

This is an expanded version of a sermon given at the feast in Flagstaff

## Reconciliation and Restoration: An Army of One

Wednesday October 15, 2014: Flagstaff, Arizona (Brian Convery)

Good morning brethren, Saints of the Most High God and veterans of the falling away and the church wars. I could also greet you by other names and descriptive titles: such as mature sheep, survivors, remnant, soldiers in the army of Christ, etc. You are a special people!

I have often explained to folks that I look at the Bible as Gods master cooking manual. In it we find all the ingredients to nourish us spiritually. However it takes the spirit of God assisting us to be able to put together a palatable and nourishing and spiritually relevant meal. I hope the recipe I am using today accomplishes that objective. There are times when we can have a nourishing spiritual meal that is not very palatable. We have all heard and read such things at various times in our lives whether being delivered by another or from our own personal studies. It is my desire that this meal not be one of them but that it may be found both nourishing and very palatable.

We find ourselves on day seven of the feast of Tabernacles. As most of us “old timers” understand seven is a special number in what God does. It was on day seven of creation week that God rested from all the labors and work associated with creation. Thus we have the basis of what we refer to as a week. Six days of work, one day of rest. Then it’s back to work the next day. That in itself has a special significance in respect to an eighth day added in the sequence here after Tabernacles in respect to who is being dealt with in the plan of salvation. We will not be talking about that today for that is for tomorrow’s speaker. Our focus is on the 7<sup>th</sup> day in the sequence. It can be looked at as a transition day between work weeks. To me it is not only a day which symbolizes rest but one which symbolizes summation. So what I would like to do today is present a simple summation of these wonderful 7 days which God calls the Feast of Tabernacles/Booths and the Feast of Ingathering and how relevant they are to us today as to the condition of the church and our training. God names things with, and for, a purpose. So let’s answer why Tabernacles/Booths and why Ingathering?

In Leviticus 23:2 we find that God calls these appointed times of meeting; holy convocations. He lists them here in their sequence as He designates them. To bring to remembrance, convocation here in the Hebrew is Miqra or #4744 in the Strong’s Concordance. For many years I simply thought of it as referring to an assembly or gathering until I started making my annual trips to Israel and being exposed to the Jewish usage of the word. I found it very intriguing that it was used by those speaking Hebrew as a word designating a **rehearsal**. The more I looked into it I found myself looking at the holy days or (sanctified, set apart) convocations as not just assemblies or gatherings but rehearsals of a reality of a great future event that was still yet to happen in most instances. We know the reality of Passover listed here in Lev 23 is fulfilled by Christ’s sacrifice yet we still are to keep it as per His command and example.

Words are very important to God.

The word here used for convocation (Miqra) comes from the root word Qara or #7121 which means; to call, call out, or recite to, with the usage being assigned to a specific task, and properly by name. That is what the linguists teach us about it. In fact they tell us it is used to describe sustained communication. With that understood, I personally now look at these wonderful appointed times of meeting or convocations; as public rehearsals of wonderful events in the plan of salvation, and in fact as times of **sustained communication** between God and those He has called by name to publically rehearse the spiritual events depicted by the meaning of the day or days we are observing. I hope that makes sense to you.

So here we find ourselves, a very special people with a personal invitation, keeping a very special rehearsal of a wonderful future event. Never let anyone rob you of either of them. You are special for you have been called by name and invited to this appointed time of meeting with God the King of Creation. If we for some reason do not think we are special to God, each and every one of us individually, then we can be dissuaded from what we are to be doing 1) in our personal growth and 2) in our assistance to others. Matthew 5:14-16; "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." That is what we are doing here brethren, keeping a very public rehearsal of good works. So after our review as to why God calls this festival by the two names of Tabernacles/Booths and Ingathering I hope we will find ourselves even more grounded in our calling at this time and more embolden to assist others.

To me it is fundamentally inspiring that God used two names in describing this 7 day festival. Let's address Ingathering first to set the stage as to the **conditions** which will exist at the time of its commencement and fulfillment and its main participants.

