

The Hireling and the Wolf

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Greetings brethren. I hope that this study finds you in good health: spiritually, physically, and economically for we do live in troubling times.

It has been nearly 14 years since I last addressed the subject of the hireling and the wolf. In fact it was July 26, 1997 when I gave the 3-tape study on the subject. That study focused on several important factors relating to “the ministry.” A common lie of theirs was that brethren “lay members” as they called us, were the cause of all the problems in the organizations. Scriptures proved that a complete lie. We also addressed the pagan teaching of apostolic succession, which they claimed whether overtly or covertly. We spent a lot of time examining the scriptures, as well as the Hebrew and Greek words to clearly show most were nothing short of being hirelings and worthless shepherds.

At that time there was a lot of chaos and confusion engulfing the called of God the Father, who at one time or another, had been part of the organization we called the Worldwide Church of God. At the time we were witnessing a mass migration of brethren from the midst of that entity for all kinds of reasons. In my opinion the biggest was due to the fact that the new hierarchy that had taken corporate control was dismantling the basic underlying truths which had been its foundation for many decades. As most of us look back now I think we can call those truths “the milk of the word” for many different reasons. By 1997 we had seen a number of new organizations, or offshoots as many call them, forming across the country and for that matter across the world. The brethren, whom we will refer to as God’s sheep in this study, were looking for a safe pasture to rest and feed in. They were wandering around from hill to hill searching. Many were running to and fro desperately seeking a sheltered haven. At the same time we were also witnessing many brethren becoming disillusioned with commandment keeping, and thus falling away.

The turmoil of those days still resonates in my mind, as I know it does in many of you who had come out “early” not being able to stomach the filthy residue being fed to us. After 18 years of hindsight it is simple to see God’s hand in it all. However, at the time that was not my clear focus, but by 1997 so many things had become clear as to why such a traumatic upheaval had taken place and in fact was still taking place.

After leaving WCG, my wife and I affiliated with what we thought would be an answer to our prayers. We prayed for a church group to appear on the scene which would be a safe haven as to doctrine and fellowship with “ministers” who had our well being at the center of their service to God. That did not come about and after a few years we were off on our own with our four children and with scattered brethren who had come to realize we were called to be a part of the body of Christ first and foremost. Now I could talk about that subject for hours on end as most of you are aware of who know me. But that is not the crux of what I will be addressing today, at least until I have established a baseline for what is afflicting the body then and even now and ultimately will until Christ returns.

You have heard me talk about patterns to the point some will say enough is enough. But, we can never get enough of them. They are the basic building blocks of a sound mind and are used more than any other tool by God to teach us Their mysteries, or hidden truths. Everything and everyone has a very specific pattern. This is an absolute. We can decide to use them for our learning or not. God has spelled out all Their truths in patterns since the foundation of the earth. They are found throughout creation. That is why we read what we do in Romans 1:20. I will read it from Green’s Interlinear Bible for it is a favorite translation of mine even though I normally quote from the NKJ Bible version.

“For the unseen things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things made, both His eternal power and Godhead, for them (all humanity) to be without excuse.”

These are words of incredible value to all of us who are striving to fulfill the calling we have received from the Father unto the Son. These patterns found in the things made from creation are a gift from God to us all. Many of them are designed to be understood by all mankind, because God placed a spirit in us all, a spirit in man, which has set us apart from the rest of the physical creation. However, we who have been called can see even deeper into these patterns from creation because God has imparted to us an additional spirit, a helper one might say, to open our mind to a much greater understanding than just the physical. We have addressed this often in the past. The apostle Paul makes a wonderful summation of this in 1 Corinthians 2:9-14;

“But as it is written: eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart (mind) of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

But God has revealed them to us through His spirit. For the spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him. Even so no one knows the things of God except the spirit of God.

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the holy spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

If you do not believe this with all your heart then I suggest you stop reading here at this point for this will not be for you. In this study we are going to be using the spirit of God to help us understand many patterns which will assist us in helping others through some very difficult times being experienced by many brethren currently. Some of the patterns we are going to be covering are vital to our spiritual survival and well being in these evil times.

The way God uses patterns to teach us and to reveal to us a particular lesson is simple. The pattern first teaches, displays, or imparts knowledge and with that knowledge we can gain understanding. With that knowledge and subsequent understanding being combined we gain wisdom as we learn to recognize that particular pattern playing out time and time again. Each of us has seen and experienced this in our lives in both purely physical, as well as spiritual ways. Some of us have never equated it to, or thought of them as patterns and to the fundamental teaching tool of God. Those who have been called, and who have accepted the personal responsibilities that go with that calling, are granted the ability to come to a much deeper understanding of the patterns in the things made from creation, which have in fact separated man from the rest of the physical creation. But I reiterate one does not need to have God’s spirit to understand and gain wisdom from many of these patterns in creation.

A little bit of my history. My grandma Bowman had a very good grasp of many of these patterns as they relate to interactions among people. I used to think she was the smartest person alive at times because of her understanding of them. She spent a lot of her life on the farm in the “backwoods” region of Westmeath and Arnprior Ontario, Canada, close to the shores of the Ottawa River. Society then and probably today would not look to one coming from such an environment as being wise in many things. Such however is the arrogance of man’s society. Many of my earliest memories were of times when she would impart to, or display for me, this simple wisdom of man. I am not talking about $2 + 2 = 4$ or anything like that. The wisdom she imparted was about life and its relationships. I miss her dearly and I only wish I had the maturity to appreciate all that she was imparting to me way back then.

As a very young boy I would rather spend the day in the backyard or at the pollywog pond (if I could sneak away) observing the wonders of creation. Things like a spider making a web or how a spider would instantly attack and kill some bugs which got trapped in its web as opposed to some others which it would stand off against for a long while. Or how a pollywog would start to grow legs and then start looking like a toad or a frog and start sticking its head out of the water for air. Simple knowledge and understanding was gained

through the time I would spend observing the things which were made at creation. As I grew older and acquired wisdom through these patterns I was able to relate them to many circumstances in life, which helped explain the seemingly inexplicable. My mom often used to say to me I was a strange little boy because I would rather be out observing and interacting with my bugs and such than watching TV or doing the dreaded “school work.”

I cherished my time out in creation up through my teens and early adulthood. However, decisions in life separated me from this pastime as I assumed more and more of life’s responsibilities that society demanded of a young man. At least it used to. Now I do not believe it does, those demands are left solely up to parents who understand their personal responsibility in raising children who will be an asset to a community and not an encumbrance or burden.

In my 27th winter I was called of God. That was a life-changing event for me. That winter I fell in love with God and with my sweetheart Linda. What an incredible turning point in my life on both accounts.

When God blessed me with His spirit I started seeing the patterns I had been taught through creation in terms and ways I had not understood before. Many of my observations sprang to life in ways I had not conceived of. The clarity was breathtaking in many instances. It still is difficult to put into words. With that stated its time to look into the Bible and combine that with the wisdom readily found in creation, the things which are made, to help us learn some very important lessons of survival when it comes to the subject of hirelings and wolves.

God has given these descriptive names to certain men for our understanding.

We need to use the scriptures as God intended them to be used for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, so that we may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work with the hoped for resulting sound mind. We will see how God likens and patterns many men, and activities of men, to things in nature and actually associates them with specific animals for a reason. Lets take the wolf as an example since it is part of our study today. For those of you who have had the opportunity to observe wolf behavior in the wild or even in documentaries (without a save mother earth agenda) you will have a much better understanding of what God is getting at when Their scriptures use such terms. I have had the opportunity to do both. I could relate lots of stories to you about some of those encounters and experiences in the wilds of northern Ontario. None of them were harrowing or anything like that for I clearly understand a wolf’s demeanor, whether in a pack or a loner. Wolves are afraid of man (God made it that way after the flood) and if in a particular instance they don’t want to play that part I carry the great equalizer with me. I have never had to follow through with it however. I remember quite vividly one such experience on the shores of the Attawapiskat River. There are no roads going into this remote area. You get dropped off by a floatplane and if you are lucky it will return on the day it’s supposed to, to pick you up. For two days straight I sat at a particular location on the river. Both of those days I had a very large, pitch-black wolf come out of the bush opposite me across the river. It would sit on the sandy shore and watch me for a long time. I was hunting moose on that trip. There were wolf tracks everywhere on both sides of the river, but this one wolf was the only one I saw or even heard on that trip, but there were many more in the area. They were all playing their role as scripted in nature, that being, making themselves scarce when people are around. I had a rare opportunity to study this particular wolf for many hours. It was not in the least bit frightened of me. Wolves in that part of the country have little if any contact with people. That usually will result in them running far and fast to put distance between you and them. I was happy this was not the case with this one. The hours spent observing it where of great value to me. I was asked why I didn’t shoot it at the time, and on occasion since when I mention the episode to others. I am one of those hunters who hunt to eat not just to shoot and kill. I don’t shoot something I am not going to eat unless it presents a real danger. We will discuss some of what I learned from this encounter later in the study.

