

What Is the Body of Christ/Messiah and How Does It Function?

February 6, 2014

Dear Brethren,

We hope you are all prospering and growing in the grace (favor and acceptance) and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ/Messiah. That is the basic tenet of our calling during these second covenant times. It is an incredibly personal directive to each and every one of us. No one can do it for us, but we are all to assist each other in achieving it.

Philippians 2:12 clearly instructs us as to our personal involvement in the process: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The personal commitment is of a singular nature, but the end result as well as the process at many times is collective, for we are part of the body of Christ/Messiah.

In the past number of years I have heard this term (body of Christ/Messiah) used more increasingly by many of the so-called splinter groups and by individuals. At times I get the impression some are using it as a backhand rebuke to what we refer to as the church. Almost like they are of the body and the rest are not.

That is dangerous thinking. If I am present when this happens, I seldom let it go by without asking what exactly do you mean by the body of Christ/Messiah. I have received just about every imaginable reaction to doing so—from anger, to bewilderment, to an actual straightforward answer. When I actually get an answer, I will usually follow up with a request to show me where they get it from in Scripture, as to a pattern of it.

A doctrine as important as what and who the body of Christ/Messiah is should be on the tip of our tongues as those who have been granted or permitted to go beyond the milk of the word. This is not a lesson in deciding what individual is in the body or not, but who and what that collective body is and our responsibilities to each other as part of it.

What we can certainly do is recognize those of the body who are making an attempt at being a part of it by their good actions, works and fruit, as we will see as we close out this study. However, we must always remember we are all a work in progress and that we all stumble at times along the way.

Heresy and evil deeds are not stumbling, so do not be confused. There is to be no tolerance of either. Keep in mind this applies only to salvation issues. If these spiritual diseases are allowed to invade the body, it will become very ill.

To me the go-to verse as to the body of Christ's/Messiah's description, is found in Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:22-23: "And He (the Father) put all under His (the Son's) feet, and gave Him head over all the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

Well, there is a straightforward answer to our question, right? The church is the body of Christ/Messiah! Time to move on!

Not exactly. We are not to form a doctrine based on one verse from Scripture but rather from patterns of scriptures. We will see that lesson proven today as we look at these two simple enough scriptures. So let's apply the directive as to growing in favor and acceptance and knowledge to these two scriptures. The original wording found in the Greek is as follows: ". . . But also in the coming (age) and all things subjected under the feet of Him, and Him gave over all things to the church, which is the body of Him, the fullness of the (One) all things with all things filling."

From Jay P. Green Interlinear: "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him filling all things in all."

Verse 22 is a simple pattern to follow through the scriptures as to its relevance and establishment in the plan of salvation. Most of you who are reading this have a good understanding that the Greek word used here for church is *ekklesia* or #1577 in *Strong's*. It is a compilation of two Greek words: *ek* "out of" and *klesis* "a calling."

The simple understanding of it is "a calling out of." Most refer to it as "our calling" or "the called-out ones." That, however, is really not accurate in that it could relay an impression not stated to someone new to it. It means "a calling out of," which is very, very, important to our accurate understanding of what the church is and what the body of Christ/Messiah is.

All too often today many brethren do not apply an accurate meaning, as in their use of it in conversations and such. For instance, we often hear folks say, "We are going to church." The correct use here would be we are going to church services.

"Too picky," some might say. My response is: "Not picky enough," as we are about to see. If we don't know who we are, and what the intent of the "calling out of" is, then we do not understand our identity and what we are called out of.

With that said, many would respond, we are called out of sin. Really? So have you sinned since you were called out? If so, then you would not be truly called out of sin would you?

Many have taken on the world's connotation of what a church is. However, it is not a building, place, organization or corporate entity. The Greek had two uses for the word and, unfortunately, the secular use of an assembly or congregation has also stuck.

Church, or *ekklesia*, is a name given to the individuals who have been called by the Father unto His son. We can read that in John 6:65 and 6:44.

Before we move forward with this study of the body, let's take a few minutes and review this basic doctrine. First of all, Christ/Messiah does not do the calling or drawing. It is the Father who does that to display a very important pattern in Scripture. He is a father seeking a bride for His son, just as Abraham's example was for Isaac.

The reason the Father does the calling is that we are to be of "His seed" before we can marry "His Son", for we are to be after "His kind."

The prime directive of a husband and wife is to be fruitful and multiply. Unfortunately, Satan has convinced the freethinkers in the world that is not the case, so we see states sanctioning marrying men to men and women to women.

It is also important to establish that Jesus is the only begotten of the Father physically. It was actually the Word of God/Elohim who divested Himself of His glory who became Jesus the Christ/Messiah who created all other things that are created (John 1:1-4). We should never lose sight of that, for there is a terrible heresy being spread in some sectors of the church, which is teaching He was not the Creator in spite of all the scriptures to the contrary.

If we do not use the scriptures ourselves through personal Bible study, we may be led astray. We must all be good Bereans and check up on what others are attempting to teach us. Our understanding of the plan of salvation is hinged upon who and what the Father and the Son are, and what Their relationship is. In turn, we can know what They are doing with us in it.

In the overall context surrounding John 6:44 and 65 we see many disciples of Christ/Messiah falling away because of what? Unbelief, as verse 64 clearly tells us.

John 6:64: "But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him."

We must understand that there are qualifying criteria attached to the "calling out of" by the Father.

So what do the scriptures tell us here that we are called out of? Out of unbelief! That means an individual can't be a member of the church unless they are truly called out of unbelief. So what belief are they called into?

John 6:47: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life."

This simply means that we need to believe that Jesus Christ/Messiah is our source, or doorway, to eternal life. Salvation will come only through Him. This chapter of John is filled with that information. Jesus Christ/Messiah truly is the bread of life.

Verses 36-40: But I said to you that you have seen Me (all the miracles) and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come (needs to come) to Me, and the one who comes (not all will) to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may (not guaranteed) have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Why "may"? Because believing is just the first step, then come repentance and baptism and receiving the holy spirit, and then growing in favor and acceptance and knowledge. This is intended to culminate in our preparing ourselves to be the bride of Christ/Messiah through our righteous acts, as Revelation 19 tells us. As members of the body, we have lots of work to do, as we will discuss in this study. Each and every one of us.

John 6:45: "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be taught by God/Elohim. Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me."

Did we get that qualifying statement here? We need to learn from the Father in order to come to Christ/Messiah. To what extent is that learning? What it takes is for us to come from unbelief into belief that our sins have caused the death of Jesus and that He has died for us and has become our Savior. We then are fully cognizant of what we are to repent of and then be baptized into His death and come up out of the watery grave into His resurrection to a new life with the spirit of God dwelling in us.

That is when we begin to grow in favor and acceptance and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ/Messiah. We then come to a clearer understanding of our relationship to Him as a Husband and our responsibilities in such. At least, we are supposed to.

You will often hear me mention the "doctrines of the Father." Christ/Messiah teaches us that very thing in John.

John 7:15-17: "And the Jews marveled, saying, how does this man know letters, having never studied (under us in our school)? Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. 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."

Never let anyone water down your understanding by convincing you doctrine is not important. We are told that we need the Father to be able to have the Son and the Son to be able to have the Father. They are inseparable in that.