For many years I was taught that the main focus of why this festival was called one of Ingathering was related to the completion and storing up of the summer harvest season produce in Israel. That may be the case for some of you as well. However, as important as the physical harvest of fruits and vegetables is, there is far more importance placed on the ingathering of the remnant of physical Israel. We have all often read verse 39 here in Lev 23.

"Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather in the increase of the land, you shall keep a feast of the Lord seven days; on the first day a Sabbath and on the eighth day a Sabbath."

So is God just talking about agricultural products here? Are we just rehearsing the gathering in or ingathering of fruits and vegetables, or does this festival depict much more? I am not trying to insult anyone's spiritual intelligence here by asking this. There are many who have that physical understanding only. I ask these simple questions because we as the called of God have a responsibility to be able to explain the basic fundamentals of each of the annual rehearsals we call feasts to others when asked about the hope which is in us. How do we respond to such situations? Do we perceive them as opportunities or as something less desirable?

In Exodus 19:5-6 we are told how special Israel was to God.

“Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My commandments (specific conditions), then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation...”

We have no doubt read this often here and elsewhere in the scriptures. It is a promise with conditions to a group of people. The scriptures establish a pattern around this of a promise to a chosen and blessed people. Chapters like Deuteronomy 7 are very familiar to many of us. In verse 6 we read;

“For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special treasure above all peoples on the face of the earth.”

Look what verses 14-15 teach us about how special they would be.

“You shall be blessed above all peoples (the world would say that’s not fair as well as some who number themselves in the church); there shall not be a male or female barren among you or among your livestock. And the Lord will take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known, but will lay them on all those who hate you.” That is a physical covenant with physical blessings. **A slight digression here.** The covenant we have entered into is a better covenant full of spiritual blessings. The focus is no longer on the physical and thus health and wealth are secondary. In fact we are tested by both of those categories of physical blessings under the very nature of the terms of the second covenant. If you are enduring a test of either health or wealth please be patient in both. As much as it is a test for you individually it may be a test directed at the body of Christ to see how we all react to it and then to the special needs of you individually. That is often used by our Father and Savior/Husband to see where we are as a body. If one part of the body hurts do we as the remainder actually really hurt. It is a test and dear brethren you may be the instrument for it. So be patient, they are designed to make us better sons and daughters of our Father. That was not the case under the terms of the first covenant. So back to physical Israel.

It is a shame most of Israel’s descendants do not even know who they are. They were to be the head of all the nations. But because of their sins and lack of adhering to the special conditions attached to the promise they were scattered throughout the nations.

But we all know that is not the end of the story for the first covenant Israelites don’t we. A loving God and Creator does not diminish His promises lightly. He actually tells us the end before the beginning so very often. Isaiah 11 is a prophecy about a wonderful event which will take place in the future. Once again we have no doubt read it often in the past at this time of year. Let’s narrow our focus of it down to verses 11-12.

It shall come to pass in that day, the Lord (Adonay to be precise) shall set His hand a second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left; from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the coastal areas of the sea. He will set up a banner for the nations, (Israel) and will assemble (gather) the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” This is a significant event and future pattern as well. A second

calling out which is very important to the church and in particular to us and our training and job description in this day and age as we will see.

Verse 16; “There will be a highway for the remnant of His people who will be left from Assyria, as it was for Israel in the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.”

This is all very important not just from an historical and promise point of view, but to the naming of this festival we are keeping today and to tying it to the events of coming out of Egypt. It is very important to those whom God identifies in its keeping. Lev. 23:42-43.

“You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are **native Israelites** (please do not just read over that for it is a key to who are the main participants God is working with in this part of the plan) shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel (their forefathers) dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt; I the Lord their God.”

That setting is very familiar to us all for it happened after Passover in the first month when they came out of Egypt which in my opinion represented a time of captivity and now we see it being incorporated into this feast, this rehearsal in the 7<sup>th</sup> month after the day of Atonement. That is not a coincidence.

