of Unleavened Bread to the Lord/Yehovah. Seven days you MUST eat unleavened bread.”

This function is not a choice. We are commanded to eat UB for 7 days. This is the big lesson that is to be understood by those called of the Father. We have to eat unleavened bread for all seven days. It is our responsibility to remove all leavening immediately when we find it or remove ourselves from its presence. That's it in a nutshell. We are of the Firstborn or of His body and we must not tolerate sin in that body if we are to become the firstfruits.

Verses 7-8:

“On the first day (15<sup>th</sup>) you shall have a holy public rehearsal of sustained communication with God/Elohim. You shall do no customary work on it. 8: But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord/Yehovah for seven days (these are spelled out in Numbers 28:17-25). The seventh day as well is a holy public rehearsal of sustained communication with God/Elohim. You shall do no customary work.”

We are to learn many lessons from the keeping of these 7 days of UB. They are to be all kept, leaven free. That takes a lot of effort individually and collectively. It takes a great deal of personal involvement. No one else can do it for us, but we can help one another in accomplishing the task. Christ/Messiah had already died for our sins the day before on the 14th, the Passover of the Lord/Yehovah. He had become our perfect, unleavened sacrifice. He had become a sweet-smelling aroma to the Father. He started the unleavened process for us. So now His body, His Church, must keep leaven out for 7 days, or for 7 Church eras (as some call them) or for the 7 Church types or even better stated; attitudes, spoken of in Rev 2 & 3. In 1 Cor 5:7 we read:

“Therefore, cleanse thoroughly (#1571 *ekkathairo*) the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ/Messiah our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

Brethren, we the members of the body of Christ/Messiah must individually continue the process, He started for us and in us, regardless of where we find ourselves in the landscape of the Churches. During Israel's first 7 days of UB she found herself traveling through the landscape of the surrounding territory of Egypt. In Numbers 33:5-9 we can read the following sequence of events.

On the 15th she traveled from Rameses and camped at Succoth. She was now a true sojourner living in temporary dwellings. No longer was she in Pharaoh's presence and under his influence.

On the 16th of Abib she left Succoth and camped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness. She was not yet ready to face that yet, that is, the true wilderness.

On the 17th they left Etham and camped near Migdol. This is so symbolic of what was about to happen to them. They were about to pass from the fortress of Egypt to the pillar of the Lord/Yehovah.

On the 18th of Abib they left there and passed through the midst of the sea and went 3 days journey in the

wilderness of Etham and camped at Marah. So here we see the 18th, 19th and 20th of Abib consumed. In relevant terms those days were the 4th, 5th, and 6th days of UB. But now on the 21st of Abib they moved from Marah, the place of bitterness, to Elim, the place of 12 springs of water, and 70 palm trees. The spiritual significance of these springs and trees and the number of each on the last day of UB should be racing through our thoughts. These 7 days of UB here were times of great testing and joy for Israel. Much of it was very difficult. Remember how this journey started. Ex 12:41-42:

“And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, on that very same day, it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord/Yehovah went out from the land of Egypt (15th, Num 33:3). 42: It is a night of vigilant watching (#8107) to the Lord/Yehovah (no longer Pharaoh) for bringing them out of the land of Egypt (Duet 16:1). This is that night of the Lord/Yehovah of vigilant watching (#8107) for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.”

Why vigilant watching? Because sin is sure to follow and if we are not watching the Lord/Yehovah vigilantly it will overtake us and destroy us. Thus, an important lesson we are to learn.

In Ex 13 we read about the events surrounding the 15th, 16th and 17th of Abib or as we know them here, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd days of UB. It is important to note that on the 15th of Abib, the 1st day of the appointed time of Unleavened Bread, that God/Elohim instructed Moses to teach Israel about His laws of the firstborn. There was an assembly on this holy day in which Israel received that instruction. Its fundamentals were; 1) God/Elohim owned all the firstborn and 2) they were not to eat (take in) any leavened bread. (Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees or their doctrine. Mat 16:6 & 12)

In chapter 14 we see that God/Elohim hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would pursue them. Israel was tested at that time. She was tested throughout these 7 days of UB to see if she would remain vigilant and watchful. Pharaoh overtook her on the 4th day and she became afraid, in fact the scriptures tell us “very afraid.” She doubted God/Elohim and His promises after all He had shown her and done for her. They actually wished to return to Egypt and serve in bondage to Pharaoh rather than the seeming severe onslaught and hardships with God/Elohim. This is so indicative of spiritual Israel as we will see. God/Elohim told Moses to instruct Israel to move forward and He would fight for them. But she continued to look back and not forward, to the point she was afraid and confused and didn't know right from wrong desires. How often brethren have we fallen into doubt and fear about the way of life we have been called to and which we have willingly accepted? How often have we felt we are in a wilderness alone, apart from what seems appealing to the eye? How often have we stumbled and sinned?