It is a simple equation. The Father calls us out of unbelief to prepare us as His children. Not all follow through on that calling. Even fewer embark on the path to growing in favor and acceptance and knowledge. We are not just to believe in Christ/Messiah but also to function just as He did. He then does the choosing as to who will be His bride, His eternal helpmate, in the household of the Father.

It is a qualifying process which Satan the devil likes to confuse through worldly philosophies and outright deceit. That is why after we are chosen we need to remain faithful, as Revelation 14 teaches us.

Revelation 17:14 "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."

Once again this process starts with the Father making the attempt to call us out of unbelief. That is a big step forward. Until He is successful in that, there will not be any further growing as to being one of His children. That is a defining moment in our calling, for only after that can we come to an understanding of the rest of the process.

His spirit leads us at that time. After this, we can start the growth into the fullness of the stature of Christ/Messiah. Will all who are called of the Father complete that? No! Because we are told that in this part of the plan of salvation many will be called and few chosen.

This understanding of the Scriptures is in no way a put-down to any one of us. Our calling at this time is for a very special purpose and function in the household of the Father.

We have often covered the résumé of the bride of Christ/Messiah in Proverbs 31:10-31. In fact, at the Feast of Tabernacles location this past year we had an incredible interactive study of it with all present. The level of involvement and contribution was exceptional. The theme was to convert the physical attributes recorded there to spiritual applications.

In Proverbs 31:29 we are told: "Many daughters have done well but you excel them all."

That is what our Husband-to-be is looking for at this time. He is doing the choosing. Keep in mind, however, that He commends many daughters who did not excel but did very well.

There is a special designation for them as well, just not filling the functions of the bride. We have talked about that often in the past. The point I am making is that each and every one of us must never give up trying to excel in our relationship with our Husband/Savior, Jesus the Christ/Messiah.

We must have a very close relationship with our Father as well. We have been given an open door to both relationships and to the opportunity to grow in grace and knowledge.

Please keep in mind that door can close to us if we do not respond, or do respond and then become lazy in it, as well as for many other reasons. All of them depend on us, for Christ/Messiah has told us He will never leave nor forsake us. We are the ones who do the leaving and forsaking.

We are told in Hebrews 6:3 that we will be granted or permitted to move on beyond the milk of the word if the Father decides it is best for us in our calling. If that happens, we will be growing towards being mature individuals in our relationship with God/Elohim and also in our level of accountability. Once again we have discussed this in great length in the past.

Actually, there are two times in our calling in which the Father grants or permits us to move beyond a certain level. Let's read them both.

John 6:65: "And He said, Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

Kind of throws hot coals on the preacher standing before the crowd screaming out, "Come to Jesus," doesn't it?

Hebrews 6:3: "And this we will do if God/Elohim permits."

We will look at this shortly. But, with this basic understanding of being called out of unbelief into belief in Jesus Christ by the Father and a time period of growth and qualifying, let's return to Ephesians 1:22-23.

I hope after this we can think of the word *ekklesia*, translated "church" in English, as being "called out of unbelief" when we read it in the Scriptures. It will change your outlook on the significance of it.

For instance; when you read a salutation that says, "Greetings to the church at Ephesus," hopefully you will now read in your mind, "Greetings to the called out of unbelief at Ephesus." It really helps to personalize who is being spoken to, and what their purpose is.

We have addressed verse 22 to the extent we need to for this study, so let's now address 23.

Ephesians 1:23: "Which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

We are talking about Christ/Messiah here lest there be any confusion as we will see in greater detail shortly in Colossians. Unfortunately, most folks skip right over what verse 23 here in Ephesians 1 is teaching us. It is very important as we will see. The first part is simple: His body is the church, the called out of unbelief.

Let me reiterate we should not apply the Greek secular use to the word "church"—*ekklesia*—which is the impersonal assembly or congregation. We were never called out of unbelief as a congregation or an assembly by the Father. To think so is unscriptural, for we are called out of unbelief individually. We are to seek out our own salvation; we are talking a one-on-one relationship with the Father and the Son. Satan would have us be confused on this point so that we can lazily depend on another and thus be able to blame another for any shortcomings. He is very clever and has established the philosophies and traditions of men to attempt to deceive us.

What most gloss over here in verse 23 is the qualifying and defining statement as to the body of Christ/Messiah: "The fullness of Him who fills all in all." We can find this phrase "fills all in all" mentioned at key times of instruction to us. It is used of both the Father and the Son. Remember They are one. Ephesians 6 expresses the same intent in regard to the Father.

Verse 6: "One God/Elohim and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

This is very important to understanding what and who the body of Christ/Messiah is. So who are we talking about here in verse 23 when it refers to the fullness of Him? The Father; the Son; or both of them?

Colossians 2:8-10: "Beware lest anyone cheat (plunder, rob) you through philosophies and empty deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ/Messiah. For in Him (Christ/Messiah) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead/Elohim bodily (or in His body); and you are complete (or made complete) in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

So the answer is we can't be in the fullness of Christ/Messiah unless we have both the Father and the Son. Otherwise we would be incomplete! The body of Christ/Messiah will have both, not just one. To be so would be incomplete or partially full.

Christ's/Messiah's body will be representative of all those who have completed the process of being called out of unbelief, and who have finished the qualifying process of being washed by the water of the Word, whom He has made holy and without blemish. Let me read these verses from the Jay P. Green *Interlinear* and you will see why I like reading from it on a personal level:

"Fullness" here in verse 9 is #4138 in *Strong's: pleroma*. It is the same Greek word used in Ephesians 1:23. It means repletion or completion. Thus it is obvious that the fullness of the Godhead/Elohim is replete or complete with the Father and the Son, in His body. That is a huge understanding. It also tells us here that, "having been filled (#4137 *plero*, to cram, level up, finish) you are in Him." The NKJ says, "And you are complete in Him." That is very accurate.

The big question is: Are we completely filled in Him, as in His body, from the time we are called out of unbelief by the Father?

The answer should be clear to all: No! It is only after we have completed the qualifying process of the bride of Christ/Messiah. We will then be "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" as Ephesians 5:30 teaches us. Thus we will be the second Eve and He the second Adam in a spiritual focus and reality. To get there, we need more than just belief, don't we? We need faith, as the preceding verses in Colossians 2 tell us.

Colossians 2:5-7: "For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ/Messiah (now; both belief and faith in Christ/Messiah.) As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in Him, rooted and built

up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught (by the Father's doctrines) abounding in it with thanksgiving."

Colossians 2:5-10 are a set of scriptures that define the instruction found in Ephesians 1:22-23.

The process started by the Father calling us out of unbelief is finished and completed as we grow and mature in the favor and acceptance and knowledge of Jesus Christ/Messiah, who thus qualifies us to be in the fullness of His body. This is a wonderful promise from both the Father and the Son.

John 14:23: "Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me (has His commandments and keeps them, verse 21) he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

They will never leave nor forsake us, as we mentioned earlier. We hold that card ourselves. We do the leaving and forsaking just as the beguiled Eve did to her husband Adam. She let Satan in between her and Adam. There is only one Head of the body who has all rule and authority. He is our Husband and Savior, with no surrogates allowed.

Ephesians 5:25-27: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ/Messiah also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Feeling a little short of that? Good, for we are not able to accomplish it on our own. We need to do our utmost best and He will finish it for us. That's a promise in Scripture. He empowers those of us called out of unbelief to grow in favor and acceptance and knowledge.