God will once again be revealing Himself through mighty works to His people Israel who do not even know who they are. We will expand upon the whole concept of booths shortly but let's stick with the understanding of “ingathering” first so we can learn of a specific need for these booths based on the condition of these returnees, the remnant whom are being reconciled or restored to God.

Hosea 11:1-11:

“When Israel was a child then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. As they called them so they went from them; they sacrificed to the Baals; and burned incense to carved images. I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that **I healed them**. I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them. He shall not return to the land of Egypt; but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to repent. And the sword shall slash in his cities, devour his districts, and consume them, because of their own counsels. My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him. How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? (Two locations around Sodom and Gomorrah). **My heart churns within Me**; (a deeply loving God.) My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God (El) and not man, the Holy One in your midst; and I will not come (to you) with terror. They shall walk after the Lord. He will roar like a lion. When He roars (at that specific time) then His sons shall come trembling from the west; they shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, like a dove from Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses, says the Lord.”

Israel's condition will be that of a beaten and humble people who are in need of being **healed** after the intensely brutal time which we sometimes call Jacobs trouble for a reason. Let's just pause here for a

moment and clarify how we are to look at this time frame which is called Jacobs trouble and the day of the Lord.

Amos 5:18-20, "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! For what good is the day of the Lord to you? It will be darkness, and not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him; or as though he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light, very dark, with no brightness in it."

I have heard folks say that they are praying for the day of the Lord to come quickly. That is somewhat ignorant of the scriptures for we are not to do so but we are to be praying that the kingdom come quickly. They are two very different things. So let's continue in the pattern of scriptures we are reading as to this time frame and the resulting ingathering of the native Israelites coming out of it and the need for Gods intervention in healing them of the horrible conditions prevailing among them.

Isaiah 66:20-21

"Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the Lord out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. And I will also take some of them for priests and Levities, says the Lord."

Jeremiah 23:7-8.

"Therefore behold, the days are coming says the Lord, that they shall no longer say, as the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, but, as the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them. And they shall dwell in their own lands."

Yes the descendants of Israel will know who God is and who they are: **a special treasure among the nations. They will be restored and reconciled to their God.**

Jeremiah 30: 3 and 7-17.

"For behold the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah, says the Lord. And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

Alas! For the day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacobs trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from your neck, (who's yoke, think of a spiritual type) and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them, but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them (That's why we know this prophecy has not happened yet, in spite of some saying it has). Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob, says the Lord, nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of captivity, Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you, says the Lord, **to save you**; though I make a full end of all nations where I

have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished. (We will see this same sequence given to segments of the church just prior to Christ's return which we will read a little later and review our personal responsibility in it.)

For thus says the Lord: **Your affliction is incurable, your wound is severe.** There is no one to plead your cause, that you may be bound up; you have no healing medicines. (Please remember this theme for it does exist in our day as well, in our lives, if we are of spiritual Israel. We will be judged by it as we will clearly read later not unto salvation but to a special reward in the family of God the Father. Remember the rich young man who asked Christ what he needed to do to enter into eternal life? Christ simply told him to keep the commandments. Matthew 19:16-19. That is the requirement for the gift of salvation to be given to all mankind. There is not a reward for works given here for it is a requirement and scripture clearly explains to us that we are not to expect a reward for actions clearly required of us. However we at this time are called to something higher than that. Our actions in righteousness will actually be rewarded for going above and beyond the basic requirement. It all boils down to what I call the eleventh commandment, a new commandment which we will address later). All your lovers have forgotten you; they do not seek you; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquities, your sins have increased. Why do you cry about your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable (without Me). Because of the multitude of your iniquities, your sins have increased; I have done these things to you. Therefore all who devour you shall be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; those who plunder you shall become plunder, and all who prey upon you I will make a prey.

**For I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds,** says the Lord, because they called you an outcast saying: this is Zion? No one seeks her."