Christ/Messiah says to us at these times of testing and possible weakness, do not be afraid, move forward, don't look back to sin, but be vigilant and focus on the Lord/Yehovah for He will help in the fight. In fact, He will never test us with more than we can endure. But, be absolutely assured brethren, we will be tested often and hard, for He has a purpose for us and we must prove ourselves worthy of it.

In chapter 15 we learn that after Israel summoned the courage to pass through the Red Sea that God/Elohim had a great victory over sin. Here Israel was symbolically baptized, but then, was immediately tested without finding water for 3 days, and when they did it was bitter. Do we have enough stores of water to carry us through such times brethren? What do we do when we are faced with only bitter water? Would we drink it and taint ourselves in desperation, or would we be vigilant and wait on the Lord/Yehovah, drawing on our reserves? We must only and always drink in the doctrines of the Father as Christ/Messiah instructs us in John 7:15-18.

Once again Israel was tested and once again she murmured. It was after this that God/Elohim said to Israel in verse 26 of chapter 15:

26: “If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord/Yehovah your God/Elohim and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord/Yehovah who heals you.”

He then blessed them at Elim with rest, and 12 springs of water, and 70 palm trees on the 7th day of UB. Keep in mind the 12 pillars and the 70 Elders of Exodus 24 of the feast of Pentecost at Mt Sinai. There are many more events in which we could read about the trials and testings of Israel, as well as the blessings they received during these 7 days of UB as well as the 7 weeks count to Pentecost which started on the 4th day of the 7 days of UB in the year which they left Egypt. Do not forget that is also the day they crossed the Red Sea. A day of great victory over sin. It is representative of the day of the wave sheaf offering. Christ/Messiah gained a great victory over death that day as He was accepted by the Father back into eternal life during the Second Covenant terms and conditions. He was returned to the Glory He once had with the Father before the world was, (John 17:5).

So, did Israel remain leaven free during these 7 days? Physically maybe, but spiritually no way. When they allowed spiritual leaven to move in God/Elohim gave them help and even at times fought for them. All this is symbolic of what God/Elohim is doing for the New/Second Covenant Church.

Not all of Israel was fearful and not all wanted to return to sin. But the vast majority did stumble over it. We must not forget that Israel was not alone in this journey. Ex 12:38 says:

“A mixed multitude went up with them also.” (If you are not familiar with this refer to our study on the Mixed Multitude and the Tares.)

What effect did this mixed multitude have on Israel? Numbers 11:4:

“Now the mixed multitude who were among them lusted to intense craving; so, the children of Israel also wept again and said: Who will give us meat to eat?” (Monkey see, monkey do!)

Here Israel not only had to deal with their own shortcomings and weaknesses but also with the bad influence of those amongst them who were not of Israel. Sound familiar. It should. The Second Covenant scriptures calls this equivalent; Tares. They perform the same obstacle to the Church as the mixed multitude did to Israel.

With this under our belt let’s turn to the NT scriptures of 1 Cor 10 before we go to Rev 2 & 3. Here we learn a lot about what we have just read. Let’s actually read verses 1-13.

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2: all **were baptized into Moses** (big point brethren) in the cloud and in the sea, 3: all ate the same spiritual food, 4: and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ/Messiah. 5: But with most of them God/Elohim was not well pleased (many are called but few are chosen), for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness. 6: Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7: And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written; the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8: Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9: nor let us tempt Christ/Messiah, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10: nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11: Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12: Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13: No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God/Elohim *is* faithful, who will not

allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.”

Yes, brethren we must be vigilantly watching. If not, sin will overtake us. Its leaven will consume us and puff us up, so we appear pleasing to the eye but are full of the emptiness of death.

Paul here has concisely prepared the way for our study of the 7 Churches of the Second Marriage Covenant. They all have the same baptism, the same spiritual food, and the same spiritual drink available to them. But do all partake of them and are all of them acceptable to God/Elohim? This will be answered.

Let's now look at the state of spiritual Israel on her 7-week journey to the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost as depicted in the messages to the 7 Churches. We are going to see Christ/Messiah is instructing these 7 Churches on putting out spiritual leaven. Let's get the setting here first. Rev 1:1-20:

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ/Messiah, which God/Elohim gave Him to show His servants; things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John, 2: who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ/Messiah, to all things that he saw. 3: Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near 4: John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Favor and acceptance to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5: and from Jesus Christ/Messiah, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6: and has made us kings and priests to His God/Elohim and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7: Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. 8: I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End, says the Lord/Yehovah, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. 9: I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ/Messiah, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God/Elohim and for the testimony of Jesus Christ/Messiah. 10: I was in the spirit on the Lords/Yehovahs Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11: saying, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, and, what you see, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea. 12: Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13: and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. 14: His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15: His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 16: He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength. 17: And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18: I *am* He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. 19: Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. 20: The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.”