There is a very personal message here, but also much more. However, it takes both; belief and faith to do righteous works. There comes a time in our calling, in our conversion from unbelief to belief, that we are expected to contribute to the overall well-being of the body of Christ/Messiah. Babies in Christ/Messiah can't do this, for they are unskilled in the gifts they have been given.

Each and every one of us who has been called by the Father to Christ/Messiah is given at least one gift to assist the body. If you are one of those people who proclaim they have no gift, then you are proclaiming you are not of Christ/Messiah. You are a lazy little kid who wants to just lie back and let everyone else do all the work necessary to sustain you. Not a good state of mind to be in.

Let's look at it spelled out in Ephesians 4. These are very encouraging verses of instruction to each of us individually and collectively. They are our marching orders in the growth process.

Ephesians 4:7-8: "But to each one of us favor and acceptance (or a spiritual endowment in this case) was given according to the measure of Christ's/Messiah's gift (He decides which gift or gifts and no other). Therefore He says: when He ascended on high, He led captivity captive (think in context about what captivity), and gave gifts (spiritual enhancements) to men.

(Verses 9-10 are not part of the original letter.)

Verses 11-16: And He Himself gave some, apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, (For being in charge? Not quite! For usurping His authority and rule? Not a chance! They are gifts of functions in the body.) for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry (simple service), for the edifying (or building up in maturity) of the body of Christ/Messiah, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God/Elohim (filling all in all) to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ/Messiah."

There is only one Head of the body. We have all received gifts, which are spiritual enhancements, as we will see, of something we naturally possess, but on occasion something new we do not have an ability in, to assist every component, every member of the body to reach its full potential as to being an acceptable and worthy sacrifice and thus qualify to be the bride of Christ/Messiah.

We reach a maturity level that is pleasing to Him, one in which He then knows we will be able to work at His side for eternity as the second Eve without any doubt on His part.

2 Corinthians 11:2-4: "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present a chaste virgin to Christ/Messiah. But, I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ/Messiah. For if he who comes preaching another Jesus who we have not preached or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it."

There is a time when we should not be able to be dumbed down by those who feel our calling is an opportunity for them for gain and fame.

Continuing in Ephesians 4:11-16: "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 in which they lie in wait to deceive (not by accident) but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things (filling all in all) into Him who is the head, Christ/Messiah. From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies (you are important and vital to the functioning of the body), according to the effective working, by which *every part* causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Don't ever let anyone tell you to just pay and pray and sit in your chair and shut up. You are of great value to the rest of the body so grow up and act like it. There is no room for false humility or lazily allowing yourself to be dumbed down. One is no worse than the other. We all have a very important job to do in the body. If you do not believe that, you are not going to grow in the grace (the gift you have) and the knowledge (of how to use it).

We also need to recognize here that the body is edifying itself in love first and foremost. It does not say the world. Our focus is on our responsibility to the body of Christ/Messiah, and after that to assisting worldly things.

Why? Because the Father is not calling all the world at this time, is He? That will happen at a future time in the plan of salvation. We have a responsibility to proclaim the gospel about the kingdom to a confused world. But, how and when do we do that? We will have to address that in another study, for we are to do so after the example set and commanded by Christ. It will take us too far off course today. Please keep this in mind: that many brethren have been led into captivity of men by such deluded pursuits that they are going to fulfill a command to preach the gospel to the whole world. But, buyer, beware! For they need your servitude to supposedly do it. They will fleece you of everything you own in an empty attempt to do so, with no consideration to you at all. They will constantly tell you you need to do more. Ezekiel 34 jumps to mind.

Ezekiel 34:1-4: "And the word of the Lord/Yehovah came to me, saying, son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, thus says the Lord God (Yehovih/Adonay) to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed what was 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."

This is a pure Nicolaitan behavior. We have a very simple message to preach to the world. It is about the mystery of God/Elohim, our understanding of it. Others who are being called of the Father will recognize it, and then us and our commitment to it.

We are not out to call the masses of people inhabiting the world. That outreach part of our work is simply used as a point of recognition which alerts others that we too have been called out of unbelief.

Our primary purpose at this time is to prepare ourselves to be the bride and then to assist others in that endeavor as well. Please do not lose that focus.

As we mature and grow, we need to be assisting others to do the same. We do that by incorporating the doctrines of the Father into our very being, and conducting ourselves in them and our works should reflect them and thus Him and Christ/Messiah.

We make every effort possible to accept our responsibilities to grow and mature in the doctrines of the Father and the favor and acceptance and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ/Messiah, to the stature of His fullness, so that we then can assist others to do the same thing, and they in turn to do likewise. That is a process and act of pure love with no dominion or rulership or vanity found in it.

If anyone does not grow in the calling of the Father, then he will not be permitted to go beyond the milk of the word. That is an act of mercy because there is a fearful expectation if we should at some time after that reject our relationship with Christ/Messiah, for He cannot give up His life for us a second time, as Hebrews 6:4-6 clearly tells us.

However, those who are not permitted or granted to go beyond the milk of the word still have hope in the resurrection to come, contrary to some prognosticators of this present age. Christ/Messiah will be marrying only a mature, fully knowledgeable and willing woman. Our God/Elohim is not a child molester.

It is so disgusting to see some of the "great religions" of this world practicing child marriage and declaring it is God/Elohim ordained. Actually, it is sick! Christ's/Messiah's bride will be mature and of age. She will have made herself ready by her righteous acts, as Revelation 19:7-8 tells us. Yes, that means by her righteous works; she is judged by them. So this wife will not be composed of any infant or babe but those who have grown to the stature of the fullness of Christ/Messiah.

I certainly hope that when we think of, or use the terms, church and body of Christ/Messiah we do so from a full understanding of what and how God/Elohim sees them and not some worldview or adaptation of them which can be used to deceive even the elect of God/Elohim.

The message of the plan of salvation is one of beauty, wonder, awe, and great encouragement. No part of it should ever be used to just belittle another, but it should be used alongside the truth of the doctrines of the Father to correct something or someone who is going astray.

We have been given a good understanding of this all. Paul calls it a great Mystery in regards to Christ/Messiah and the church in Ephesians 5:32. We understand that the body of Christ/Messiah is the matured members of the church, they are the second Eve of His body, of His blood, and of His bone. She is the spiritual Eve just as He is the spiritual Adam. She is the fullness of Him.

Please do not let anyone rob you of this understanding through philosophy and empty deceits of this world's traditions which are according to the basic errors of this world.

So where do we go from here with this understanding? How do we apply it? Let us now look at the nuts and bolts of how this is to work individually and collectively with some very clear dos and don'ts as to the inner workings of the body, that is, the entire body as seen through the Scriptures. This is not according to the traditions of men.

Each and every one of us has been gifted by Christ/Messiah to perform a valuable function in His body. That is a biblical fact. Every gift is intended to cause growth in the body, as we have already read earlier. When we look at the body we see many members doing a vital part. That is how a mature member sees things.

Men who are filled with the philosophies and deceits of this world do not. They see the members of the body as either competitors in the cafeteria, or as lunch itself. If we are mature in the faith, we will be assisting others in their growth. We will be "giving" as our primary focus. Infants or babes do not do that. Infants are self-focused on their personal needs and desires first and foremost. With such a desire to

satisfy the self, they can be easily led astray. Their childish drive of "get" and not "give" needs a strong and caring adult to help them through that stage of growth.