These folks were regarded as undesirable outcasts; no way could they be of Zion. So those who could have helped turned their backs on them. This same condition is present at this time and very relevant to you and me as the called of the Father and as the bride of Christ..

To say the condition of Israel will need a miraculous healing and a covering is an understatement. Our Lord and Savior has that in store for them. That is, for all the native Israelites who are brought back from among the nations. They will be in terrible condition; spiritually and physically. Not only will He be healing them but He will be restoring them to their rightful place among the nations and reconciling them to Himself.

Jeremiah 31:31-33.

"Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their minds, and write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

Ezekiel 11:16-20.

“Therefore say, thus says the Lord God: although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone. Therefore say, thus says the Lord God: I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they will go there, and they will take away all the detestable things and all its abominations from there (a precondition which needs to be done first). Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.”

Once again we can see a parallel event happening in the past few decades in the church especially during the apostasy. Many brethren have been cast out among the religions of the world. God has not forgotten them, have we? How do we regard them? These are fallen brethren who we fellowshiped with and feasted with for many years in many cases. Could they be regarded as the least of those who were called or even just tares? Have we turned our backs on them? What do we do when we have a “chance” encounter with them, let’s say at the grocery store? Do we scurry away before they see us to avoid a greeting and possible conversation? How do you think our Father and Husband look upon such behavior? Dear brethren I know for a fact that I have done this in the past. As I often have mentioned, the more you know about yourself the more you know about others.

Ezekiel 36:23-31 and 38.

And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will deliver you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; **and you will loath yourselves** in your own sight (true repentance), for your iniquities and your abominations. Now 38. Like a holy flock, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days (appointed times), so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. They shall know that I am the Lord.”

Let’s wind up the examples of Ingathering and the needs and results of such with Zephaniah 3:19-20.

“Behold at that time I will deal with all who afflict you, I will save the lame, and gather those who were driven out, I will appoint them for praise and fame in every land where they were put to shame. At that

time I will bring you back, even at the time I gather you; for I will give you fame (a name) and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I return your captives before your eyes, says the Lord.”

The list of prophecies about this great event depicting the healing and the restoration of physical Israel to its rightful place among the nations goes on and on. This great ingathering of all the native Israelites will be completed after our Lord returns. He will restore them to health and to His ways and to being the head of all the nations. He will make them whole again. This great event which precedes the events of the 8<sup>th</sup> day is so important, it can never be overstated what we are rehearsing today. This week’s work depicted by these 7 days of Tabernacles and Ingathering with God are a prerequisite to the next part of the plan of salvation commencing which will be **for all of mankind**, which will be the capstone of all the work prior to it.

So let’s leave the ingathering aspect of these days and move onto that of the booths now that we have seen the ingathering taking place is speaking about (in my belief) all the native Israelites being brought home from all the nations of the world where God had scattered them. They are incurably sick and beaten down and without understanding of who they are or who God really is. They need God’s healing. They need to be reconciled to God and restored as the head of the nations, a special treasure to God.

So why does God tell us about living in booths at this time during this festival? Why temporary dwellings? I am sure we have all heard lots of explanations for this. Some no doubt good and meaningful, and some “just blowing smoke” as the saying goes. Let’s now look at an aspect which many may not have known which (if you wish to), you can add to your bank of understanding. The Hebrew word for booths found here in Leviticus 23 is *cukkah* or Strong’s #5521. No mystery as to its meaning. It can be used to describe a thicket in which one can seek refuge and protection, or as a temporary shelter built of interwoven boughs of trees. Both are protective coverings, places of refuge. Have you ever asked yourself why does God emphasis the use of these special booths here; during this festival of gathering in all the sick and injured native Israelites returning for the second time? Once again keep your thoughts on God as a healer and restorer.

Leviticus 23:40.

“And you shall take for yourselves on the first day, the foliage of beautiful trees, branches of **palm trees**, the boughs of leafy trees, and **willows of the brook**; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days.”