Verse 19 tells 3 things; past, present, and future.

Brethren, we are told here in verse 20 that there are literally 7 churches. Does this mean 7 eras of the same church? Does this mean 7 concurrent different churches? Does this mean any of the other explanations put forth by writers as to their timing and presence over the past 1950 years, give or take a few? Is it important to debate such things? **NO, it isn't!** The lesson we are to learn from this group of 7 Churches and the messages given to



each is very, very clear. Many are called and few are chosen. It's that simple. These 7 churches depict for us the situations and conditions in which Christ/Messiah will work with His bride, those who will be acceptable to Him after the 7-week count to Pentecost. Christ/Messiah is teaching us here that we need to undertake and maintain the state of being unleavened regardless of our surroundings. We are to be able to identify ourselves in these messages and take the necessary steps to prepare ourselves for Him. Watch how clear and crisp His lists of do's and don'ts are. Rev 2:1-7:

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, these things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: 2: I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3: and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4: Nevertheless, I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. 5: Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent. 6: But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7: He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God/Elohim.”

Brethren, can we relate to any of this? We know that we certainly can. He says, I know your works (#2041, *ergon*). It means just that, “work, employment, task.” We are to be employed by our Husband the Christ/Messiah. We are to be doing the things which are pleasing to Him and our Father. This is very personal. Many deceivers over the years have inserted the meaning of another Greek word for the simplicity of *ergon*. They say we are to be doing a #2039, *ergasia*, “a work.” They have used this to take the focus off those being called to Christ/Elohim by the Father, and place it on themselves. That same methodology is used in every walk of life by those who want others to look to them and their great leadership and vision. We are not to do that. Remember this; James tells us, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26).

These works are very personal just as our faith is also very personal. So here we see that the message to the Ephesus Church contains positive and negative comments.

The positive are:

1. They are patient and persevere.
2. They cannot tolerate those who are evil.
3. In fact, they have tested those who pretend to be apostles and have found them to be liars.
4. They labor for Christ's/Messiah's name sake and do not weary in doing so.
5. They hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans.

I ask again, can we relate to any of these?

Many of us display our patience and perseverance by our keeping of the “faith once delivered.” Many of us at times have had no one else to fellowship with outside of a few family members but we have not let down. Many of us have fled from spiritual fornication. We have rejected those who have presented evil doctrine to us. We have tested them and have found them to be liars and have gone to great lengths, to Christ's/Messiah's name sake to warn them of these evil men. In fact, we still do so. We have rejected their system of hierarchy, their self-gratification, and dominion over the called of the Father. Christ's/Messiah's words ring loud and clear, “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men: for you neither go in nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.” (Matt. 23:13)

Yes, we have, and also continue to fight this fight. We live in an age where the Nicolaitan system engulfs not

only the world but also the Church. These thorns and thistles choke the life out of many who are called. These Nicolaitans put themselves and their doctrines between God/Elohim and His called. Their rules and regulations are more important than the Word of God/Elohim. They become the focus of what is right and wrong and their followers who are deceived follow their evil ways. 2 Thessalonians 2:4:

“who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God/Elohim or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God/Elohim in the temple of God/Elohim, showing himself that he is God/Elohim.”

Yes, these *NIKA LAON*, or “he who conquers the people” are to be shown to be liars and not tolerated. Much of this should sound familiar. These works are commendable. They are a lot of work and effort. But they are not enough! Rev 2:4:

“Nevertheless, I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.”

With our involvement in all the outward commendable works we can forget about the inward ones. We can get so caught up in the fight for truth in Christ’s/Messiah’s name that we can forget about our very deeply personal relationship with Him. Our “*protos agape!*” He says the Church has *aphiemi*, “left alone, forsaken, neglected, that love.” Do we understand how important this is to our Husband! Are we enraptured with Him, with spending time with Him, not wanting to be away from Him? Do we awaken in the morning with Him on our minds, and go to sleep at night talking with Him? Do we let Him talk to us during the day from His word and do we spend time talking to Him? Is our relationship so intimate that it is hard to be away for any length of time?

Oh, Brethren, this one can really hurt. We can get so caught up in just the endeavors of life that we can substitute our outward actions of fighting for what is right and true for the tender and devoted relationship we should have with our beloved! Look how He addresses this. Rev 2:5,

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.”

Do you remember how it was when you were just called? We do! Everything else in life became less significant. We wanted to spend almost all our time buried in the bible, listening and learning from Christ/Messiah. We left that after a time. It became more important to debate with others, to serve the congregation, to spend more time working so I had more to give to “the work.”

1 Cor 13:1-2:

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2: And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”

Forsaking our first or foremost love is a terrible thing. It can cause us to be removed from the favor and acceptance of our Husband and thus our ability to be His bride. We must always do these “first works” as well as not leaving the others undone. We must become the *tamin* or whole package. So, Christ’s/Messiah’s corrective measure to Ephesus is to 1) repent and 2) do the first works.