Infants use their sense of taste to extremes. They judge everything by it. Everything goes into their mouths, whether good for them or not. Thus every wind of doctrine, if packaged in a nice big bottle and filled with sugar water, gets ingested unless an adult in the faith keeps it from them.

These infants are not a functioning part of the body yet. They have not learned about their gift and how to apply it for the edification of the other members of the body. They still need to get there through growing in favor and acceptance and knowledge. They, as infants, are not yet capable of making those sound decisions.

We have all been at that stage in our conversion and growth. When thinking or talking about infants in the church, my mind will undoubtedly or inevitably turn to Hebrews 5:12-14. In the preceding verses to these, we see the author talking about Christ/Messiah and the Melchizedek Priesthood. Verse 11 has a very sobering judgment by the one teaching here.

Hebrews 5:11: "Of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing."

The Jay P. Green Interlinear says of it: "Concerning who we have much to say, and hard to interpret (or explain in an understandable way to you) since you have become dull of hearing."

"Dull" here is #3576 *nothros*. *Strong's* says of it "from a derivative of #3541; sluggish, i.e. (lit) lazy (fig) stupid: dull, slothful."

The word it comes from, #3541 *nothos*, means "a spurious or illegitimate son; bastard."

God/Elohim has used this word here to clearly convey to us His thoughts of the shameful state these brethren were found in. They were doing the opposite of growing in favor and acceptance and knowledge. Let's read through verses 12-14.

Hebrews 5:12-14: "For though by this time you (longtime members of the church) ought to be teachers (that is, expected of each and every one of us regardless of the gift we have, for we are to teach by example), you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the scriptures of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For every one who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age (mature), those who by reason of use (practice) have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Here we have a very descriptive lesson in that we are expected to be teachers. That means having a good enough grasp of the doctrines of the Father that we in fact can teach them to others in an accurate and understandable way in our sphere of influence.

There is a period of time attached to this. This is necessary for our growth and our assistance to others. To be content with just drinking milk provided by another is not acceptable. We need to be able to sit at the table one on one with our Creator and learn from Him with His Bible, and the aid of the spirit which has been given to us. Only then can we mature and be able to understand good from evil.

It is at that point in time that we will not be easily deceived by others and can assist the rest of the members of the body with eating good solid food. This is a lifelong endeavor after our calling and conversion to the belief and truth of God/Elohim and all Their ways.

God expects us all to go through a spiritual stage of infancy as part of our learning process. It is patterned after the growth cycle in physical form. You don't stay an infant for 10 or 20 years, do you? Of course not! The same thing applies spiritually. The members of our physical family—father, mother, sisters, brothers and such—assist us through all the growth stages until we reach maturity, and then we are expected to carry our own weight and be able to assist others in the household, the family.

That is the same in the spiritual pattern. In spiritual terms our growth in favor and acceptance and knowledge will not stop as we know it until we reach the stature of the fullness of Christ/Messiah, to a perfect man.

Simple question: How many of us think we have reached that pinnacle?

I know I haven't, and, frankly, I don't know anyone who has except those in Scripture like Paul, etc.

There are some who think they have. If anyone thinks they can come between you and your spiritual Husband, then they have placed themselves at His level in the relationship whether they say so or not. There is no doctrine of multiple headship. There is only one head of the body and that is Christ/Messiah. Now, on the other hand I do know a lot of people who have become very lazy or dull of hearing and thus dull of doing. The two go hand in hand. They depend on another to do their studying for them. They hire somebody who is happy to take their money who then starts the process of dumbing them down and further lulling them to sleep.

Lazy little children! Some of these children make it to adolescence and then try to survive on a diet of sugar drinks. That is a diet of prophecy as in predictions, no substance for growth, just a quick rush.

We need to be ingesting at a very minimum the basic or elementary principles or teachings of Christ/Messiah as listed in Hebrews 6:1-2. That is the milk of the word. There will not be any growth with that as a strict diet, but death will not occur either.

Unfortunately you will be content to be a dependent and not reach your full potential that the Father and the Son envision for you at this time in the plan. That basic milk listed here is, specifically, repentance from dead works, faith towards God/Elohim, of baptisms, teaching, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal life.

These scriptures here in chapters 5 and 6 are telling us we need to move beyond these elementary understandings and onto perfection. Remember, the author was trying to teach them about Christ/Messiah and the Melchizedek Priesthood. That is very important understanding to all of us, for we are going to be priests in that order. We are in training for it right now. That goes way beyond the milk of the word.

Do you know what that job description is? Do you know how you fit into it now and in the future? If you don't, then there is a lot of catching up to be done. To become a perfect man after the stature of the fullness of Christ/Messiah, we need to keep on learning from Him. That means spending time with Him in study and not depending on another to do so for us.

Verse 3 here in Hebrews 6 says: "And this we will do if God/Elohim permits."

Why would He say that? Read the next three scriptures to get the answer.

Hebrews 6:4-6: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and who have become partakers of the holy spirit, and who have tasted the good Word of God/Elohim and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open (or public) shame."

Does that need any further explanation? I don't think so! However, I will add that 1 Thessalonians 5:19 tells us that we can quench (extinguish) the spirit.

Our merciful Father and Husband/Savior do not want to lose us to the second death. If They think we will carry on with some lazy habit which in fact can lead us to being bastards as the root word meant as we saw earlier, then They will not allow us to move beyond the milk.

Once again, it is we who do the leaving and the forsaking, not Them. So there are safeguards built into the process. Unfortunately, there are some who do not think so and teach that if you are called now and don't make the cut you are fuel for the fire of the second death.

That is just not a doctrine of the Father. That, however, is not to be used as an excuse to wander away either, for we are accountable for what we know and, for that matter, what we teach. We must never, never, never deny the spirit!

There is a doctrine known as the unpardonable sin. We have a lengthy article addressing it on the website.

Speaking of the website (abibofgod.com), if you are not capable of downloading and printing out an article, please let us know and we can mail one out to you. It does not cost you anything. Nothing here is for sale, and we don't want your money.

I find it amazing that there are a lot of individuals and organizations running around spouting off that they are the elect of the body. By that they are saying they're the only ones that count. Somehow everybody else is meaningless and trivial compared to them. They profess they are the Philadelphians, the cream of the crop.

Those things confirm to me they are anything but. In fact, that type of attitude declares to me they are of a Laodicean attitude. Remember? Rich and in need of nothing. That is an arrogant attitude and behavior pattern that many juvenile individuals characterize. There is none of the humility and meekness displayed in it which is a prerequisite to the stature of the fullness of Christ/Messiah. They are in fact usually wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked, as Christ/Messiah tells us in Revelation 3. They have become so lazy, complacent and self-centered that Christ gives them this warning:

Revelation 3:15-16: "I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot I will (am about to) spew (puke, vomit) you out of My mouth."

That is a very frightful thing. Christ/Messiah is about to puke brethren out of His body! **How drastic a wakeup call is that!** To be puked out of the body of Christ/Messiah by the direction of the head of it! Please do not just read over this. The predominant attitude in the "churches of God/Elohim" is exactly that today. A self-importance, and a complacency to growth, has become so entrenched in the works of most organizations that I personally fear for them. They should be in all of our prayers.

I am not talking about those who have denied Christ/Messiah, who have become anti-Christ/Messiah, but about those who have not denied the spirit and who have just gotten very lazy and complacent towards the rest of the body. I am talking about those who are quite content with the growth level they have reached and do not wish to go beyond it.