Nehemiah 8:15 tells us that besides the palm and willow boughs mentioned here in Lev. they also used **olive and myrtle boughs** as well, to build their booths, the protective coverings. Why are these so important to our understanding of the festival we are keeping so that God gives us such specific instruction? It’s about the **healing process** brethren and where it comes from and all its symbolism which stretches all the way back to the Garden and the Tree of Life. It is very important to our understanding and functioning now, **at this time**, because of the responsibilities we will not only have in the future which we are rehearsing, but those facing us today as to spiritual Israel, the church, and her condition. Please do not forget reconciliation and restoration!



These physical booths are the result of interweaving the boughs of the four species of trees that are mentioned in scripture. If there are more we don't know for they are not specifically mentioned to the best of my knowledge. I do think Jewish tradition may add to them. However, keep in mind or focus on healing. All of these species contain incredible medicinal qualities and characteristics. Please take the time to relate each of these specific medicinal characteristics to restoring one to good spiritual health and not just to the physical, for we do not have the time to cover that aspect in the allotted time today. Look at these as mini trees of life.

Let's start with the willow of the brook. It has been used for millennia as a pain relieving agent and anti-inflammatory medicine. Salicin is the chemical found in it that gives willows this property. It was used during the 1800's to develop what we now know as aspirin. The most common pain and anti-inflammatory medicine we have today. But willow also contains polyphenols, and flavonoids; which have antioxidant, fever reducing, antiseptic, and immune boosting properties. If you are not familiar with polyphenols they are used in the communication process between individual cells. We could really run with that one in the spiritual application couldn't we.

Then we have the Myrtle tree. Many ancient civilizations believed myrtle was a symbol of immortality due to many of its properties. It has been used to treat all kinds of ailments and for that matter still is. It is used conventionally in treating coughs, bronchitis, digestive disorders, urinary tract disorders, and wound infections. It also has anti-inflammatory properties. Middle Eastern countries have and still do use it as **the** traditional treatment for diabetes.

Then we have the date palm tree. It is regarded in some circles as the perfect food due to all the nutrients in its composition. It was regarded anciently as a fertility symbol because of its effects on sterility. It is still used to treat that today. It may be of interest that some date palm seeds were found at Masada, from King Herod's store areas. An agricultural entity in Israel planted several of them. One of those 2000 year old seeds has transformed into a thriving healthy tree. Palm dates are used to treat intestinal and digestive disorders. They promote pro-biotic bacteria in the intestines. They are also used in the prevention of stomach cancer, treating cardiovascular disease, and curing night blindness. They are also used in the killing of intestinal worms and parasites. Once again please relate these to spiritual healing qualities for our time and not just to the physical. When we read about the architecture and décor of the future temple during the millennium we see palm trees everywhere in it. In fact the healing waters which flow from that sanctuary teach us many important lessons.

Ezekiel 47:12, "Along the bank of the river on this side and that, will grow all kinds of tree's used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for medicine."

This pattern will continue in the future when it comes time to reconcile all the nations as depicted by the events of the 8<sup>th</sup> day, the circumcision of the heart of all mankind. Revelation 22:1-2, "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb. In the middle of its street (speaking about New Jerusalem) and on either side of the river, the tree

of life, which bore twelve fruits, each yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” (At that time the leaves are used to heal the rest of mankind.)

Incredible patterns, they all go back to the Garden of Eden and the tree of life and its purpose then and now and in the future.

Then last but not least we have the olive tree. Where do we start and finish with all the medicinal qualities it contains. From its leaves to its fruit we have so many documented medicinal uses it would take far too long to bring them all up let alone elaborate on them. Let’s just limit it to its ability to enhance the wellbeing of the respiratory, circulatory, and digestive systems. Once again please look at them in spiritual applications.

Our Creator did not just randomly pick these four species of trees to build the temporary protective coverings Israel would need after returning to the land. She has just come through the time we call Jacobs trouble. If God did not shorten those days no flesh would be saved alive. The physical and spiritual understanding to all this is a gift from God to us, His called out of unbelief at this time, at the end of the age. We have been given a promise by our Creator, by our Maker. We can read about it often in both covenant scriptures. I think Jeremiah 23:20 conveys the meaning of it well.