In verses 8-11 of Revelation, we read His message to the Church in Smyrna.

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, these things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: 9: I know your works, tribulation, and poverty; and *I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. 10: Do not fear any of those things which you are

about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”

Here we see a Church in a very different situation than Ephesus. Ephesus had outgoing works, things they initiated and pursued. But here is Smyrna we see those who are on the receiving end of much hardship. Her works are; tribulation, poverty, and being blasphemed by the great ones of the congregation of Satan.

These false apostles, deceitful workers, angels of light, ministers of Satan persecuted those called of the Father who rejected their evil doctrines and stuck with Him. This tribulation they endure is #2346 *thlibo* “to suffer affliction, to be troubled, has reference to suffering due to the pressure of circumstances or the antagonisms of persons.” Vines also says of this word, “refers almost invariably to that which comes upon them from without.” Her poverty is #4432 *ptocheia*. Vines says of it; “destitution.”

We find these same words spoken by Paul in 2 Cor 8:1-2 and verse 9:

“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the favor and acceptance of God/Elohim bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.” 9: “For you know the favor and acceptance of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”

Over the millennia, the Church has gone through much tribulation, much poverty, and much maligning. But as verses 10 & 11 of 2 Cor 8 tell us, we must be willing to complete what we have started in spite of circumstances. That is why Christ/Messiah tells Smyrna, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.” Why?

In Rev 2:8 He encourages them by stating what He is about to tell them comes from He who is the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life. Continuing in verse 10 of Rev 2:

“... Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Yes, we may die by the hand and the efforts of those who are of the synagogue of Satan. That is not very appealing to me. How about us? Well, it has happened in the past and will happen again. Will we be fearful of such things? Will they prevent us from completing the work which was started in us?

We have heard some say there is nothing negative or in need of repair in Smyrna. If that is the case, why does Christ/Messiah say to her, “He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” What is she to overcome? The fear of the things which are about to come upon her to cause her to suffer. What will it take to make us quit?

Remember Israel the 3rd day out. Ex 14:10-12:

“And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So, they were **very afraid**, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord/Yehovah. 11: Then they said to Moses, “Because *there were* no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? 12: *Is* this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For *it would have been* better for us to

serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.”

After we come out of sin and are led by our Husband who has started a good work in us we surely will be tested by the Devil. A little bit of fear let in will grow into a very compelling thing if we let it. We must never sound retreat on what we have started. We must move forward, we must overcome, we must be faithful unto death. Yes, endure the tribulation and poverty and stand against the blasphemy of the angels of light. Rev 2:12-17:

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, these things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: 13: I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne *is*. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14: But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. 15: Thus, you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. 16: Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. 17: He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat (physically located in the Ark of the Covenant). And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it*.”

After reading this remember that there is one of the seven lampstands of Christ/Messiah in their midst. He starts out this message to Pergamos by stating that He has the sharp two-edged sword. (#4501, *rhomphaia*, of large size) A two-edged sword is used for heavy battle. It cuts going forward or backward. It is not what one would use for fencing or sparing, but for major battle. This Church is not only in the midst of leaven, she is full of leaven. In spite of all that, Christ/Messiah gives her the opportunity to repent. He specifically tells her she tolerates those who hold the doctrine of Balaam. What is the doctrine of Balaam? 2 Peter 2:15:

“They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the *son* of Beor, **who loved the wages of unrighteousness;**” (Follow the money)

Jude 11:

“Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain (murderer), have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit (greed), and perished in the rebellion of Korah (dominion).”

The doctrine or teaching of Balaam is; that for a price one will give unrighteous counsel which will result in those called of the Father to stumble and sin. They teach others to worship God/Elohim by keeping pagan practices. Pergamos also tolerates those who would have dominion over the brethren, who become their benefactors stepping between them and God/Elohim. This is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. “You need to go through the great ones to get to God/Elohim.” With this said Christ/Messiah tells us that Pergamos still holds fast to His name and did not deny His faith.

So here we see a Church which still faithfully does things in His name but allows deceivers to work in her midst, being surrounded by the ministers of Satan. Christ/Messiah tells Pergamos to repent quickly of these two egregious sins and let’s not forget her murderous ways after the works of Cain. She is to put her leaven out immediately. Many of us found ourselves tolerating this very thing. We found ourselves in the midst of Satan’s synagogue. Their false apostles were teaching the brethren it was okay to eat unclean things and fellowship with those who worship at the altars of demons. Their greed and lust for all things unrighteous has led many of the called away from God/Elohim. We are to use the two-edged sword, the sword of the mouth of God/Elohim, which is the Word of God/Elohim, to rid ourselves of such sinful surroundings.