If we are content and satisfied with where we are, how do we grow in the grace and knowledge of the gift or gifts we have been given? We are not given these gifts to edify ourselves; they were given for the express purpose of edifying the body, the other members of it, wherever they may be found. Such a self-centered, lukewarm attitude will not be tolerated by Christ/Messiah. He will puke it out.

Do not be dumbed down by others to think you have no gift or that your gift is not important at this time. The modern-day Pharisees who teach such things—that the focus is on them and their works—are nothing more than agents of the devil. They attempt to put on a shiny veneer, but the filthy stench of Satan is pervasive.

Use all your spiritual senses for discerning not just one or two of them. You are of tremendous value to the Father and the Son and thus the body of Christ/Messiah. Just think. The Creator, the King of the universe and all creation have singled you out to be called out of unbelief into the glory of the knowledge of Jesus Christ/Messiah and the part you have at this time before you in the family of God/Elohim the Father. Don't let any man or demon steal that crown from you! It should fill us all with hope and zeal.

Do not be so dumbed down that you come to believe you are not worthy of such a magnificent calling. You are not inferior to anyone except the Father and the Son, and—just think—the Son wants you to be

complete in Him, to be perfect in Him, to His stature and fullness. How can we let anyone else tell us otherwise?

Brethren, deluded men have been creeping into the church for nearly two millennia. Let's come to grips with a very important understanding. The Scriptures tell us that the vast majority of us who have been called were the weak and the base of the earth, but we are not to stay in that way or to even think that way.

On the other hand, we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we should, which we will be getting to shortly. We need to believe and understand that at this time in our calling we have been called to train for the number-three position in the family of God/Elohim. That is the bride, the wife, the mother after the patterns of creation and the family. Don't get caught up in the false humility of "Why me?" Just drink it in and get to work.

The reasons why are meaningless to me. I just scream out *Thank You, thank You, thank You* in the spirit. I know I can't do it myself, so give me all the help I can get.

Take a look in the mirror. Yes, it's you! Do not doubt but believe. Nothing is impossible for God/Elohim, and we are going to be living proof of it. At least I know I will be if I can do what is expected of me.

My part is easy. All I have to do is be obedient to what I am told to do by my Father and Husband/Savior. I don't care what some self-proclaimed muckety-muck thinks or says, and neither should you. We are of great value to God/Elohim and the plan for eternity if we pick up the ball and get in the game.

All we have to do is the part or function He has us placed in the body for. That's it. We need to play for the entire game and not be a ball hog but understand that others are gifted as well, and as a team we can come to a great victory.

The rest of all of mankind is in the audience and they don't even know they are cheering you on. We are all of the same value! If we decide to lie down during the middle of the game and no longer put in any effort, we are not just hurting ourselves but also our fellow teammates.

There are many hurting the body today because all have at one time or another fallen asleep or at the least slumbered when we are to be active and alert. Matthew 25 tells us that is a sure condition just prior to His return. Wake up and fill up your own oil. No one else can do it for you. Once you are filled up, you are able to show others how to do it as well and from Whom they need to purchase the oil. We could read those scriptures but we have so often we will forgo them at this time, for either we believe them or we don't.

Now let's get to some of the interworkings and relationships that we are to be involved in as members of the one body.

Romans 12:1-12: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God/Elohim that you (very personally and individually) present your bodies a living sacrifice (that means laying down your life for others. Do we do that? Do you give of your time and resources and set your desires aside to serve and benefit other members of the body?) holy, acceptable to God/Elohim, which is your reasonable service (did we get that? God/Elohim expects us to be doing it. We don't score any brownie points for doing so because it is part of our responsibilities). And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (growing in favor and acceptance and knowledge according to Christ/Messiah) that you may prove what the good and acceptable and perfect will of God/Elohim is." Brethren, do we do that? It is not someone else's responsibility to do it for us. If we do not do ourselves, how do we know for sure what the good and acceptable and perfect will of God/Elohim is? Are we willing to leave such a personal and important decision up to another? That would be beyond ridiculous.

This is all effort on our part. Some brethren feel renewing their minds is going to services once a week and listening to a sermon for an hour or so. That is lazy, lazy, lazy. If for some reason you have not been renewing your mind daily, start now. Get up a half hour earlier each day and just read a chapter or two from Scripture.

In fact, start at the beginning in Genesis and make the commitment to read through the Bible a little bit each day. It has profound effects on us all. You are not just doing it for yourself but for the rest of the body as well, for as you grow in that you will undoubtedly be able and willing to assist others as well. Rekindle your first love. Put more oil in your lamp—pure oil, not oil filtered through another's eyes. Start proving all your beliefs over again. Take one at a time and let Christ/Messiah feed you from His word.

Many doctrines have been watered down and changed in subtle and gross ways so that they do not even resemble the doctrines of the Father. You may think you are following truth when in fact you are following philosophies and vain and empty deceits of men shaped after the tenants of this world.

Get it all straight in your mind because what Paul is about to teach us next is your responsibility in the body. Remember, Christ/Messiah gave us all gifts when He ascended on high. That means He at that time started handing them out to the individual members of His body.

But what else does He tell us there in Ephesians 4? Let's read it again.

Ephesians 4:8: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men."

He led captivity captive. I asked earlier "What captivity?" and "Why is it timed with giving men gifts?" Have you relied on the thoughts and conclusions of men to shape you into their image of understanding and their belief system?

Throw off those shackles and dine one on one with Christ/Messiah and come out of that captivity. He has given you the ability to do it. Yes, you, me and everyone else who is called by the Father. Don't ignore it! Use it!

This does not mean you are becoming big in your own eyes. On the contrary, Christ/Messiah is then becoming big in your eyes and not some man who would gladly take over His role. Some lazy little children say, "I have no gift from Christ/Messiah." Do you believe you are a baptized member of the body? If the answer is yes, then you have been given the gift of the holy spirit after the outward expression of the laying on of hands by one who has the spirit in them.

If you then have been given that common gift which is given to all who repent, have been baptized, had hands laid on, then you also have been given at least one individual gift as well. To deny the fact that you have been given a gift to develop and use in helping the body grow in love is a dangerous place to be.

You may say, okay, I believe the word that I have been given a gift, but I do not recognize it.

Let me help you with that. Please do not let men define for you what are gifts and what are not. The answer is solely within you. Remember, it is personal to you, given to you by your Husband/Savior.

Matthew 25:15: "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, **to each according to his own ability**, and immediately he went on a journey."

Did we hear that loud and clear? He gives us talents or gifts according to something we already possess. In most cases it is just a spiritual enhancement of what we already have or do. Stop and think. What do I do instinctively or naturally in life that can benefit or has benefited others? There is your answer now get to work on it.

Pray to Christ/Messiah that He refreshes you

in it, renews you in it, so you can grow in it. Once you have that established, you then need to exercise it, start small and

let it grow in your sphere of influence in the body.

Pay no attention to any threats from men. Just think if the disciples of Christ/Messiah had listened to them put them down, and to their threats. They would never have gone on to success.

Stephen is a prime example of that. Was he an apostle, evangelist, prophet, etc.? Not according to Scripture, yet he preached to the highest religious/political organization of his time, the Sanhedrin. Scriptures tell us he was a deacon or servant, the same word used to describe what is our common service to one another. It simply means one who serves or ministers.