“The anger of the Lord will not turn back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly.”

We have been given the gift to understand these things I have been speaking about today; and much, much, more. What we are talking about is just the simplicity in Christ, simple patterns in scripture which we can understand because the Father has given us His spirit. I ask the question, what are we doing with it? Is our presence here today just a call to assembly? To me it is a call to a real live rehearsal. I believe we are going to be the ones administering and caring for the untold numbers of native Israelites who will be returning home to the promised land and to God, which are being depicted during this festival time line. If that is the case how are we doing with it? Are we practicing and improving our skills in doing that today? I believe we are in training for it right now, here at the end of the age. The conditions found here in Israel are also found in many segments of the church today. If we believe that, do our actions and our works reflect that understanding?

2 Corinthians 5:18-20;

“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry (service) of reconciliation that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” Reconciliation found here is #2643 katallage, from #2644; exchange or adjustment, i.e. restoration to favor. Vines says of it; primarily denotes reconciliation, a change on the part of one party, induced by the action on the part of another. Have our actions, our works, helped to induce a restoration to favor, a reconciliation to God, with others who are in need of it, or have we turned our backs on them? This is very personal brethren.

We live in an age spoken of and clearly articulated in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. Here we find a vivid description of the wellbeing in some cases and the lack of it in many instances of the church. These are the conditions existing in the church prior to Christ's return. We refer to these chapters as the messages to the seven churches. We are rehearsing 7 days of healing and reconciliation during this festival timeline. There is a lot of hurt and pain contained in these two chapters. The spiritual symbolism is not unlike that which we have reviewed in the collective embodiment of scattered Israel at the time of Jacob's trouble when God draws them out of their delusions and the dominion or yoke of others for the second time and unto Himself. Many are in need of a second spiritual calling out. Christ says of those of the Laodicean attitude that they are in actuality; wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. He instructs us, and I say **us** not knowing your state, but rather the fact that I see myself as a repentant Laodicean. Christ says to them and thus me, buy from Me gold refined in the fire that we may be rich; and white garments that we may be clothed, that the shame of our nakedness may not be revealed, and that we anoint our eyes with eye salve that we may see. Not real flattering is it. But then on the other hand, **it is full of hope** for if we read on in Chapter three it is full of promise. Once again a personal second calling of sorts is given to come out of a dillusional captivity. These are brethren who answered the call of the Father and have somehow been diverted into a terrible state of affairs. So now, Christ Himself steps forward and says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door I will go into him and dine with him and he with Me."

It is preceded by this, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. **Therefore be zealous and repent.**" Sound familiar? That is the same sequence we read about when God calls native Israelites out for the second time to repentance and then restoration and reconciliation.

Remember what we read in 2 Corinthians a few minutes ago? "And has committed to us (that's you and me dear fellow servants and veterans of the spiritual war) the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." Look what Malachi teaches us. Malachi 3:6-7; "For I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, sons of Jacob. Yet from the days of your fathers, you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of Hosts. But you say in what way shall we return?" That is the first covenant decision made by God and He goes on explains what they must do to return to Him. He makes the same decision with the churches but responds with a second covenant response as to what our actions must be to return to Him so He will return to us. "**Be zealous and repent.**"

I ask again how are we all doing in that job assignment? It is individual first and then collective second. There are many in the churches who are yoked to a benefactor be it individual or an organization who hold dominion over them as to their faith and much, much more. It is my opinion and action in my calling at this time to assist those found in this captivity. I also believe it should be the focus of many more in the body as well. However this is not some monkey see, monkey do thing. It is deadly serious. I take Matthew 12:30 as a personal rebuke to my past thinking as a Laodicean in one of the big organizations. "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad."