The area I hunt elk in Wyoming is now overrun by wolves. These particular wolves have lost some fear of man because they are protected. We have observed them walking through wide-open pastures next to homes

and barns during the day. This type of boldness is a direct result of them not paying a penalty for it. Some may say why a penalty? That's simple. In each case they have been looking for an easy kill of a domestic animal. Not much of a challenge for them but some real good eating. We will see this same behavior displayed in those that God refers to as wolves in scripture.

I am sure many of you have seen documentaries on wolf packs. Often they will speak a lot about the hierarchy of the groups. There is always a dominant male and female. The dominant animals can be absolutely brutal to other members of the pack especially when their dominance is challenged. Rank has its privileges when it comes to breeding, eating, and much more. No doubt many have observed them hunting during these documentaries. I find it hypocritical of the producers often, for they really don't show the hunt from start to the gruesome finish. They usually will cut sections of the hunt out, as well as the feeding on the animal when it is still alive. To understand what a wolf does spiritually we need to understand what a real wolf does in conducting its business. It's not pretty and very brutal. What a wolf does to a sheep is something most would not want to witness, even the aftermath. Many sheep are too naive to run for their lives. They depend on their shepherd to protect them. That's great if the shepherd has the character of biblical David but not when a hireling is filling that position.

If we have opportunity we will also address the loner wolf today. They are usually very shifty and crafty. And then there is the wolf in sheep's clothing. Something completely contrary to nature and very, very, deadly to the flock! Regardless of the status of the wolf, every one of them must kill to eat for they are meat-eaters. They need to shed blood. Their existence depends on it. It is very sobering that God uses the wolf to typify the behavior of some men spiritually. We must never minimize this nor forget it, for their behavior can be seen all around us in these dark and gloomy evil days.

We will also discuss the hirelings as goats and the roll of rams in the flock as well. God talks about them all in relation to men.

Our method of learning today will be according to scripture and as delineated in Isaiah 28: 9-10;

“Whom will He teach knowledge? And whom will He make to understand the message? (remember the two fundamental building blocks to acquiring wisdom through patterns) 1) Those weaned from milk! and 2) Those drawn from the breasts! (not infants any longer) For precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.”

Genesis the first chapter contains the beginning of knowledge of patterns to be found in creation. God has left us an incredible lesson here if we are willing to believe.

The heavens and the earth, light and dark, night and day, water and solid ground, grass and seeds, trees and fruit, sun and moon, all kinds of creatures; birds, fish, cattle, etc all after their own kind and so on. An absolute wealth of knowledge if we can understand it as God wants us to. God takes a lot of time and scriptures explaining all their patterns to us throughout the entire word of God.

But something very special takes place on the sixth day in verse 26;

“Then God said, let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

What an incredible amount of knowledge is transferred here by God to those who wish to understand the hidden things of God or as many religionists put it, the mysteries of God.

In Their image and according to Their likeness simply tells us we look like God with hands, feet, legs, head, eyes, ears, etc as well as having Their ability to make moral decisions. None of the rest of the physical creation has this ability for each species is programmed by a specific instinct, which forms their pattern of life with all its activities and results. Man however has free moral agency! We have a spirit which sets us apart. That spirit enables us to make moral decisions. Without it we would not have “dominion” over the other living creatures that are found on the earth. In fact we would be just part of the food chain. Through this spirit

in man we are able to think of, as well as make moral decisions in relation to the other species which have been given life by God. It was critical to our being granted dominion over them so that we could experience some of the responsibility which God hoped we would emulate and exhibit after Their kind. Righteous behavior and character development was the goal and still is. It is a training exercise in godliness. Dominion here in verse 26 is #7287 in the Strongs. It says of it, “a prime root; to tread down, ie subjugate; specifically to crumble off.”

The Brown, Driver, Briggs says of it, “have dominion, rule, dominate ... as in chastise, tread, trample” One thing we are taught here about this dominion is it will take a lot of work. For instance if you walk up to a lion and suggest to it you are going to dominate it by trampling it down, treading on it, or even chastising it, I do believe its instinct would kick in and you would become dinner or maybe just a lifeless corpse. The same pertains to a horse. We just don’t walk up to it and suggest to it we have dominion over it so take me for a nice ride. Mr. Horse will have a different idea which would result in us getting thrown off and maybe even trampled down our self. The same pertains to a cow. It doesn’t say to itself, oh there’s a man, he has dominion over me so I think I will fatten myself up so he can eat me.

We have been given the ability to work in the lives of the other living creatures in a similar way that God works in our lives. I don’t think it takes any explanation from me as to how this was meant to happen. What we do need to address right here is the big omission which takes place in verse 26. Nowhere in the account of creation week do we see God giving man dominion over another man or for that matter a woman. This is very important. Man was not given the authority to tread down, trample, or subjugate another of his kind. It was not part of the plan or the command. It was not to be found in God’s training for us, or the work of our hands. We were created in Their image and likeness.

Unfortunately for the first man and woman, the first Adam and Eve, there was a test applied to them after their basic training was complete to see if they would remain faithful to it and thus the image and likeness of God. Everything had gone well according to plan up to that point. Life was good and when life is good, get ready. Israel was warned about that repeatedly. Many scriptures come to mind with Deuteronomy 8:11-14 being just one of them. I hold this lesson close to heart, and have made an effort to call a fast during good times.

To sum it up they failed miserably. Lets pick up the aftermath in Genesis 3:9, “Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, where are you? So he (Adam) said, I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself. And He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

Now watch how Adam responds to a very specific question. He does not do so with a simple yes, which would have meant he was taking responsibility for his own actions.

Verse 12;

“Then the man said, the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I ate.”

So here we have Adam, the progenitor of all mankind after him except for Christ, blaming Eve for his actions. Not just Eve however, for he also blames God here as well for giving her to him. Now watch, his terrible example did not go unnoticed.

Verse 13;

“And the Lord God said to the woman, what is this you have done? And the woman said, the serpent deceived me and I ate.”

Eve followed Adams example of blaming another for her actions, not taking responsibility for them herself. Grandma would say, “What a fine kettle of fish we have here” and probably throw in a, “monkey see, monkey do” remark.

God goes on now and details what They did as punishment to the three individuals involved in the sin. What is important to the patterns we will be discussing today is found in the last part of verse 16 where God is addressing Eve.

“...your desire shall be toward your husband, (yes they were married) and he shall rule over you.”

The Hebrew word translated rule here is #4910 *mashal*. Strongs says of it, “a prime root; to rule.”

The Vines says of it, “to rule, reign, have dominion. This term is common in both ancient and modern Hebrew...it is used most frequently in the text to express the ruling and dominion of one person over another.”

There is no doubt what this word means here in this verse. For the first time ever in their relationship Adam would have dominion, rule, over his wife Eve. This was a terrible turn of events. It also would affect the plan of salvation and the future roles of the second Adam and the second Eve. However, that is for another study. Adam and Eve had now entered into an entirely different relationship and set the pattern for the rest of mankind. That is not what God wanted at creation but due to Adam and Eve entering into a sinful act and the resulting character flaw being revealed, a new pattern was set in motion. God would now have to work with it and use it to further Their plan and the revealing of the family of God. They had to change part of the process. It would take millennia for Them to work with this relationship to accomplish Their plan through one becoming the Son and the other the Father. But focusing on where we are here in Genesis 3:16 we must acknowledge not only the rulership which entered in but also the “desire” Eve would have for her husband. This is very important to understanding the balance which would now be required in the marriage relationship and how it would shape that between the second Adam and second Eve especially when it comes to another stepping between them as Satan had done.

Desire here is the Hebrew word #8669, *teshuwqah*. Strongs says of it, “from 7783 in the original sense of stretching out after; a longing.” #7783 is *shuwq* and means, “to run after or over, ie: overflow.”

The Brown, Driver, Briggs says of it, “longing.”

Now why do I say this is so important to understand?

Because right here we see what is to be the pattern of a relationship that will lead to the union of the Son of God with His bride. The second Adam and the second Eve. He will be sovereign in their relationship and she will long for Him, follow Him wherever He goes, suffer with Him, rejoice with Him, obey Him and His lead, love Him, and remain faithful to Him all the days of her life. She will be one with Him. She will not allow anyone or anything to come between them as the first Eve had done with Adam. She will take direction from Him and only Him. She will follow the family rules, which are those of the Patriarch God the Father, as her husband teaches them to her. She will not be competing with Him for rule in the household let alone in their relationship.

The first Eve was deceived into believing Satan’s teaching was correct and her husbands flawed. Satan used her vanity to make her stumble, as well as using the desires of her flesh. The second Eve will have nothing to do with vanity. It is a death trap spiritually for it is the underlying reason and motive for why Lucifer sinned. Ezekiel 28: 17; “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor...” Now contrast this with the attributes of the bride of Christ as stated in her resume in Proverbs 31:30, “Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain. But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.”

So from this point forward in Genesis, woman was to cling to her husband as one in everything. No competition, no desire for power over him in any form whether intellectual or physical. There was to be absolutely no vanity in their relationship.

But!

We have not forgot about the 3rd being in this first sin between Adam and Eve. He was now to be a pestilence to them and a continual burden to them and all their offspring. We see the effects of it all around us today. We will address that alot as we continue in this study.