Christ/Messiah now moves on to address the condition in Thyatira. Rev 2:18-29:

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, these things says the Son of God/Elohim, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: 19: I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and *as* for your works, the last *are* more than the first. 20: Nevertheless, I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols 21: And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 22: Indeed, I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. 23: I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. 24: **Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say,** I will put on you no other burden. 25: But hold fast what you have till I come. 26: And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations. 27: He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels as I also have received from My Father; 28: and I will give him the morning star. 29: He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches.”

So, we read that there are those in Thyatira who love others, serve others, keep the faith, and who are patient to persevere. Christ/Messiah tells them their works are stronger than when they started. That is a wonderful pattern to strive for. But we see that they allow a woman to claim to be a prophet and let her teach and beguile the called of the Father. The consequences of these actions are very severe and far reaching. Christ/Messiah says this must be repented of, for her teachings lead to spiritual adultery. The other thing He has against them is that some know what is called the deep things of Satan. Brethren these are sins which go far beyond what we would associate with normal worldly lusts and actions. We need not elaborate.

Look how individual all this is. Later part of verse 23, “... And I will give to **each one of you** according to **your works**. Verse 24, “Now to **you** I say and to the rest in Thyatira ...”

So, He says; repent, overcome, and keep His works until the end. Here are brethren who function in loving, faithful, service while in the midst of a perverse church. He is not happy that they tolerate their surroundings. Imagine that!

So much to understand about today can be gained from these messages of Christ/Messiah. In Rev 3:1-6, we read about Sardis.

“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, these things says He who has the seven spirits of God/Elohim and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2: Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God/Elohim. 3: Remember therefore how you have received and heard; **hold fast and repent**. Therefore, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. 4: **You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.** 5: He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 6: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

A dead church! A church which has little recognition as the body of Christ/Messiah. As the body without the spirit is dead so faith without works is dead also. This church has very little in the way of works. Yet Christ/Messiah encourages them to be watchful and strengthen the things which remain which are almost dead. He tells the members to remember! Go back and think about what you received and heard at your onset. Don’t

let it fade away but hold fast to it and repent. Believe the bible! On the one positive note, He says there are a few (puny number) who will make it. This represents a church which has gone from having truth to not having it. So many today have been beguiled by unrighteous deception and have not maintained the love of the truth, so they receive strong delusion that they believe the lie of Satan and his pleasures.

Now we come to one of the most turned to sections of the scriptures by the hypocrites. Rev: 3:7-13:

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, these things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens: 8: I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9: Indeed, I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie, indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10: Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11: Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. 12: He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God/Elohim, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God/Elohim and the name of the city of My God/Elohim, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God/Elohim. And *I will write on him* My new name. 13: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

It is obvious why so many organizations wish to claim this name and attitude. Look at the simplicity and humility of these people.

1. They have kept Christ's/Messiah's word.
2. They have not denied His name.
3. They have kept His command to persevere.

They are absolutely aware that it is through His strength, that it is He, who opens and no one shuts. It is He alone who sets before them an open door. These brethren do not suffer from delusions of grandeur. They know it is He who has the key of David just as He says, and not some surrogate or wannabe. To clearly understand what is said here to the Philadelphian, it is necessary to better translate verse 8:

“I know your works. See, I have placed before you a door being opened which no one is able to shut, because you hold little power, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.”

These humble folks take their instruction from God/Elohim Himself. They do not listen to the lies of the great ones who are of the synagogue of Satan. They have done well at keeping leaven out because they believe their Head. They are true sojourners going out often. Christ/Messiah gives them a very special promise in verse 10. He will keep them from the trial of the great tribulation.

“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11: Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”

We should long to be numbered amongst these called of the Father who are known for their love for the brethren as their name so readily depicts. We are to make every effort at obeying our Husband and deeply desire to serve His body. We hope it is becoming obvious to us all, the language used by Christ/Messiah in these messages is to all 7 churches, and is in the contextual timing of the very end of the age just prior to His return “But hold fast what you have till I come” and “Behold I come quickly.”

So, let's move on to His last message, Rev 3:14-21:

“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, these things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God/Elohim: 15: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16: So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17: Because you say, I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. 18: I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19: As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent. 20: Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21: To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”

A few years back while doing a study my thoughts (Brian) wandered to this section of scriptures. I turned to it and read it through for probably the hundredth time. But on this occasion, it was different. For now, I saw myself being talked about. These scriptures became very real and personal to me. I had been taught by my keepers that in fact I was a Philadelphian and not one of these; “other six inferior churches.” I knew in my heart that day that I was not sincere in that understanding. You see, I was part of an organization that searched land and sea seeking proselytes who would be “of like mind.” I held the belief that we were the one and only true “church of God.” My organization had all the truth figured out because we were special. We had nothing to learn from others for we were the teachers. We had lots of money, buildings, TV programs, magazines, etc. We were it!