I think about the parable of the 10 virgins often which I do believe represents the time frame we find ourselves in today just prior to the Bridegrooms return for His bride. There are those who have struggled through and who have kept their oil reserves high. There are also those who have not, who in fact have relied on others to do it for them and who eventually come to those who have managed to keep their oil up within a personal relationship with their husband Jesus the Christ and the Father, and they the foolish virgins ask to be simply given the oil. That is what they have been taught to do, that being they turn to a benefactor for it, as a go between. That is exactly what Israel did with Moses, they said to him why don't you go and talk to Him for us, on our behalf. Those who have faithfully maintained the method of how our oil is kept up understand it is not theirs to give and wisely direct them to Those (the Father and the Son) who generate the oil and who have it for sale. Where do we fit in here? Have we kept our oil reserves sufficiently high enough and humbly enough for that matter, so that we can actually direct others to the Father and the Son to help them find the true source of the oil?

Those of you who know me know I often turn to and recite the instructions found in Matthew 25: 34-40 quite often. Today you are hearing the reason why I do so. It is very sobering to an ex Laodician.

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

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 it to Me." If we read on in Matthew 25 we would read that most who were able to help had turned their backs on them.

How humbling is that! How relevant is that! Only God defines who are His and who are not. He knows each and every one in spite of the condition they are in. We are in training now to function in all these circumstances and boy do we have a lot of them to function in here at the end of the age. Many relate these conditions to the world. That's fine, however I go beyond that in my thinking and relate them to the body of Christ, the church, as depicted in Revelation 2-3; for Christ here in Matthew is clearly talking about His body, His brethren, and not the physical world. I believe our training now is for the conditions we presently find ourselves in and for those depicted and being rehearsed by the keeping of this festival of God. There are many who have been separated from the Father and the Son; thus, many spiritual orphans and widows. James speaks of our responsibilities in this matter as well as to ourselves. "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this; #1; to visit orphans and widows in their troubles and #2; to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

How are we doing with that? Many concentrate on #2. What efforts do we make personally towards the spiritual widows and orphans who abound at this time in the churches? I like the slogan for the army

which I have not seen in a while, "I am an army of one." That can be our motto brethren. It actually has many scriptural references and examples.

Jeremiah 3:14-15. If you have not read the entire third chapter lately please do so for it contains so many understandings of who is who, and what sequences follow each other as detailed by our Husband and Creator. It can be a real eye opener.

"Return O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding." And then I like to add in my thoughts "till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

That's us brethren, each and every one of us. Do we believe it? We have received the ability to do this in the body in one form or another. **Are we using these gifts we have all been given to help the body heal and grow closer to God?** That is our training ground for a future event. What we don't receive **is the desire** to put some of our life's cares aside and serve others. That is completely up to us and a very big part of our test being administered by the Father and the Son at this time. How are we doing with it? Do we in fact muster up the desire to use the gifts we have been given or have we stored them away? We have many brothers and sisters in the body, and out of it (i.e. the apostasy) for that matter, who have become spiritual widows and orphans, who have become estranged from the Father and the Son for any number of reasons, which frankly should not matter to us or influence our desire to help.

I could recite scriptures like Ezekiel 34 and relate it to the conditions we find ourselves in as a church but I am sure we are all familiar with them. On second thought let's do that, for it is very important and relevant to the times we live in and to a major problem existing in the churches. It clearly addresses in all its ugly dominion and reckless behavior the actions of worthless shepherds, hirelings, and wolves. Ezekiel 34:1-6; "And the word of the Lord came to me saying, son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, thus says the Lord God to the shepherds (benefactors who have dominion over the faith and lives of others at this time), woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, you do not feed the flock (they actually demand more and more of the flock all the time). The weak you have not strengthened, 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. (There are a lot of rulers in the churches today separating brethren from the Father and from the Husband.) So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep (He clearly knows who are His) 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."

We can then read in verses 11-16 that Christ gets personally involved with these sheep in seeking them out and restoring them. Brethren we are His ambassadors in this. We are of His body and thus are to function in this as He sets the example.