The understanding of the pattern, which was to exist between a husband and a wife, is quite simple. It is one of mutual love, admiration, and respect, and of suffering together in all things. Satan has left nothing undone in his attempt to destroy that relationship physically and he is relentless in doing so between Christ and His bride as well. Christ will marry His church, His called out ones who have not only been called and chosen but most importantly who have remained faithful in all things to Him and to the Father of the family. This is not an easy task having to contend with the pulls of the flesh let alone the constant attacks from the devil. We do rejoice however in the fact that the second Adam is a true Savior of His body, His spiritual flesh and blood, and will never leave nor forsake us as the first Adam did to the first Eve. If there ever was a case of throwing someone under the bus it was displayed by Adam.

Satan knows how successful he has been at coming between a husband and a wife. We are surrounded by the evidence of it. He is using the same tactics to come between those called of the Father unto His Son. He is very clever and will stop at nothing to do so. As soon as he can put a controlling voice between us and our husband, he knows he is close for his success rate is almost perfect. We can't let this happen to us! If we have allowed such things to take place we must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ to overcome it and thwart such wicked things. We must always look to our husband for direction and understanding and no other. It is vital to an everlasting relationship between a husband and wife.

It has been imperative that I establish the things I have before we proceeded with the patterns of the hireling and the wolf. I only hope it can be as important to you as it has been to myself, and others. We are our brother's keeper. The church, the body of Christ, is under relentless attack from our adversary the devil.

We are going to pattern a lot of identities today. When talking about hirelings and wolves we need to bring in the whole cast of characters as well as all the descriptions God assigns to them. We will be covering and assigning names such as false shepherds, worthless shepherds, fatlings, thieves, robbers, and he-goats to the appropriate characters. We will be identifying sheep, goats, and rams through their interactivity with hirelings and wolves. The Bible is very clear about all of these if we just follow it through its patterns.

Lets start with the hireling first. There is no better place to start than in John the 10th chapter. We will be introduced to both the hireling and the wolf here as well as some of their character flaws, and some traits which are very discernable spiritually. But first let's let the word of God lead into it and build the foundation in context for what Christ is teaching us for our safety and well being.

John 10:1-5;

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

So much wisdom here! Lets just repeat a few simple and obvious facts from these verses which have been illustrated here for our understanding.

A sheepfold is meant to be a place of security.

Not all the sheep in it belong to one shepherd.

There are robbers and thieves who want to penetrate the sheepfold. They know they can't come through the front door and must use other methods.

There is a doorkeeper or gatekeeper who decides who comes through the door. He is able to discern between a shepherd and a robber.

The shepherd uses the open door to call to his sheep.

His sheep recognize his voice and gleefully follow after him and reject the voice of a pretender.

Now I am sure our minds can be swimming in many of these illustrations as to what they represent individually and as a whole. We will follow some, if not all of them through today, for they are a contextual foundation for what Christ is going to further illustrate here in John 10, as well as teach.

Verses 7-14,

“Then Jesus said to them again, most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who come before Me (to the door that is) are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.” (He is talking about false and worthless shepherds here)

I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” (Notice the sheep are going to be the only ones let into the fold. The fold was used to keep sheep safe at night when predators do most of their dirty work. During the daylight the sheep go to and from the fold under the watchful eye of the shepherd.)

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come so that they will have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (Quite a contrast. No mincing of words here as to the purpose of a thief. Be mindful Satan is the chief thief, killer, and destroyer with his minions just mimicking his ways.)

Verse 11;

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. But a hireling and not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves (yields up is what the Greek means here and that will become very important in identifying a hireling) the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.”

Oh is there alot to talk about here.

A hireling is not a true shepherd but just one who plays the role for a price. He does not own the sheep and when trouble arises he says, “I am out of here” if it endangers him. He will not lay down his life for the sheep. He will however make a livelihood from them.

King David didn't own the sheep he watched but he sure did put his life on the line to protect them. 1 Samuel 17:34-36,

“But David said to Saul, your servant used to keep his fathers sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it. Your servant has killed both lion and bear...”

David was no hireling. He set a perfect physical example of what a shepherd should be willing to do even if he did not own the sheep for he was entrusted with their well being. He was a worthy shepherd and earned his wages. On the other hand the hireling is nothing more than a thief and a robber, taking wages but never intending to protect the sheep when a wolf (or bear or lion) would show up. The hireling is a coward with deep character flaws. The hireling likes having dominion over the flock but not to the depth of fighting for it with a real genuine predator. It's just a way of making a living. These hirelings are false and worthless shepherds, and they are also likened to goats by God.

We will be reading from Ezekiel quite a bit today as well as other first covenant scriptures but nothing sums up the activities in full length color as does Ezekiel 34, in reference to them being goats. We can read about it in verses 18-21,

“Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue (remainder) of your pasture, and have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet?”

And as for My flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they drink what you have fouled with your feet.

Therefore thus says the Lord God to them: (the goats) behold I Myself will judge between the fat (goats, for they ate all the choice things) and the lean sheep (because they only were left with defiled residue).

Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones (sheep) with your horns, and scattered them abroad.”

Here we have a very vivid description of what a goat will do to a flock of sheep. In ancient times goats were trained to lead a flock of sheep in some cultures. They had attitude one might say in today’s vernacular. It is a fact that goats will push sheep around but only the weak ones, that being the ewes and the lambs. They will butt them with their shoulder and their horns to keep them from feeding on what they think is theirs. They will only allow the weak to eat on what is left after they have repeatedly had their fill and defiled the rest. I hope your minds are swimming in the realities of today when it comes to hirelings and the sheep and these simple illustrations given to us by God.

How do we know these are goats here and that God is labeling worthless and false shepherds as such? The entire context before this from verse one tells us so. Before we get to the grim details lets read verse 17.

“And as for you O my flock, thus says the Lord God; (Adonay Yehovih throughout) behold I will judge between sheep and sheep, rams and goats.”

This is an absolute promise, as we will see later in Matthew the 25th chapter. But here we can see the backdrop of their behavior as we have just done and will continue to do in Ezekiel 34. But lets establish the key characters in this judging. Sheep here is the Hebrew word, sey # 7716. It refers to a lesser or small member of a flock which grazes. That would be a ewe or a lamb be it of sheep or goats. Then we have rams mentioned which is #352 ayil. It can refer to almost anything strong but when used in this context it means “a ram from his strength.” Then we have goats. It is the Hebrew word attud (attitude) #6260. Strongs says of it, “prepared, ie full grown; spoken only in plural of he-goats, or leaders of the people.”

Lets examine this cast of characters here.

Little sheep will be judged with little sheep. Those are the weaker members of the flock and that is what God does in His righteousness. Once again we will go through all of that when we get to the second covenant scriptures later.

Then we have a judgment between Rams and He-goats. Very important to our understanding of what is going on today. A new character is introduced here, that being Rams. Rams are mature male sheep. They are not goats. They are not shepherds. However they do watch over the flock. A ram will flatten a he-goat that tries to mess with his flock. It is really something to watch. The ram is a symbol of strength throughout the scriptures and in many cultures anciently as well as today. Here we see a judgment taking place, between rams and he-goats. Now why do you think God makes that point here in Ezekiel 34? It should be obvious to us all. Rams resist he-goats, the leaders, or false and worthless shepherds of the flock. The hirelings, trained to be “the leaders”.

I have had the wonderful experience of seeing some real rams come to the rescue of the weaker members of the flock of God today. I have seen them stand up to both hirelings and wolves. They are a major asset in the work of God, in the body of Christ. They seek no wages or self-glorification, and certainly no dominion over other members of the flock. They have a responsibility to look out for the weaker members and help them to reach a state of maturity in a safe environment. God will judge them as a ram and in direct correlation to their actions towards he-goats. This is very important to the body of Christ for it is He who places all of us in His body as He sees fit, as we will review later.

Getting back to the he-goats. They are cowards when they are stood up to. At times they will try bluffing their way through something but if they come up against a ram or a real shepherd they will back down or get smacked. Either way they are humiliated in human terms for they are full of vanity. They are real tough

talkers with ewes and lambs. They appear to them to be strong but also insensitive to the needs of the flock or congregation because they are focused on feeding themselves with the best of the best. They will take from the flock when the flock has virtually nothing. Lets read about these thieves and robbers in excruciating detail here in chapter 34 starting in verses 1-2.

“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: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks!” (Statement not a question)

:3) “You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock.” (only filthy residue)

:4) The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.”

Brethren this is talking about what has happened and is happening in the churches today. The worthless shepherds are so intent on providing for themselves from what the sheep have to give they are causing incredible hardships on the body of Christ. They want everything the sheep can produce! They call themselves shepherds of God but are anything but in their actions and their cravings.

:5) “So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; (just hirelings, he-goats, thieves, and robbers.) and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered.”