On this particular day, the scales fell off my eyes. It was one of those moments in time which needs little words to describe. I am sure we have all had them from time to time. My actions had not shown the depth of love for others required but in many instances contempt. For even a tax collector loves his own. **Here Christ/Messiah told me and the rest of the Laodiceans that I did not have one redeeming quality to mention.** Not one! Just imagine that for a moment. **All the other churches had at least one good quality mentioned but not Laodicea.** He said to me, Rev 3:18:

“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.”

It was on that day that God/Elohim truly allowed me personally to go beyond as we are taught in Hebrews 6:3. Many trials started after that. My God/Elohim opened my eyes that day and kept His promise to rebuke and chasten me for my own good.

Christ/Messiah says to the Laodicean,

1. Be zealous and repent.
2. Forget your organization, your great ones, and your delusions of grandeur and open the door to your mind so I can come in and teach you Myself.

To say I was puffed up like leaven would be a gross understatement. For the first time in my life I realized that when Christ/Messiah told His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees that He was talking to me today. I became a repentant Laodicean. I decided I would let Christ/Messiah and only Him teach me through one on one bible study. Me and Him sitting at the table. In time, Linda and I realized we must share with others, the things God/Elohim had taught us. It was all new. We had never reached out to others that in that way before.

We had to show genuine outgoing concern for all the others called of the Father. We had to divest ourselves of all our spiritual prejudices. We knew then that we were to be a sojourner amongst these 7 churches of God/Elohim and not isolated in one somewhere waiting for the return of our Savior. We had now become a part of the body of Christ/Messiah in action as others were becoming as well.

Our Husband is calling us out by name. Revealing Himself to us in a very intimate way. We were not in need of a surrogate, a benefactor, a leader; for the Head was now going to nourish us Himself. To whom much is given brethren, much is expected. We must all do our part in love, one unto the other. Christ/Messiah is unleavening His Church today. But He is not doing it as most would suppose. Instead of keeping us in a particular “church organizations” and then removing the leaven, He is removing us from the leaven. That is the only way to do it because of the amount of steadfast sin accumulated in the churches. He is building His body at this time. He is adding the feet, hands, legs, and all the other parts. His body is maturing and coming of age. He is calling us out of the sheep folds which have been overcome by robbers and thieves.

So here in Rev 2 & 3 He tells us what we will see at the end of the age. Where do we fit in brethren? What are we to do? 2 Tim 3:1-5 & 1 Tim 6:3-5

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy 3: unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good 4: traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God/Elohim. 5: having a form of godliness but denying its power. **And from such people turn away!**”

And:

“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ/Messiah, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, 4: he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, 5: useless wrangling’s of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of gain*. **From such withdraw yourself.**”

Now let’s read about the actions of those who are self-important who view and use the Church for gain. Ezekial 34:1-12:

“And the word of the Lord/Yehovah came to me, saying, 2: Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, thus says the Lord/Adonay God/Yehovah to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3: You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, *but* you do not feed the flock. 4: The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. 5: So, they were scattered because *there was* no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. 6: My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching *for them*. 7: Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord/Yehovah: 8: *as* I live, says the Lord/Adonay God/Yehovah, surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because *there was* no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock; 9: therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord/Yehovah! 10: Thus, says the Lord/Adonay God/Yehovah: Behold, I *am* against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My



flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them. 11: For thus says the Lord/Adonay God/Yehovah: Indeed, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. 12: As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.”

How does a shepherd seek his scattered flock? John 10:1-4:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2: But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3: To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and **HE CALLS HIS OWN SHEEP BY NAME AND LEADS THEM OUT.** 4: And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”

In verse 1, notice the setting: Thieves and Robbers! And they use the Church for gain! A shepherd calls to his sheep. He has an intimate or personal relationship with each of them. They know and recognize each other. Rev 3:20:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

Oh yes, we live in perilous times. As a result of that the churches are for the most part laced with leaven. Christ/Messiah is careful to point out, that even in that state there is still some good mixed in for some part. So, what are we to learn about our behavior from the messages to the 7 churches? Christ/Messiah has left us with a very clear road map to following Him, a clear trail as to our personal behavior, as to what He expects of us. If we are to be counted among the firstborn we must meet at a minimum the criteria He gives us here in Rev 2 & 3.

Let’s look at the good works we are to be doing. In each message, He closes with a promise if we do one thing; OVERCOME. Rev 3:21:

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”

We are required to do what He did. Who and what did He overcome? The Greek word used in these instances is #3528, *nikao*, from #3529; to subdue (literally or figuratively). It is translated: conquer, overcome, prevail, get the victory. What we are being told here is not a passive thing. It is a war, a war we cannot win on our own. We need help. Rev 12:11:

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”

By His blood! Without that we are helpless. Do we understand the extent of His sacrifice? If Christ/Messiah had sinned, He would never have been able to return to the glory He had with the Father before the earth was and from eternity. That is an awesome sacrifice! We must understand it completely to effectively use it in the word of our testimony. That is listed here with His shed blood. It takes two things. His shed blood and the word of our testimony. One part is His the other is ours. In the messages to the churches He tells us how to do our part.