I have had women, sisters in the faith, say to me what can I do, I have no gift, I am just a mother and housewife. Are you kidding me! You're right, you don't have a gift, but rather many gifts if you have been a successful mother and wife and homemaker.

You obviously have let the great ones of this age define for you what a gift is and isn't. That is why you need to let Christ/Messiah feed you and not some man who is an agent of the devil, whether deluded or not.

Just think how many times a day as a mother, wife and homemaker you have opportunities to teach, exhort, give, be compassionate, provide for another's needs, etc., etc., etc. Those are all gifts. If you can complete them in your physical responsibilities, you can do so spiritually in the body.

Let's continue listening to Paul here in Romans 12 and listen to what is and what is not good, and acceptable, and perfect and then renew our minds in Christ's/Messiah's instructions as to what the body is to be looking like and doing.

Romans 12:3-8: "For I say, through the favor and acceptance given to me, to everyone (not just some) who is among you, not to think more highly than he ought to think (no benefactors, overlords, great ones, high and mighty ones, for we have only one head) but to think soberly, as (because) God/Elohim has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we many, are one body in Christ/Messiah, and individually members of one another (we do not harbor any doctrines that would resemble those of the Nicolaitans in the body of Christ/Messiah which He says He hates. So why would we agree to come under the rulership of layers of men when we have only one head? Paul here has just given us a beautiful and detailed description of the body and our relationship to each other), having then gifts differing according to the favor and acceptance that is given to us, **let us use them:** if prophecy (#4395 *propheteuo* or one who speaks openly of divine scriptures or simply under inspiration) in proportion to our faith; or ministry (simple service of all kinds) in ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives (talking about all kinds of giving here; time, patience, longsuffering, food, clothing, all the various things we have at our disposal) with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."

There is nothing here about the philosophies and empty deceits of the world as to a rulership structure, is there? No, not at all. For everything mentioned here are gifts, spiritual enhancements given to the individual members of the body to benefit other members in love. There is no vanity in any gift Christ/Messiah has given us which is intended to enhance a natural ability.

When Moses told Christ/Messiah/the Word, that he was not a good speaker naturally, did God/Elohim make him one? No, He let Aaron do the talking, the speaking before Pharaoh, because he had a more natural ability to do so.

Some folks can't speak boldly about anything, so why would God/Elohim enhance something they do not naturally do? They will not get a gift of prophecy, but God/Elohim will enhance something they actually have. It could be exhorting, or mercy, or giving. They all are to be used within the body to enhance it, to grow it in love and also to grow it in more favor and acceptance and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ/Messiah, the Head of it all.

Paul is teaching us that all the functions in the body are a wonderful, methodical, unified, system of love towards one another. That is so foreign to what we see in many of the "church" organizations today. It is a wonder people are not flocking out of them.

Their hierarchical layers of rulership and dominion are anything but an example of the body of Christ/Messiah. They are in most cases a mechanism of this world's understandings, which are designed to dumb down the occupants.

Let's continue to listen to Paul's instructions here to see how Gods/Elohim word empties burning coals on the vain philosophies and empty evil deceits of the basic tenants and teachings of this world and those who hold them.

Verses 9-21: "Love without hypocrisy (not pretend or any definition of the world's). Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly devoted to one another with brotherly love, in honor, giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord/Yehovah; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. **Be of the same mind towards one another.** Do not set your minds upon high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion (prove your beliefs from patterns in Scripture). Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give way to wrath; for it is written; vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord/Yehovah. Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts give him drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Anyone feeling rich and in need of nothing after reading that?

Do we believe all this? If we do, then we need to make a greater effort to not function according to the world's ways. We should not fear them or the things they impute. We need to use our God/Elohim-given gifts in a humble and caring way.

We will not think we are more important than another. We will depend on the Word of God/Elohim and the spirit of God/Elohim for our inspiration and understanding and not some interpretation of another. Yes, we can listen to it, but we need to check up on it in the Scriptures and filter it through the spirit of God/Elohim residing in us.

We do glean from all four corners of the field as sojourners. Gleaning is a time-taking process. It isn't an action of just shoving something in our mouth. It takes effort on our part to pick up the good kernels and remove any chaff or dirt that may have accumulated on them. Only then are they ready to be eaten and digested.

We will not place undue honor on anything. We will make every effort to renew our minds daily so we know what is the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ/Messiah and not some forgery. We will serve His body as we are placed in it, not looking for any honor or accolades in doing so but undertaking our reasonable duties assigned to us as we are placed in it by the Head. We will not feign from them regardless of who or what confronts us.

There is no fear in true love or carrying it out. Our focus will be on giving and not getting. Oh, yes, dear brethren, we are of great value in God's/Elohim eyes if we do such things. We have been called out of the unbelief of this world into a glorious calling of belief and faith in Christ/Messiah.

I like to turn to 1 Corinthians 1:18 often when getting my bearings on this subject when surrounded by a sea of turmoil.

Colossians 1:18: "And He is the Head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead (spiritually, of course) that in all things He may have the preeminence."

So very simple and all-encompassing at the same time. No doctrine of the Father assigns layers of headship, not one. We are all to willingly submit one unto the other in love under the authority and direction of Christ/Messiah. Do not let any man or demon convince you they have headship, dominion over your faith, for we have the faith of Jesus. You are directly linked to the head as in direction. Unfortunately so many men and women have submitted to the hierarchical lie. I did at one time, until Christ/Messiah led me out of that captivity. So have many others. We are under a patriarchal system of governance. The only two beings that have been positioned in that are the Father and the Son. Many years ago I had a man attempt to convince me and many others in attendance at a Bible study that he had rule over us. He emphasized a few scriptures that are translated as "rule" over us. In each case I pointed out the dual meanings of each Greek word and at times the singular meaning. In every case the Greek had the meaning of leading and maintaining.

Now, that is a far cry from the terrible translation of "rule." Unfortunately, the translators filter it through their understanding of such things and apply the wrong meaning in some instances. In others, they have the right one.

After everyone else was told to leave the hall and that the "study" (dictates) was over, he continued with my wife, Linda, and me, trying to convince us of his right of rulership. One of the places he ventured was 1 Corinthians 12:28. He didn't actually turn there, for I was the only one with an open Bible before me.

1 Corinthians 12:28: "And God/Elohim has set these in the church: first apostles, after that prophets (inspired speakers), third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, variety of tongues."

He insisted these were orders of rank of authority in the church. He could not or would not accept that they were orders of **functions** given to the first century church for the obvious reasons. First apostles, because they were sent forth by Christ/Messiah to get things started. That is the meaning of apostle: one sent forth.

Then there was a need for inspired speakers (prophets) because of the masses being called.

Then there was a need for teachers to assist in explaining the inspired Word of God/Elohim, how to put it into practice to all the people hearing the truth for the first time as God/Elohim intended it to be understood.

The list goes on. Miracles, healings, helps, administrations, tongues: All were necessary to the growth and health of the fledging church to confirm these things were of God and to conduct things decently and in order without confusion.

Are we to believe that "helps" have more authority than "tongues" or "healings" have more authority than "administrations" and so on? How worldly is that? How deluded spiritually is that?

Anyway, this fellow was fit to be tied and was completely lost on what to do or say next, so we eventually left.