I have witnessed this time and time again. When a group or congregation is caught up in this type of leadership they eventually break apart due to the tug of war over dominion of the sheep. Then you see all the wolves circling the sheep picking them off before they have a chance to reach the safe pastures of the Good Shepherd. What should be troubling to us is the lack of rams to stand up for the weaker members of the flock. Those men who are not paid wages but have the ability to protect the flock should be making a difference but in many cases fold to the pressure put on them by the hirelings. If you find yourself in a situation in which you can be a defender of the flock and you have the ability to do so you had better do it or the Good Shepherd will judge you just as He does a he-goat hireling.

:6) “My sheep wandered through all the mountains (folds of the muckety mucks who are high on dominion) and on every high hill: (the little muckety mucks who want to be like the big ones) yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.” (except for wolves)

Now we are going to get to the physical punishment for the hirelings, the great ones, who trodden down the sheep and take everything they produce for themselves.

:8-10) “ As I live, says the Lord God surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd (one who acted like one) nor did My shepherds (those He has actually placed in the body as overseers) search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock, therefore, O shepherds (both categories here) hear the word of the Lord God: Behold I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them.”

Just incredible!

Here God tells us He will change the entire structure of the flock and how it will function. No more shepherds! What do I mean by this?

God will use the sheep to care for the sheep. He will give them what they need and He will place them in the body so that it is cared for by all the members of it. No muckety mucks, no worthless shepherds, no hirelings, no he-goats, no thieves and robbers, no perverted dominion of any kind. That is what is happening today. The Good Shepherd is calling out His sheep by name, one by one, out of a fold which has become corrupted after the ways of this world and after the spiritual sickness of Satan. He is giving them an enhanced spirit to see them through.

Lets read Ephesians 4: 7-8 and 11-16. We have covered these verses often in the past and when doing so I usually point out we do not use verses 9-10 for they are not part of the word of God and fit very clumsily in this context as they should. These particular verses here are used by the “great ones” to claim dominion over Gods sheep. They are blinded to the intent and purpose of them.

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 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 we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried away with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working, by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edification of itself in love.”

The great ones try to use these verses to declare they have dominion over the brethren, the sheep of God. They are completely deluded and suffer from spiritual diseases of the mind. They actually believe that these are titles of authority given by Christ here. How sick is that! These are simple functions given by Christ to help the body grow into the stature and fullness of Christ its husband. They are given for “the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry” That means just what it says. The entire body is to function for the “ministry” or as the Greek means “service” of itself in love with each and every part doing its share. Christ will feed Himself, His body. He will give us clean and safe pastures to feed in, away from the fray of those who are hell bent on dominion and fleecing us of everything we own, and scattering us all over the landscape of religious perversion.

What we are reading in Ezekiel 34 is very relevant to us today. We will get back to lots of second covenant scriptures later to clearly show what the body of Christ looks like and how it is to function but lets continue back in Ezekiel 34 to continue confirming the truth of who and what we are and these vital lessons of survival. Verses 11-16;

“For thus says the Lord God: Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.

And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country.

I will feed them in good pasture, and their folds shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God.

I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.”

Incredible promises for our time, yes, the times of the second covenant. However for our testing and perfecting we will have to endure a lot of Satan’s dirty work. He will use any and every available means to separate the sheep, the parts of the body from the Head. The simplest way to do that is to layer levels of benefactors between Christ and us. When I read these verses and others like them I think of Revelation 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, (to our minds) I will go into him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

That is clearly one on one. One body and one spirit! No layers of benefactors allowed but only one Head. He places us in the body as He sees fit for one purpose and that is to edify and build up the body so it can minister

to itself in love. That is why we read the things we do from the last surviving apostle (one sent forth). John teaches us in 1 John 2:27, "But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him." Yes we do abide in Him as He Himself says we should, not as some thief, or robber, or hireling, or he-goat, worthless shepherd, or as we will see shortly, angel of light or false apostle. As the apostle John reminds us we will have the Diotrefes types in the church. We who are called of God at this time have a lot of burdens to overcome and a lot of deception to see through. We have the actions of all the aforementioned to deal with but even more which can be very emotional when it comes to an individual whom we may have put a lot of trust into. We will only address that here briefly for God mentions a particular category of shepherd in Ezekiel 34 and verse 8. He says very specifically "My shepherds" did not search for My flock. Yes two groups of shepherds mentioned in this context of not searching for His scattered flock. Remember this is not in the context of searching for them to feed off them and rule them with force and cruelty as a hireling he-goat does, but to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring back what was driven away, or seek out what was lost.

There are some who start out as true shepherds who will loose their entire focus. Jeremiah 10:21, "For the shepherds have become dull-hearted, and have not sought the Lord; therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered."

There are many reasons why this can happen but none of them are acceptable to God.

I have personally witnessed this in my time in the body. It is a very sad occurrence but nonetheless one we need to deal with from time to time. We can't let our emotions cloud our spiritual judgment at those times. Every member of the body is required to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no exception. If an overseer's heart grows dull they have become as tasteless salt. They will not allow the rest of the body to grow in the manner which will bring them to the fullness and stature of Christ to a perfect man. That flock will then be scattered as sure as the sun will rise each day. I am not talking about every wind of doctrine here brethren but about those things which build up the body. That does not mean pump up with sugar water for a quick high. There are many running about to and fro doing that presently. I am not going to dwell on this in this study for it is a subject which needs to be addressed on it's own. Many of you have walked that walk in the past.

The predominant problem we will run into is that of the hirelings. I have known a lot of them in my lifetime. I have confronted a lot of them during my calling. They all have the very same pattern. It is called, "**follow the money**". These types are basically cowards at heart but very determined in their quest for easy pickings. That is why they prey on the weak of the flock. They would never defend the flock from attack especially if they are told they will be safe and full if they just yield them up. I have wrangled in my mind whether I would bring up one of these encounters of the past for I am basically a very private person when it comes to personal things. However before sitting down and putting this study together I came to the understanding it would be necessary to allow others into my past to be able to convey in very clear terms what I am putting forth to the body. I am not comfortable with it but that is for me to overcome and set aside.

Let me give you a personal experience to clearly illustrate my point that hirelings are cowards just as we were taught in John 10 by Christ.

Back in the olden days when I was a member of the Worldwide Church of God I noticed some very unsettling patterns developing with the leadership of that organization. The time period I am referencing is the late 80's and early 90's. At the time I was a member of a congregation of a little over 300 brethren. My wife and I were very committed to the core beliefs of that organization as it followed Christ. We attended with our four young children. We were involved in the daily life of the congregation in many respects. The one thing we did not participate in was the YOU activities all over the state and country. We did not need a surrogate avenue for teaching our children about sports let alone life and all its relationships. However there is little else we were

not involved in. I was involved in taking attendance, set up of the hall, securing our hall rentals for that matter, fund raising, etc. Linda and I combined our efforts outside of these functions to often host such things at our home as campouts, cookouts, and senior festivities. We functioned in all this only to the point it would not be detrimental to our children's well being. Linda actually fulfilled here roll as the mother and I tried to do so as the father. Many of you have done the same things. You have walked the same path.

Linda and I started noticing some very disturbing patterns of character and doctrine starting to manifest themselves in our congregation. They were obvious with the "minister" and those close to him. By that I do not mean anything sinister as to being covert for these guys were quite blatant about their newfound "freedoms".

I spoke with the minister who was responsible for our local congregation about some of our concerns. They went nowhere. I was given the run around on some and on others was told headquarters set doctrine not me. That was a big mistake telling me that for I was very clear in my response that headquarters was to follow the directives of Jesus Christ and the Father.

I then spoke with some of the "leading men" in the congregation. They thought I was delusional and loosing faith and stressed that any changes from headquarters would be for our own good and we were not to question them but rather comply with them.

My wife and I were very concerned for the spiritual well being of our children. They knew nothing other than the milk of the word and had stood their ground on it as had Linda and I in dealing with such things as school, sports, friendships, and business. We functioned as a unit in these things in all our undertakings. Now we were beginning to see and hear sermons and sermonettes embracing unbiblical teachings. This all led up to the time period of 1992. We were being flooded with guest speakers who were promoting the new teachings of the church administration. They flooded our congregation because the hireling who was in charge of the flock was embracing the teachings. It still makes me sick when I see some of these same he-goats running around as "ministers" in some of the current church organizations playing their follow the money and dominion game plan. These men tried perverting the underlying doctrines of our faith.

In December of 1992 I was removed from the speaking schedule for setting the record straight about our true identity and our belief in the sanctity of the Sabbath. No big surprise there to Linda and I. What was a surprise was I was asked to continue in all my other responsibilities of leading graduate club, running the fundraising efforts, hosting the seniors events, and so on. Imagine that!

At this time Linda and I knew our "minister" was a complete hireling. He could not yield the flock up fast enough. He did not have to flee because he was not being threatened but rather praised by the pack running church administration. He had clearly placed his faith in his paycheck and not in that which was once delivered. As bad as all this was, things progressively went down hill more. We knew we could not keep attending under such circumstances. The Sabbath we actually left on was in September of 1993 when we sat and listened to a sermonette where the speaker talked about how he resurrected a dead bird which had hit his window that morning and a sermon in which the "minister" read from a book as to why God the Father was not our father.

That was the limit and it was our last Sabbath attending a Worldwide service. We informed the "minister" we would not be back and left without talking to anyone else about our complete distain for what they were doing.