So, who and what are we overcoming? Rev 12:9:

“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

We overcome the Devil by the blood of Christ/Messiah. He made that possible by His victory over death but we have to overcome the Devil’s deceit personally.

Romans 12:21 says:

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Just look at the vivid opportunities that the churches have to do this in the messages to us in Rev 2 & 3.

1 John 2:14:

“I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God/Elohim abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.”

Does the Word of God/Elohim abide in us so strongly that we are skilled in wielding the sword of truth in overcoming the deception of the Devil? We do not war against flesh and blood. We war against the Devil and his minions who have, and are deceiving the called of the Father. Satan has deceived the whole world. It is our part to expose that deception in our works so all can see. Remember faith without works is dead.

We are told in 1 John 5:4:

“For whatever is born of God/Elohim overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.”

So, by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony we overcome the Devil and are willing to die for it. We read in the messages to the churches that the brethren are persecuted by the synagogue of Satan, that Satan dwells among them, that these are those who teach the deep things of Satan or his doctrines to the churches. This is a real war. Remember thieves and robbers have taken over the sheepfold. These liars use deceit and guile to take control. They preach love of this world and hate for those who do not agree with them. We are to flee from that spiritual leaven, but we are to love our brother at the same time. We are to lay down our life for him. It is not enough to just flee from it. We are to follow Christ’s/Messiah’s example. After He had been tested in the wilderness and then was strengthened and nourished by God/Elohim, He didn’t stay there in the wilderness, did He? He returned to confront the liars, hypocrites, blind fools, offspring of the serpent, or as Paul calls them; false apostles, deceitful workers, and angels of light; who do not enter the Kingdom and prevent those who are trying to enter from doing so.

Yes, we must be willing to lay down our lives for our brothers. We were once captives but now are free. Have we abandoned the weak, the sick, the broken, those that were driven away and are lost?

In our zeal to flee the spiritual fornication that the churches have with the world and the Devil we hope we have not lost sight of the fact that our brothers and sisters who are called by the Father are being ruled with force and cruelty.

Christ/Messiah tells us in Rev 2:6, 15:

“But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”

15: “Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”

This doctrine of inserting a man between the Husband and the bride should be hated by all who love their Husband. This is the doctrine of hierarchy. It is no different from going to a confessional and confessing your sins to a Catholic priest and expecting forgiveness. Look what Christ/Messiah had to do immediately after the Passover and foot washing. Luke 22:24-26:

“Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. 25: And He said to them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors.”

Do we get that? Those who are being lorded over actually are deceived to think their oppressors are benefactors.

26 “But not so *among* you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who leads as he who serves.”

No, we do not fight or hate those who are deceived into following such things. We fight those who are doing the deceiving just as Christ/Messiah did by using the Word of God/Elohim to expose their evil ways. He spent a lot of time with the sheep. He taught the masses who were around Him the Word of God/Elohim and challenged the leaven of the Pharisees and Scribes. We are to do no less. We are to be spending this time in the wilderness developing our skills in using the whole armor of God/Elohim. And we are not to put a bushel over our heads. One of the greatest examples of how a servant of God/Elohim can get into a bad attitude and forget about his brothers can be found in 1 Kings 19:11-17:

“Then He said, go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord/Yehovah. And behold, the Lord/Yehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord/Yehovah, *but* the Lord/Yehovah *was* not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, *but* the Lord/Yehovah *was* not in the earthquake; 12: and after the earthquake a fire, *but* the Lord/Yehovah *was* not in the fire; and after the fire **a still small voice**. 13: So, it was, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice *came* to him, and said, what are you doing here, Elijah? 14: And he said, I have been very zealous for the Lord/Yehovah God/Elohim of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life. 15: Then the Lord/Yehovah said to him: Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazeal *as* king over Syria. 16: Also, you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi *as* king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint *as* prophet in your place. 17: It shall be *that* whoever escapes the sword of Hazeal, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill.” (In other words, go and be about your work I have given you to do.)

And oh, by the way Elijah, verse 18:

“Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

What a lesson for us today brethren! Forget the woe is me pity party. We do not and will not know the vast majority of our brothers and sisters who are called by the Father at this time. Please, do not ever think you are the only one. That is actually a very bad attitude and in fact negates the trials and tribulations and struggles of everyone else in the same boat. It will eventually lead us to “not” doing what we have been called to do.