He now goes by the title of pastor general and actually allows his followers to refer to himself as apostle. There are so many Little Lord Fauntleroy's running around in and out of organizations today it is no wonder brethren are losing their identity as active working and functioning and gifted members of Christ's/Messiah's body. When you get a steady diet of Nicolaitan doctrines, one can come to believe them or in some cases just give in and acquiesce.

There is a lot of instruction on the body of Christ/Messiah and what it is to look like and what it is to do. Let's turn to another very familiar account of it so we can continue to renew our minds. Paul does another beautiful job of putting it all into relevant and easy-to-understand terms and language in 1 Corinthians 12. The entire chapter is to me a work of art.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11: "Now concerning spiritual gifts (or spiritualities), brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that you were Gentiles carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. (He is actually making fun of them because to do what they were doing was dumb, no matter what the excuse or reasoning.)

"Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the spirit of God/Elohim calls Jesus accursed (*anathema*) and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the holy spirit.

"Now there are diversities (various kinds) of gifts, but the same spirit. There are differences of ministries (services) but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but the same God/Elohim who works all in all. (There is that phrase again).

"But the manifestation of the spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same spirit, to another faith by the same spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He (Christ/Messiah) wills."

I was led to believe years ago they come with the piece of paper one received from a college.

Verses 12-27: "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ/Messiah. For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slave or free, and have all been made to drink into one spirit. (Not one college.) For in fact the body is not one member but many.

"If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? (Of course not, for Christ/Messiah makes that determination, not the individual members.) And if the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I am not part of the body, is it therefore not part of the body?"

"If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing; where would be the smelling? (Simple lesson here: If another part of the body does not look like you and do the same function, don't proclaim it not to be of the body. All the functions are supposed to work in unity under Christ/Messiah through His spirit, which is used to give life to it.)

"But now God/Elohim has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. (Not some man or group of men.) And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

"No, much rather, those members of the body which *seem* to be weaker are necessary. And those of the body which **we think** to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. (Because they seem to get it anyway.)

"But God/Elohim composed the body having given greater honor to that which lacks it (contrary to the way of man) that there should be no schism (as to who is the greatest) in the body, but the members should have the same care for one another.

"And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with. Now you are the body of Christ/Messiah, and members individually (if you follow these patterns)."

That is the beautiful and humble approach we need to take towards members of the body. No vanity, no self-centered; me, myself, and I; no worldly desires; and no deluded actions according to the philosophies of this world. It is all a labor of love under the direction of Christ/Messiah. We just need to do our part and He will make it all function well (filling all in all).

Once again, these scriptures have taught us that it is Christ/Messiah who gives us our individual gifts, it is He who determines which ones we will have to use in the body. He is the only one outside of the Father who knows how we can contribute most effectively and efficiently, for that matter.

Christ/Messiah says each and every one of us is important to the well-being of the body. We are training to occupy and function in the responsibilities of the number-three role in the family of God/Elohim. We must all approach our responsibilities like a loving wife and mother does to hers.

It is my personal opinion that a woman who takes on her physical responsibilities as a mother, wife and homemaker, in a responsible, loving way, has a real head start over many of us. It is second nature to her.

Satan wants to shut that down by allowing women to think they are just subordinate. Look what his major religions in this world do to women and young girls. It's evil to the core. Look what Islam does to a woman. I'm not talking about westernized Islam, for those folks would switch in a blink if they were pressed to by mainstream Islam. Deluded leaders and very stupid people who are most of the time one and the same proclaim it to be the religion of peace. How screwed up is that?

We need to let the Scriptures, the Word of God/Elohim, define who and what we are. The philosophies of man, which are just deceptions of Satan, will attempt to keep us dumbed down, limit us in our real potential as ones called out of unbelief into the glorious grace and knowledge of the King of the Universe, not the ruler of this world.

Our calling is not a contest with each other. It is a start to learn what simple service to all in love is. It is humble and straightforward service. No Diamond Jim Brady's need apply. That is Satan's approach. To make this all work we must respond to the one spirit in us all. That is what assists us in what Ephesians 5:21 instructs us.

Ephesians 5:21: "Submitting (willingly yielding) to one another in the fear of God/Elohim."

Just think. There are some who always apply the other Greek usage of this word here translated "submitting." That would be "ruling." Just insert that here to see how ridiculous that is: "Ruling to one another in the fear of God."

Then there are those who teach brethren it means submitting to them. I don't see any fear of God/Elohim in that. That would be fearing men. If we find ourselves in captivity to the dictates of the Nicolaitans, then get out of where you are. Get some space between you and them. They will threaten you, etc., but pay no heed to it. They can do to you only what God/Elohim allows.

We are to be of the same mind one towards the other. Now, that does not mean to overlords, great ones, heretics, busybodies, etc. We are instructed in Scripture how to deal with such.

Romans 12:16 also tells us: "Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble."

And verse 10: "Be kindly devoted to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another."

We read the same instruction to the members of the body throughout the Scriptures. There is no gift of dominion over another, but there certainly is a spiritual disease as such. It is an infection which can spread rapidly with terrible debilitating effects to the members and especially to their command to use their gift in the body. It is designed to destroy just that. Let me repeat verse 3 to us all.

Romans 12:3: "For I say, through the favor and acceptance given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly than he ought to think, but to think, soberly (not drunk on delusions of self-grandeur) as (because) God/Elohim has dealt to each one a measure of faith."

As soon as an individual feels that gifts are a road to rankings of authority instead of simple functions of service in the body, Satan has his hooks in him, and it will be difficult to win him back to the truth.

However, with that said, we must try if we know such a one on an individual basis. I have seen a lot of men fall into that trap of the devil. It is a lesson to avoid, however, since it is fostered in self-importance once again: the "me, myself and I" syndrome.

There is so much dominion over another being practiced today that it is restricting the growth of the church, the body of Christ/Messiah. Paul did instruct us about this arising in his time, and it has continued on since, for its author is tireless and very determined to take your crown from you in any way he can.

Acts 20:29-31: "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse (misleading) things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch (someone in the body needs to be doing this) and remember for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."

Paul obviously did not let go of that. It was very important to him. I'm sure there were many who passed it off as not possible. How could Harry or Larry do such a thing?

Well, ask yourselves why we also have the parable of the tares and the wheat. These are all pitfalls to the church. Both are happening and have happened. We need to be alert to them. Both are detrimental to the body of Christ/Messiah.

Some have asked me how can tares be really harmful. Simple study: Go back to Exodus and see what the mixed multitude led Israel into. Intense cravings!

How soon we can forget. When Satan is pushing new doctrine, which is really not new but old as the world, he can count on the tares to lap it up first.

Look what happened in Worldwide, or have we forgotten? How many of the quiet folks who sat next to you jumped at the chance to consume the doctrine of the Trinity?

Look, Satan knows his own. They can sit in services for many years acting out the part. Then when he wants to activate them he does so quickly.

Remember how you looked at them in disbelief? You could not believe your eyes. You had to make the choice of leaving or staying, not them. That's what you are faced with today if you are not growing in favor and acceptance and knowledge.

If you are not allowed to function in your gift in the organization you are in, then you have a life-changing decision to make. You can actually try to change the organization for the better, but watch how long that lasts, or I should say you.

We have a study on the website that we completed many years ago. It is entitled "The Hireling and the Wolf." You may want to read it if you have not already. If you can't print a copy out, let us know and we will send you one.