But back to the coward aspect of a hireling.

During a club meeting I encouraged an individual to bring up a question which I felt needed to be addressed and answered, based on one of the new doctrines being floated in our congregation. It basically said, if a person broke into your house and was going to rape and murder your wife and daughter and you had a shotgun in the closet would you kill the individual to save your family. The chief hireling was quick to intervene and stumbled around the question and suggested it was not an appropriate question for our setting. I

insisted it was very appropriate for the scriptures are filled with examples of a father's responsibility to protect his family physically and spiritually. The minister deferred it for another time. To my surprise he actually brought it up to the entire congregation the following Sabbath. His answer however came as no surprise. He said even in those circumstances he could not take the life of the would-be murderer rapist of his wife and daughter if it came to that as the only means of preventing it all from happening. Do I need to say more? It was several weeks after this that he gave the God is not our father sermon and we were gone. We left in peace and in silence. We did not cause any disruption at all. The following Wednesday when I was at work during the day he and a wannabe in training came to the house when Linda was home to pick up the records for the fruit sale. It was at that time that he informed Linda that we were disfellowshipped on the advice from Worldwide headquarters, from a man who is currently a muckety muck in the COG which is currently fighting for the right to feed on many of the sheep who are our brethren. Just imagine this. We left with no animosity, just complete disgust, and were looking for a safe place to feed on the word of God and to be safe from hirelings and wolves. We had never contacted anyone in that regard or talked with any local brethren in that church organization.

True to form, a hireling, is a coward, is a hireling. In my mind they had declared war on my family and I engaged the enemy quickly and effectively. When the brethren returned home from services on the following Sabbath they were greeted by a letter we had written to every member we had an address for which was almost all of them. Our disfellowshipping had been announced that Sabbath in a round about way. Our phone did not stop ringing from 6 am to midnight for many weeks as brethren got word of what had happened. The following Sabbath we were marked publicly which turned into a nightmare for this pack of losers. The rest is history and I won't elaborate.

We will leave the hireling and move onto the wolf shortly. We must never confuse a hireling and a wolf for that could be very dangerous. A wolf is very clever and at times very patient. A wolf is also not a coward. However they can be frightened and will learn very quickly to stay away from something which can hurt them and inflict damage to them. Wolves behave very differently when they are hunting and when they are socializing. Wolves hunt in groups or packs when they are looking for a large feeding opportunity. When looking for a quick meal they will hunt by themselves but this is only for small game such as mice, ground squirrels, etc., but those things will not satisfy them for long. Wolves are not afraid of their prey but they are afraid of other larger predators. Remember in John 10 Christ told us that a wolf scatters a flock. A wolf does this for the purpose of causing confusion and anxiety so it can make an easier kill. As we read earlier, hirelings or he-goats also scatter the flock, but for a completely different reason. They want to keep some of the sheep, the weaker ones in their fold so they can feed on them without killing them. They are in it for the money and dominion and not for overtly killing. They need to keep sheep alive to some extent so they can produce for them. They are false shepherds who are thieves and robbers at heart. They are cowards when confronted by strength but with the backing of other hirelings they can play the bluff card and seem strong to some of the sheep in the fold. One other very important thing, they are without God's spirit. Two very different patterns! I have heard brethren in the past label some hirelings as wolves but they have been wrong in their definition of such.

Lets listen to the apostle Paul talk about how he functioned in his service to the brethren.

2 Corinthians 11:1-2;

“Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly, and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. **For I have betrothed you to one husband**, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

We must hear what Paul has just stated here loud and clear. He has just laid out his role in the body of Christ. He has just given every one of us the purpose for our service in the body. The church is the bride of Christ. It

is the responsibility of the mature members of that body to use their gifts to do exactly the same. They are to build up, to equip the body, so every member can do its part in doing the same for other parts of the body until 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. We are all to help one another qualify to be the bride of Christ.

Hirelings do not want you to come to that unity and certainly not want you to be betrothed to Christ in a one on one relationship. They will always want to be between you and Christ. They do not want you to grow in grace and knowledge but to be dumbed down so you can be a means of sustenance to them.

We are to be one with our Husband and through Him with our heavenly Father. A true apostle, a true prophet, a true evangelist, a true pastor, and a true teacher will be doing just that. They will sacrifice and suffer so that the members of the body will strive to attain to the marriage with her husband. They will exalt the members and not themselves. They will defend the body against all who would use it for their own dominion and personal gain. They will take a low profile in the body for the service of it, and not exalt themselves with great titles and positions of dominion. They will use the resources provided by the body to assist the entire body and not themselves.

Verse 3: "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."

Now what simplicity is that? That He is our Husband and the head of the body. What He says goes, not what some deceiver asserts as the serpent did to Eve. She left her husband's teachings and instruction for the deceitfulness of another. She allowed someone to defile their relationship. Paul said not on my watch folks!

Verse 4: "For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom 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."

That brethren is just like today. Our lives can be so full that we let down our guard and can be swayed into a false understanding of our relationship with Christ. We can take what looks like an easy road and think someone else can steer or in fact drive for us. Please do not ever do that. A true Pastor would never insert himself into that role so when you see someone functioning like that or even eager to, you need to put an end to it. Our relationship is to be one on one with our Husband. We are to direct our thoughts and activities to that process and goal and yes we are our brother's keeper. That means we have that same outlook for each other.

Paul has just set the context and groundwork for what he is about to teach the brethren in Corinth and thus us as well.

Verse 5: "For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. Even though I am untrained in speech (not a graduate of some hireling university with a polished speaking skill) yet not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things."

What they saw is what they got as the saying goes. No pretence, no deceit, not shifty character, and no dominion over them. He didn't even request any monetary assistance from those they were serving in Corinth because they wanted to set the right example of what an apostle was. They had a right to request support from them but because of the influx of false apostles and false teachers at that time they would not do so. That gave them opportunity to show a difference between themselves and the hirelings who were multiplying rapidly and trying to insert themselves between Christ and His betrothed. They were claiming they were the true ministers of Christ and that their gospel was the real one, and by the way pay up.

Verses 7-12: "Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I stripped (not robbed, Strongs #4813 sulao: to strip) other churches, taking wages to minister to you. And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what was lacking to me, the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep."

As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia (a hotbed of false teachers at the time). Why? Because I do not love you? God knows! But what I do I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast.”

Paul set the standard of what an apostle should be. Please remember apostle only means “one sent forth.” It is a simple function and not a rank, or position, or a means of privilege. It has an authority which goes with it but only that which is according to scripture and it is set in the humility of Christ not in the vanity of Satan. Look at why he has just stated all these things to the Corinthians. A big warning for the survival of the flock! Verses 13-15;

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”

Here Paul has linked this lesson to money. You will know them by their fruit. If the flock is being pressured to give more and more there is something wrong. No minister of Christ will ever function in that way. The hirelings of today are continually beating on the sheep for more and more of what they have. They are told it is their responsibility to provide them with all the capital to finish the work. That is completely unscriptural as to function, for Christ will complete His own work. They are delusional and full of themselves and self-importance. They attempt to separate us from Christ and from our wallets at the same time. Their behavior is shameful and satanic. Let me add here that a wolf has little interest in such things for it wants to kill and destroy. Lets not lose sight of that.

Paul knew all too well that the scriptures made it clear that he could make a living by preaching the gospel as well as by ministering to the body of Christ. Throughout his epistles he makes it clear however that it was not a focus of his. His reward was to come, as he put it. He also makes it clear that he was allowed to have a life outside of his work like some of the other apostles, but he chose to work around the clock to support, teach, and protect the church.

There were many who were attempting to scatter the flock during his tenure as an apostle. He knew the enemy very well, as we will discuss later. His insight into them is downloaded to us in almost all of his teachings, be it on a spiritual or physical plain. He teaches us how to defend ourselves against the “angel of light” and his false apostles, his false ministers.

One of the most obvious “fruits” of the devils minions is the display of dominion they desire over another. It is truly a spiritual sickness passed to them from their contact with their father. We see this displayed through their quest for rankings of authority and power in their organizations. They are often fighting among themselves for position in these organizations. We know and understand these actions and layers of rankings as gentile hierarchy.

Look what Christ taught us as a result of His disciple’s actions following the Passover service and especially after the footwashing lesson.

Luke 22:24-26:

“But there was also rivalry (love of strife or eagerness to contend) among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest (or greater in rank).” Just imagine that, especially after what we read in verses 14-23. It is clearly the context of the Passover. We must now take to heart what Christ is going to teach us here as to their terrible behavior.

Verse 25: “And He said to them, the kings of the gentiles exercise lordship (kurieuo, rule from the top down) over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But **NOT SO** among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger (youthful, tireless) and he who governs (leads the way) as he who serves.”

We are not to practice the Babylonian methods of governance in the body of Christ. We have only one Head. All others who function in the body are to do so in humility and respect for all the other members. There is to be no desire to be a benefactor in any way, shape, or form.