1 John 2:1-11:

“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father and Jesus Christ/Messiah the righteous. 2: And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. 3: Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4: He who says, I know Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5: But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God/Elohim is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 6: He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 7: Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. 8: Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. 9: He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. 10: He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11: But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”

So, to all of us, wherever we are found, we have a cumulative message as to what our relationship is to the body of Christ/Messiah.

1. We are to labor in Christ's/Messiah's name (those who are called by the Father) and not weary in it.
2. We are to be patient and persevere with our brothers and sisters.
3. We must not endure those who are evil.
4. We must test those who pretend they are sent by God/Elohim to see if they are liars.
5. We must hate the deeds, the doctrines of the Nicolaitans of ruling the brethren with force and cruelty and feeding on everything the brethren have. Their doctrines of dominion and greed have caused many to stumble on their way to the kingdom.
6. We are never to allow anyone or anything to come between ourselves and our Husband. Our first love must be as fresh at the end as it was in the beginning.
7. We must be willing to suffer tribulation, poverty, and even death to stand against the blasphemy of those who call themselves spiritual and of the body, who in actuality are members of the synagogue (or place of learning) of Satan.
8. We must hold fast to the name of Christ/Messiah and remain in His faith.
9. We must love and serve the brethren wherever they are found. We are not at war with the brethren, but with the implements of Satan who deceives them and keeps them captive.
10. We must be strong in the Word of God/Elohim and not deny His Plan of Salvation so that we will have an open door before us to keep His command to have love for one another.
11. We are to be very eager and willing to repent of our own nakedness and blindness as we grow in the favor, acceptance and knowledge of our Lord/Yehovah Jesus, the Christ/Messiah.
12. We must always guard the door, the gate to our mind so that we are able to rightly divide the word of truth so we can keep the leaven of Satan and his false ministers of righteousness out.

It is important for us to remain positive and strong during this ever-darkening age. We must keep our focus on the light of the world, our Savior Jesus Christ/Messiah. We must make great efforts to keep leaven out and when we find it in us we must act immediately to remove it. He has shown us the way. Just as ancient Israel was accompanied by a mixed multitude who caused them to sin, so too are we mixed in among tares who look so much like ourselves. We must be very careful in how we deal with them so as not to endanger our brothers. There is a mighty need for those who have the gift of being a Pastor. Christ/Messiah has given gifts to each and every one of us in His body. He has done so for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, for the uplifting of the body, till we all come to the unity of the faith which was once delivered to mankind in the holy scriptures and thus to the knowledge of the Son of God/Elohim, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature and fullness of Christ/Messiah.

And why are we to do so? Ephesians 4:14-16 tells us loud and clear.

“that we should no longer be 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, 15: but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head; Christ/Messiah, 16: from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what **every** joint supplies, according to the effective working by which **every part does its share**, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Our seven-day process for keeping leaven out is only the preparation, the starting point for putting that to the test during our personal count to Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks, the resurrection of those who have died in Christ/Messiah and the instantaneous change for those yet alive who have been zealous for their Husband and who have kept His commands. This can only begin with the sacrifice of Christ/Messiah being applied to us after the Father calls us to Him at this time.

We cannot start the 7 days of UB without the Passover of our Beloved, the Lamb of the Fathers household. It is His shed blood on the 14th of Abib and our ingesting of His body and blood on that day which enables us to enter the 7 days being unleavened. Please do not lump His sacrifice with ours.

Remember it is the **word of our testimony** which helps us to overcome the Devil along with the **blood of the Lamb** of God. So, doctrine is important. John 7:16-17: “Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but He who sent Me (the Fathers doctrines). If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the **doctrine**, whether it is from God/Elohim or *whether* I speak on My own.”

Many perils await us, just as many have in the past. We must remain ever so vigilant and alert to keeping leaven out. That is why Israel started the seven days with a nightly vigil, for the Devil is sure to follow with his destructive lying deceit. This vigil is not about eating, about ingesting, but in reality, about keeping things out. We, as the body of Christ/Messiah must understand these examples for they were written for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages have come.

Therefore, brethren let us clean out the old leaven which may still be lingering so that we may become a new lump, so we are truly unleavened. The blood of Christ/Messiah has washed us clean. Therefore, let's maintain that state and keep the feast. We cannot do that with the leaven of Satan but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Make full use of this time in the wilderness, grow in the favor, acceptance and knowledge of Christ/Messiah, learn to use the armor of God/Elohim and when you have become skilled in it so you can defend yourself and your brothers and sisters who are held captive under the workers of deceit and wicked shepherds

Be about our Father's and Brother's business, for if we carry that sword of truth and try to only save our own life with it, then we will perish by it.

Always be willing to lay down your life for your brother whether you feel he is worthy of it or not. For not one of us was or is worthy of Christ's/Messiah's sacrifice on our behalf.

So much more could be said but we leave it to you to pick up from where we have left off. Have a peaceful and successful count to Pentecost.

Our peace we give to you.

Brian and Linda