The point I am making here today is very simple and can be typified in much of the understanding depicted in the keeping of this festival which we have reviewed today. I submit to you that our calling out of unbelief is not just to be kept personal in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. But more so to incorporate into our works helping to heal, clothe, feed, visit, take in, etc. those which are recognized by the King of the Universe as to being the least of these My brethren. If so He will call those who do such selfless works; Righteous Individuals, who tirelessly assisted the body of Christ one individual and instance at a time. The body is suffering and in poor health and in many instances kept in captivity under the dominion of others, self-proclaimed benefactors. When our Savior laid down His life for us He gave us a new command which we can read in John 13:34; "A new commandment I give to you, that you also love one another." It is my belief that this new commandment carries the same weight as the other 10 given under the terms of the first covenant and which are clearly and repeatedly listed as such under the second as well.

He then immediately follows it up with the following statement which I believe to be one of the most profound points of instruction and understanding given in the second covenant scriptures. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." True Godly love not some imitation.

Yes dear brethren **we can be an army of one during this time of training!** As members of Christ's spiritual army we do not leave our wounded or captive brothers behind. We are being watched as to how we function in that task by our Father and our Savior Husband. There is a reward attached to it. Once again by that I am not referring to the gift of salvation but to the function we may attain to in the family of God the Father. With what I have talked about today all being translated into second covenant terms we can see many very loud and clear instructions with the loudest being; "**Mercy triumphs over Judgment and grace triumphs over the Law.**" Neither judgment nor the law are gone but they ultimately take second position to mercy and grace under the terms of the second covenant. Please keep in mind that without judgment and the law there would be no cause for mercy and grace. They are all inseparable. The very foundation of all of this is the love of God. That is why Christ gave us a new commandment which as I have mentioned I look upon as the 11<sup>th</sup> commandment. It encapsulated the entirety of our covenant terms our agreement with God. As scripture tells us it is the ultimate identifying sign and action which the disciples of Christ will be recognized by. Yes the members of His body. The other 10 commandments are part of the requirements, the terms of our agreement, but if we fall short of number 11 it is my belief that we will fall short of being the bride in the Father's household. Our calling is so far above salvation that Satan the devil is attempting to keep as many of us from it as possible. In his deluded mind he actually thinks he can prevent the number of the bride from being completed and thus stymie the plan of salvation for all mankind. A mother's love for her children in physical terms is second to none. That is why it is a requirement under the terms of the second covenant for we are being called to be the bride, the mother, the second Eve. Many will fall short of this goal of our calling at this time but some will make it through as we are told in Matthew 22:14. As I have often pointed out this is not some kind of a slight by any stretch of the imagination. For God tells us in the resume of the bride found in Proverbs 32:10-31 and specifically in verse 29; "Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all." We need to internalize the spiritual equivalent of every one of the

attributes, functions, actions, and character of the wife depicted in this beautiful section of scripture. That does not mean we have to perform them all flawlessly for the function of the wife will be completed by many who are qualifying and for that matter who have already qualified and who are in the grave awaiting the resurrection. The combined gifts of them all will in fact complete the whole package in Christ the second Adam. However we must all attain to the deep love that a mother has for her children and family. The love of a mother is certainly described in what was stated before; mercy triumphs over judgment and grace over the law. A mom always has forgiveness in her heart and will lay down her life for her little ones regardless. How are we measuring up on that one dear brethren? I have a long way to go but I am greatly encouraged with the promise that our Husband and Father will complete in us what They have started if we truly attempt to do so ourselves. God's responses to scattered Israel being depicted by the events of the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles and Ingathering hold a lot of instruction and encouragement for us in this venue.

I hope you have had a wonderful feast and are looking forward with great anticipation to what the next feast day, the 8<sup>th</sup> day holds for us as well as for all mankind. Let's be about our Fathers and our Husbands work at hand, there is plenty of it to do for each and every one of us.

May the peace of God be with you.