You can just imagine what this rivalry or love of strife sounded like. "I should be in charge because I was with Christ first." "But I should, I spend more time with Him." "No, I should. I carried some of his garments" etc. The stupid, vain babblings that are associated with hierarchy and respecters of persons in the minds of man. You find it everywhere. It sounds like today. "I should be in charge because I'm an evangelist and have been for over 40 years." "No, I should because I stood up first." "No, I should because I have more truth." "No, I should because I have more love." And it goes on and on. It's the same vain garbage. It's rivalry among them. They can't get away from it.

The word for "greatest" here is "meizon." That word here means larger in age, or elder. It's very important what is being said here. The word "elder" has been totally perverted. Now it has become part of the language of the ranking system. It has been turned into something it was never intended to be.

The hireling's mind swims in delusions of grandeur. He tells you that only he can discern the things of God, so you had better listen up. The false shepherd actually thinks he rules you in spite of all the instructions in the Bible to the contrary. To think you rule God's sheep is satanic; let's get it clear. That is the very attitude Satan developed when he was placed on the earth to lead the angels or the sons of God. Look at what it created. It is pure vanity and confusion. The angels who fell prey to it didn't know what to think. They lost their senses and rebelled against God. If you listen carefully to these folks, they will sooner or later expose themselves. Their angel of light appearance will be exposed. They will tell you they rule you. You are going to hear it sooner or later if that person is a false apostle or one sent forth by the devil. This character flaw, which was first manifested in Satan, the devil, is in all his ministers and servants.

Christ in His final warnings to us through the apostle John gives us a lot of instructions on the state of affairs and composition of the church in the book of Revelation. One of those warnings is about the doctrines of the Nicolaitanes. These are the second covenant equivalent characters to the first covenant Balaam. That is why He links them together. He tells us in Revelation 2:6 & 15 the He hates their deeds.

Why!

Because they separate the called of God from Him by lording it over them. They impose gentile rulership into the body of Christ. They conquer the brethren and have victory over them just as Satan did to the angels who were separated from God so long ago. These false apostles and deceitful workers follow the pattern of the angel of light. They understand and practice the "deep things of Satan" as Christ refers to them (Rev 2:24). He tells us that Satan dwells among us in His message to Pergamos and that there are also those among us of the synagogue of Satan to Smyrna. God names things for what they are and it is very important that we recognize that form of instruction, so let's just follow the name Nicolaitanes through to see that very point.

Nicolaitanes is #3531 and Strongs tells us it comes from #3532, Nikolaos; an adherent of Nicolaus. #3532 is Nikolaos which is from #3534 and #2994: victorious over the people: Nicolaus, a heretic. These two Greek words 3534 Nikos from 3529; a conquest, by implication triumph and 2994 Laodikeus from 2993; a laodicean should scream volumes to us about this deadly doctrine of Satan's which is being practiced across the church landscape.

It is exactly where we are today brethren. Big things are on the horizon. Satan is once again feeling puffed up, even enough to try once again to overthrow God in heaven.

Let me give you another personal experience to illustrate this point and how they use threats and intimidation to achieve their means.

My wife and I joined up with another organization after we left Worldwide. We thought we found a safe pasture. The ministers we came in contact with had separated themselves from our former affiliation during

the same time period we had been struggling in with all the changes. Many reasons for their leaving have floated around but they are irrelevant to this illustration here.

We were very active in this new group and at first the participants functioned in a humble way. Unfortunately that did not last with some of the “ranking” men. I had very intimate knowledge of a lot of the backdoor moves in that group. I became quite troubled by some of them and made my thoughts known. The ranking minister in the region did not like that. He scheduled an impromptu Bible study one evening but failed to invite my wife and myself. We made ourselves available when we found out about it. He was very uncomfortable to see us there. The reasons will become very obvious. He had decided he was going to introduce the demonic doctrine of dominion over the flock here locally in all things, including our faith. He had carefully put together a lesson using most of the prominent scriptures which use the word rule in the church. I am sure most of us know them and have heard them often in the past. He was moving through them using as much slick and spin as he could. As a congregation we had been through a lot and many of us were alert to a change in character and venue when it occurred.

I listened to this lesson in “spin the scriptures” for some time. In fact, until he got to Hebrews 13, which I knew he would get to eventually. If I remember correctly he went to verses 7, 17, and 24 to proclaim he had rule over us and we were to do exactly as he says in everything. Well, so much for the humble start and charade. The funds were coming in now and the salaries were secure as were the perks. Time to lower the rulership doctrine and remove any obstacles from controlling the sheep and separating them from Christ. Well, enough was enough, I had let him “cook his own goose” as grandma would have said and I stood up and contended with him. I informed him he did not have rulership over us and that his understanding of the Greek language was disgusting. I don’t remember all the things I said to him and his assistant as I stood there but one of the brethren recorded it all at the time. While I was talking he was attempting to talk over me all the while, issuing orders to me to sit down, and threats as to how I was going to be in big trouble. He would not answer my question I asked several times as to why he had not invited me to the study. I as well as everyone present knew the answer all too well. He proclaimed the study ended and that he wanted everyone to clear the room except for Linda and I, and his wife, and his assistant and his wife. The threats flowed but in a subdued fashion from him now for he did not have an audience anymore. I continued to go through the scriptures to show clearly he was in error and not functioning after the example of Christ or His apostles. I also quoted several verses from scripture which described him and his deceptive activities. He saw it was going nowhere and told Linda and I we were to have no contact with brethren until he contacted us, and then the “hearing” was adjourned.

When we exited the building there were quite a few brethren outside in the parking lot wanting to know what had taken place. He proclaimed to them that they needed to leave immediately and not have conversations with us. Deluded is an understatement.

True to form he called my wife the next day and used every despicable tactic he could to try and convince her she was in error in following me. Can you believe it? Not only did he have the gall to attempt to separate us from Christ our Husband, he actually attempted to separate Linda and I from each other. The serpent had nothing on him in that regard. He told her our children would be ostracized and left all alone from their friends and that she would lose all contact with the brethren and so on. He tried to intimidate what he thought was a weak member of the flock. I do believe her responses from the Bible shocked him as to the depth of her understanding and conviction to the faith once delivered and to the fact she wasn’t following me but her spiritual head, Christ.

Let me say this. I had a lot of respect for this person for a long time. We spent a lot of time together and had accomplished a lot of good things together for a fledgling organization. However that changed when he became big in his own eyes. I had been warned that he could not mask his true personality for much longer but gave him the benefit of the doubt. I regarded him as a close friend but when he tried to separate us from

Christ that was a very poor choice on his part. He is now the pastor general or some other hogwash title of his own organization. I hope some day he comes to repentance for he actually could be an asset to the body with the natural talents he has been given.

I would hope brethren would do a complete study of the words used in the Greek for ruling. Many translations today actually translate them as the language meant them to be. For instance rule in Hebrews 13:7, 14, and 24 is hegeomai. It is #2233 and both Strongs and Vines tell us it means, "to lead". Do not be dumbed down on this point. You are only ruled by your spiritual Husband in the church. The hireling, he-goat, false shepherd types cannot conceive of authority without rulership and hierarchy and they themselves being the center of it. I am sure there are many reading this who have experienced some very similar episodes in the church wars. I say church wars because Satan has made this his battlefield for the present time. He is meeting no resistance in the world so he is attacking the church from within. That is why we are witnessing breakup after breakup of church organizations. Not all organizations of brethren are bad. There are actually some which are striving to fulfill a mission of love for one another. We will address some of this later. Credit needs to be given where deserved. However most of them are small in size but big in heart. I understand I am not aware of most of them. The same goes for those who are true pastors serving flocks whether scattered or in close proximity. They are out there and you are very fortunate if you have one placed in that function who is serving you and representing your beliefs and convictions to others they come in contact with.

Look what Paul teaches us in Romans 12:3-8.

"For I say through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God 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, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us: if prophecy (#4395 propheteuo; speaking openly of the divine scriptures under inspiration) in proportion to our faith; or ministry, in ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy with cheerfulness."

No dominion or hierarchy involved, or required for that matter. Verse 16 tells us, "Be of the same mind towards one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion."

No hireling in sight here! No muckety muck allowed, just those who are willing to serve the body as they are called and placed in it. Remember the lesson of Ephesians 4:7-8 and 11-16 we covered earlier. Some of these functions in the body are enumerated, "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. These gifts were given to men, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry (not the ministry), for the edifying of the body of Christ, 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 and fullness of Christ."

Once again, for what reason? So we could all stand on our own two feet with our Husband the Christ and be able to defend and assist all the members of the body until they in turn can do the same thing.

"that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working, by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edification of itself in love."

That is very simple and humble in nature. It is a complete mystery to this world which is under Satan's sway and influence. He is instructing his ministers to tighten the screws on the sheep, to lock them up in rulership and dominion. Unfortunately for him he forgets he is dealing with just men and his minions don't always play by his script. They get into too much politicking and he then has a house divided. Vanity, vanity, how telling it is. Oh yes, we will know them by their works.

Lets establish the doctrine of the body of Christ in all its clarity and to its function and purpose.

Let's take a look at I Corinthians 12:1-31. The clarity we find in this lesson tells us all how we are function together as one under Christ's authority and direction.