There is no cost to it and no follow-up either. You are not put on a mailing list or any such thing. We do not want your money or anyone else's, for that matter. We are able to perform the functions we do from our own resources in which we have been blessed.

The body is composed of many parts and many functions. We need to understand that all are not visible but have great importance to the health of the body. Just think if the body was plugged up and could not eliminate the wastes it collects and discharges what a terrible sick body it would become.

When that happens, when the waste builds up, the body will actually attempt to reabsorb some of it.

That is very unhealthy.

That very thing is happening in many of the churches today. They need a laxative to flush the filth and waste out and recover to a healthy state.

We read about Christ/Messiah saying as the Head He was about to vomit out part of the body earlier.

These things are real, brethren. The spiritual body has an immune system, or have you ever given that any thought? There are those in the body who act as that system.

Paul was a great example of it. He sought out spiritual diseases and such and instructed the brethren on how to deal with them. That is an entire study on its own that we may undertake in the future.

Keep in mind some of these parts are not always that presentable to the other parts, which think they themselves are. That is why God/Elohim gives them more honor: because of the vital role and function they perform.

We as members need to examine what we are ingesting. If it tastes good or smells good, that does not mean it is good. We need to use all of our spiritual senses as adults, as mature members in the body. Just because we have been eating the same canned food for years does not mean it has been good for us.

It does not have to be new to us. What we have been eating may have been making us lethargic. There is nothing stopping you from rereading the labels and examining the contents. In fact, that is all part of renewing our minds. Make it a habit. It can be very exciting and very rewarding to do so. As your health improves, so will those loved ones in your sphere of influence.

Another thing to keep in mind is to not spiritually guzzle your food. I have seen brethren take some new food to themselves and swallow it down so fast they did not even chew it up. That is not good. Clean animals chew on their cud. We are sheep and should spiritually be doing the same.

As much as the doctrines of the Nicolaitans are a threat to the body of Christ/Messiah today, there is actually a bigger one. It can be caused by those doctrines, but it can also be caused by a severe spiritual complacency due to the cares of this world. The two combined are disastrous.

There is no doubt in my mind that we are witnessing the predominant attitude of the Laodicean in the churches of God/Elohim today. As the world plunges into socialism and then totalitarianism, the mentality that the few need to provide for the many or the entitlement mentality, we see a similar mentality spreading in the church. It is an evil undertaking and completely anti-God/Elohim.

My thoughts jump over to Revelation 3 every time I see the world stepping closer to the arrogance and delusions and false promises of socialism. It is designed to break and enslave all but the elites. It is an economic pyramid scheme in some respects and outright theft in others.

Christ/Messiah chastises and counsels the church to buy from Him. The Laodicean church attitude is so deluded it says I am rich, have become wealthy and am in need of nothing. That means they are not in need of Him and in fact have thrown Him out, as attested to in verse 20, for He is on the outside. Let's read 19 and 20.

Revelation 3:19-20: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears **My voice and opens the door** (to their mind), I will go into him and dine with him, and he with Me."

Think about how shameful this church's behavior is, that He, the Head of the body, has been thrown out. It is a spiritually headless church for the most part. He holds out hope, however, as a merciful Husband/Savior, that some will still repent and come out of her and be part of His body in a healthy and functioning way. Remember, He is about to puke it out.

Thieves and robbers have taken over some of the sheepfolds, brethren. It's very likely you are in one. I hope not. He is no longer working through the collective body but is calling to His sheep who have in many cases been scattered far and wide while fleeing from these abominations. The vast majority, however, will not hear Him.

Paul told us about the times we live in. There are multiple and simultaneous scenarios, but 2 Thessalonians really strikes a chord. Strong delusion has overtaken them so that they will believe the lie because they did not believe the truth when it was presented to them. We could list so many of the lies but just a few are:

We are the only ones doing the work. What work? Certainly not growing in grace and knowledge in the Word of God/Elohim.

We are the true Philadelphians.

We are going to a place of safety because of the righteousness of our leaders.

We need only to come to services and pay and pray to qualify to be worthy of acceptance by Christ/Messiah.

The list goes on and on, delusion and lie one after the other. They can't see how wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked they are.

They need all the help they can get. If you profess to be a Philadelphian, how are you using your gift to assist them out of this sorry state? Or for that matter are you even making an attempt?

The very nature of a Philadelphian is to help his brother, regardless of his state. You should be full of zeal to do so. Remember your first love when you wanted to tell everyone about the hope that was in you as to the truth of the gospel and the way of God/Elohim?

We all need to be making the effort, brethren. Just don't walk away. That work is the epitome of what we have been called into the body to do as mature adults. We didn't see the authors of Hebrews walking away from assisting those who were acting like juveniles and infants, did we?

No, we did not. In fact, they started from the beginning with them again. If you have access to such in your sphere of influence you need to be stepping up to the plate. Christ/Messiah tells us that repeatedly about our training being used in this situation.

Let's turn to just one instance, in Matthew 25. The Laodicean attitude certainly qualifies as to that of being the *least* of these, My brethren.

Matthew 25:35-40: "For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.

"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, Lord/Yehovah when did we see you hungry and feed, or thirsty and give drink? When did we see You a stranger and take in, or naked and clothe. Or when did we see you sick or in prison, and come to You? (Remember, these are the conditions at the end of the age in Laodicea.)

"And the King will answer and say to them, assuredly I say to you, 'Inasmuch as you did to one of the Least of these My brethren, you did to Me.' "

If we will not do it for anything else, do it for the reward.

Verse 34: "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Revelation 22:12: "And, behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work."

1 Corinthians 3:8-9: "Now he who plants and he who waters are one (two different functions in the body but with the same goal), and each one will receive his reward according to his own labor. (And where is the focus of that work? Within the body!) For we are God's/Elohim fellow workers; you are God's/Elohim field, God's/Elohim building."

James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins."

As members of the body of Christ/Messiah, we need to come to grips with the responsibilities we have all been gifted with and use them to contribute to the well-being of the rest of the members. That means the whole body and not just the pleasant-looking parts.

The body is sick. Not all of it, but large portions of it. It is affecting each and every one of us, for we are of that same body. We are our brother's keeper!

The scriptures we have reviewed today have clearly established we are to be caring for the sick members of it. Do we turn our backs on such a thing? If we do, our Husband and Father will turn Their backs on us. James tells us:

James 1:27: "Pure and undefiled religion before God/Elohim and the Father is this: to visit the orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

There are many spiritual orphans and widows at this time, according to the Scriptures. They have been separated from the Father and the Husband/Savior by robbers and thieves who have come under the guise of benefactors and servants of God/Elohim when in fact they are hirelings and wolves and worthless shepherds.

The body needs to wake up to the evils of this age that have been allowed to creep into the church over the centuries of struggle. Each and every one of us who truly cares must not just be doing our reasonable duty, but putting in a lot of overtime.

The promise goes: Seek you first the kingdom and all these other things, the necessities in life, will be given to you.

The doctrines of the Nicolaitans are deeply entrenched in many of the organizations that are referred to as "churches of God/Elohim." With that said, there are some members still struggling to hold onto what is right in those situations. They need your help! Please remember we are not waging a physical war but one against an unseen enemy to the world and to all who are being deceived.

So put on all the armor of God/Elohim and let's be about our Father's business.

Our peace we give to you.

Brian and Linda