1: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: (The whole purpose of what Paul's going to speak about here, focuses on spiritual gifts and their true meaning and understanding so we will not be deceived through ignorance.)

2: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.

3: Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

4: There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5: There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. (Ministries here is "diakonia", Strong's #1248, and it comes from #1249 "diakonos" meaning "attendants, as a servant, etc. figuratively an aid or servant, especially of the Christian teacher, or technically of the diakonate").

6: And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all things in all parts of the body.

7: But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:"

(Now once again, why are these things given? To profit all! Remember, they are given for you. They are not given to the one so that he profits from it. It's given so that others profit from it. It's called ministry; it's called service. It's not called being served.)

8: "for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

9: to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,

10: to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues."

(That's nine things that are given there alone by the same Spirit. It's given by God, it's not given by man or any function of man. It's given by God as a function to benefit others.)

11: "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

12: 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.

13: For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."

(There is no mention of men as being even part of the selection process in determining who gets or distributes these gifts is there brethren? No, it's applied to one, the holy spirit, the power of God.)

14: "For in fact the body is not one member but many.

15: If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?

16: And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?

17: If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?

18: But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased."

(Takes the authority away from others doesn't it! Not as men please and their organizations of layers of selected benefactors. God doesn't use some Gentile hierarchy to determine this. He clearly manifests these gifts in people. It is that manifestation of these gifts that gives authority to use them, not some hireling, and not some ecclesiastical organization. Remember, Timothy and Titus were to look for these fruits before officially recognizing them in the body. They certainly didn't in any way give them. They looked for them.)

19: "And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

20: But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.

21: 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." (The individual parts of the body do not have dominion over one another. Ephesians 5:21: "submitting to one another in the fear of God.")

22: No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

23: And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty,

24: but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,

25: that there should be no division [or schism] in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

26: And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. (not in the mind of a hireling)

27: Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually."

28: "And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, (In other words, you can say fourth, fifth, sixth, and move your way right down the line here) then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues."

What is he saying here in verse 28? "Appointed" is Strong's 5087 "tithemi" and it means "to put, to place" and is translated "to set or to put". It is used as "appointment to any service" says Vine's."

Why first apostles? We have talked about that many times in the past, "those sent forth." They were sent forth with the good news of the gospel. They **had** to go forth first, they had first hand knowledge from Christ as to what and how they were to function. Then prophets, or ones speaking in an inspired way could then come, to address the scriptures of God. Thirdly teachers were developed. Why teachers? Because there were many being called, so there had to be teachers to teach them, etc, etc, etc. This isn't talking about some ranking system. That only gels in the mind of someone who is deceived into thinking that Satan's system of rulership and dominion prevails in the body of Christ. They spin the scriptures to their ends. That however is not what God is saying here as we can clearly see in the context and the meanings of these words.

Verses 29-31;

"Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? (obviously not)

But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way."

The Bible is heavily crisscrossed with this simple pattern of the body of Christ. It can be found throughout.

Once again however, it is a mystery to most. It should not be to the called of God. The bride of Christ is one body with Him, of His flesh and bone, as we will address shortly.

So how does Christ work with us, in giving these gifts to us, so that we can function in His body, in His household? Many say they have no gift. That is because they have been dumbed down to think they are inferior and of less value to the body than a muckety muck type hireling or even a wannabe hireling. There are actually a lot of the later bounding about these days.

Matthew 25:15; "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, **to each according to his own ability...**"

That is how Christ gives these gifts to the members of His body. They are given to enhance our natural ability. For instance if you have a proclivity for business or organizational skills, Christ will enhance them so you will have the gift of administration or something similar to it. It is a necessary part of any group or undertaking.

When visiting brethren in Kenya I was confronted with a problem of them wanting to call me pastor. I had to insist they did not do so for I do not have that gift. For one, I lack the special patience and mindset that is needed to carry out that function. It took some time, but they finally agreed to my request. I did explain to them that I had several functions in the body which are a direct result of Christ enhancing natural abilities that

I had previously to being called by the Father. I used the example of administration. Since my youth I have had a proclivity to organize, write down, and put into motion just about everything I worked at. This ability undoubtedly has allowed me to be self-employed for most of my life. After being called, Christ enhanced this ability and I have used it to serve the brethren in the body of Christ for many years whether in organizations or not. This enhancement has become a very big blessing to my work outside of the body as well as in business. A scripture comes to mind whenever I think about how all that works. Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." The context there is easy to see.

If you have the natural ability to be friendly and engage total strangers in a conversation you would have what grandma called the gift of gab. You then are a candidate to receive the enhancing gift from Christ which would place you as an evangelist in the body of Christ. I have a friend who has this gift and when he becomes convinced of the fact he does, he will be used in a very big way for he has a maturity of wisdom and understanding of the knowledge of God to go along with it. I also know a man who is a real live pastor. He is the genuine article and is supported by a group of brethren to perform that function amongst themselves as well as going out to many scattered brethren. He represents their basic belief in the command Christ left with us on the night prior to His being murdered. That is found in John 13:34-35.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Now does this mean they all speak the same thing all the time. Not hardly. It simply means they will have outgoing concern for the rest of the members of the body regardless of what condition they find the scattered sheep in. The scriptures tell us there will be "divisions of doctrine" among us, but that should not provoke us to lord it over one another or somehow think we are superior to one another. Just look to the example of the Corinthian church of God. We have covered that often in the past so we won't today. We should be mature to that teaching from scripture. However if a muckety muck gets on his or her high horse and proclaims their way to be the only way and if they challenge you, it is your responsibility to give a defense for the hope which is in you. By doing so you may set another free from their bondage.

We live in very evil times. They will get much worse however. We need to be establishing ourselves with our Husband to be. We need to be an active part in the body. Remember what we read earlier in Romans 12. It talked about how we are all part of one body but individual members just as 1 Corinthians 12 did. Do you remember it listing all the seemingly high profile functions according to the great ones thinking? Of course you don't. Look at the mix of gifts there. Lets see, prophesy, teacher, leader, ministry or service, and oh look, giving, mercy, exhortation. I wonder what ranking giving, mercy, and exhortation would command in the hirelings system of governance. I hope we are all cognizant that we all have something to contribute to the growth and well being of the body of Christ. For that body to grow in a healthy way we must be a contributor of what Christ has given us. We can't just hang on and not do our part for that would be the actions of a parasite. There is no room for that kind of behavior in the body. We must grow to maturity, we must redeem the time for we are to prepare ourselves so we can in turn prepare others. Christ tells us often that, "many are called and few chosen." It's not enough to be called of the Father. We must be chosen by Christ, we must be at one with Him, and then remain faithful to Him. We must learn our role as the bride, the responsibilities of the wife, in the household of God. You can read that resume in proverbs 31:10-31. Satan will do everything he is allowed to do to discourage us. Satan hates the concept of family: a father, a mother, and children. He hates the idea of a loving respectful relationship between a man and a woman. He hates a man acting like a caring husband and father. He despises a woman who functions as a loving wife and mother. He is incapable of attaining either of these. Thus we have the rejection of the family in many circles of society today. It's going to get much worse. But we need to remain positive through it all and be a light unto this world. We can do that individually and collectively.

We read back in Ezekiel 34 about a judgment coming that would be between sheep and sheep and rams and he-goats. Please do not forget the context there. It was clearly defining two very distinct systems of shepherding for the flock of God. Lets go to Matthew 25:31-45 and see that judgment taking place and with the specific criteria which will be used.

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left.

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: 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; 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?”

Please notice the attitude of those being set to the right side. It is incredibly humble. They are standing before Christ and not recognizing when they did these things to Him. That is because they did it to all the members of His body. It was a way of life to them. No dominion. No requirement to pay up first. Just love for one another, complete outgoing concern for others. Lets not lose sight of the conditions here. They sound incredibly similar to those listed in Ezekiel 34. That’s not a coincidence. They are the aftermath of worthless shepherds ruling the body with force and cruelty. These hirelings and he-goats took the shirts off the flock’s back to promote themselves and their agendas.

Look what the King says to the humble sheep, the meat and potatoes of His body.

40: “And the King will answer and say to them, Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

Is this not just incredible. The Greek word least here is #1646, elachistos. These are the very little unnoticeable parts of the body, the little tiny sheep, the helpless ones. The righteous sheep are not respecters of persons or positions. They are true servants, ministers of the gifts they have been given to serve the entire body.

Now on the other hand we have the goats who have scattered and starved the sheep, spouting off their vain self- importance instead of shutting their mouths after the King gives His judgment. Just listen to their self-righteous answer coming up here.

41-45: “Then He will also say to those on His left hand (goats as v:33 defines them), Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels (messengers), for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in; naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.

Then they will answer Him saying, Lord when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You!” (Just listen to the arrogance here. They are telling the King, the Judge, that they always did it).

45: “Then He will answer them, saying, Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do to one of the least of these, you did not do to Me.”

Christ isn’t about to argue the point with them. It is very sobering to read what He says is their reward for such actions in verse 41. The everlasting (age-ending) fire prepared for the devil and his messengers.

Wonderful company! This is not a light thing.

Jeremiah 23:1-2 comes full circle here.

“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people; You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings, says the Lord.” These are the blind guides who constantly devour and use the sheep up until they are spiritually hungry, thirsty, sick and strangers. Why? Because they have been separated from the body of Christ. They have been dumbed down to believe that they need to go through a surrogate to reach their betrothed. Without the one-on-one contact with our Husband to be we will become hungry, thirsty, sick, and estranged from Him. The oratory of the great ones turns the sheep from Christ and unto themselves for their self-glorification. They proclaim that they are the anointed representatives of God and that they have been chosen to complete the work of God here on earth.

James 1:26-27 has an answer to them and a lesson for us all to learn.

“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep oneself unspotted (aspilos: unblemished) from the world.”

Follow this up with Christ’s instruction to the muckety muck hirelings and wannabe’s of His time here on earth.

Matthew 23:11-14;

“But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be abased and he who humbles himself will be exalted. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. (They get in between the called and God.) Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widow’s houses, and for pretence, make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.”

What simple instruction to the body of Christ at this time. Why orphans and widows? Because so many who have been called of the Father unto His Son have been separated from the Father and Son by the worthless shepherds, the false apostles of the angel of light. These benefactors and surrogates have placed themselves between the called of the Father and the Son. They need to bridle their tongues and repent of the deceptive speaking and lies they have used to turn the brethren aside after themselves and their organizations.

Verse 15: “Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites for you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” Their code word for this is, “we need to finish the work.”

Their cafeterias are drying up more and more each year. Christ is going to finish His work and His work is completing the number of His bride. Only then will He return for her and usher in His kingdom. As Exodus 12:3-4 teaches us, there is a set number who will feed on the lamb in the Father’s household. In fact those 2 verses contain two very important prophetic events in the plan of salvation as we have addressed often in the past in great detail and it is worth touching upon here at this time.

“Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: on the tenth of this month (abib) every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the household of his father, a lamb for a household. (The Father’s household has one Passover lamb, Jesus the Christ.) And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his **neighbor** next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man’s need you shall make your count for the lamb.”

The scriptures have just told us there is a set number who were and are to internalize the Passover Lamb of the household of God the Father. That number was never reached under the first marriage covenant with Israel. This time the gentiles (neighbors) have been called to complete the number assigned to the Lamb. Oh yes! Christ will finish His work!

Much more can be said about those whom Christ says feed on His sheep. He clearly calls them by the names of their activities: hirelings, thieves, robbers, destroyers, he-goats, worthless shepherds, false apostles, etc.

There is no mistaking what He is talking about and how they function. It is never too late to repent of such things and join the effort to minister to the body as scripture commands. We can only hope such a thing happens.

Now let's move on to the wolves. Please do not ever confuse a wolf and a hireling. They are completely different. A wolf seeks blood and death. They will operate in a pack or do so as a loner. The packs are easy to distinguish. The loner is much more discrete in his tactics but the result is the same. We will cover him shortly.

The wolf pack does not try to disguise itself. It is completely open in what it means to do. They wish to completely destroy the sheep of God. They will use any means available to do so. They can use the governments of this world, the religions of this world, or specific races of this world. History is replete with how they do so. The Church of God has been under siege since shortly after its inception. We read about it in the epistles of the new covenant scriptures. Secular writings are also full of the accounts of persecution. Satan will not let up but can only go as far as God allows. None of this should be a surprise to any of us for we have been forewarned in scripture.

Look how clear Ezekiel 22:27 is;

“Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy souls, and to get dishonest gain.”

That is incredibly vivid as to what has and will happen. The pattern of activity is true to form throughout the millennia. The governments of this world have been used to hunt down and destroy the church many times, over and over again.

Look at verse 25.

“The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion (Satan himself) tearing the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst.” There are so many brethren completely consumed and addicted to prophesy today it is a disgrace. There are men who God here compares to devouring lions, “living high off the hog” (as grandma would say) on brethren who are helpless to break themselves free from the diet of sugar water they are being feed. It is so bad they can't eat solid food anymore. They need their sugar water rush weekly. They have become spiritually anemic. They are so addicted to the diet being given out by these prophets that they can't even keep track of their failures of predictions. They need all the help they can get from the body. They have become sick and scrawny. Yet the false prophets continue to prey on them with no compassion or mercy.

Verse 26;

“Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.”

We have witnessed this in our lifetimes in the church. Look what Worldwide did. How many brethren did we walk with who have now been swung to the dark side. They have been told there is no difference between holy and unholy, clean and unclean, and that the Sabbaths of God are profane.

Zephaniah 3:3-4; “Her princes in her midst are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves that leave not a bone till morning. Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.”

Brethren, we don't have a lot of control over what the governments of this world do to us or will do. We don't have a lot of control over what Satan's religious organizations attempt to do to us. But we do have control over what we allow to happen within the Church of God, the body of Christ. Each of us needs to stand up and set the record straight. We are to be the defenders of the widow and the orphan and above all the true way of God, and the household rules.

Christ tells us He is expecting us to go out among the wolves of the world.

Matthew 10:16-18; “Behold I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. And you will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and the gentiles.”

Paul’s exhortation to the elders in Ephesus should be a call to arms for us. He tells us clearly about the wolves and the hirelings.

Acts 20: 27-31.

“For I have not avoided declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

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 misleading things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”

Yes, Paul warned them and thus us about these hirelings and wolves. The wolves would attack in packs from outside but the hirelings would come from within. That is the pattern throughout the scriptures with one exception.

Lets now deal with the deadliest wolf of them all. Think back to earlier when I talked about my encounter with the lone wolf on the shores of the Attawapiskat River. I learned a profound spiritual lesson from this encounter. This lone wolf had come completely out of character for a wolf. It was very calm as it watched me for hours. It was not afraid and was very confident with itself. One could easily have thought it was a domestic dog by its behavior. However that would be a deadly mistake. I have subsequently learned that this behavior is not uncommon to wolves that have left the pack and are loners.

Matthew 7:15-20. Here is a life saving lesson from our Creator and Savior.

“Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”

Here we have a wolf who does not look like a wolf but instead portrays a subdued and meek behavior pattern. How do they accomplish this?

It’s really quite simple. They surround themselves with a language of love. They intermix it in everything they do to appear as something they are not. All the while they are preaching a gospel of love they are killing and scattering sheep one at a time. Their first move is to determine who the rams are and who the goats are. Many of the goats are young wannabe’s. These wise old loner wolves whisper subtle vain confidences to these little he-goats. They puff them up. They bring them into there confidence and slowly direct them to start separating the members of the flock from the rams. They use one of the flocks own to sow doubt about those who have protected the flock. They use the same methods as the wolf in sheep’s clothing for he instructs them. With the flock now in confusion and suspicious of one another he makes his move. He feigns concern for all but uses the moment to implicate the rams who have served the flock continually and without burdening it. These lone wolves are very clever and they can throw the switch to the angel of light mode instantly.

I have had to deal with several of these types in the past. One of their patterns is they like to keep the elderly in their fold and scatter everyone else except for the ambitious wannabe little he-goats. These little he-goats are praised and stroked by the wolf in sheep’s clothing until he has no use for them anymore and then he scatters them as well. His feeding ground is secure for the elderly can’t run any longer.

If you expose this type of wolf for what it is, it will usually flee. But you will need to use spiritual force from on high to accomplish that. They are usually well versed in scripture as Satan was and as he displayed when he tried to tempt Christ in the wilderness. They always will take scripture out of context just as Satan did with

Jesus. Remember when he said to him,” If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: He will give His angels charge concerning you, and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.”

Just imagine if Christ had have followed that lead and picked up the challenge according to what Satan had suggested. Our Savior would have committed suicide, self-murder if He had have done so. Wolves in sheep’s clothing employ the same tactics of twisting and spinning scripture. That is why Christ follows up this warning about them with the instructions He does.

“Verses 16-20, “You will know them by their fruits. (or its outcome, not by what they say) Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so every good tree bears fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”

We need to be alert to this very deadly type of wolf. I refer to them all as “Freddie” after Christ’s example of naming things with a meaning. That being said, they try to pass themselves off as a loveable teddy bear.

Now this instruction of patterns here by Christ applies to all who say they are a servant of the body. Put them all to the test. Don’t just accept what they say. If they are truly a servant of the body they will act like one.

The Bible is filled with example after example of how they are to function. It describes acceptable good fruit and unacceptable bad fruit. Sift what is said through the scriptures. To do so we all need to know the scriptures and be proficient in their use. Remember the Word of God is the sword of the spirit.

For instance when someone comes into our midst and preaches a gospel of prophecy, when and where things will happen we need to be very cautious. When challenged they will usually try to demean the one doing so with scriptures such as Revelation 19:10 “...for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” or 1 Thessalonians 5:20; “Do not despise prophecies.”

When confronted with scripture many will back down from these frauds because they themselves are weak in their understanding for they have not been feeding one on one with Christ. There are three different Greek words used for prophecy depending on whether it is used as a noun, adjective, or verb. I would recommend we all read what the Vine’s Expository Dictionary has to say about them. It is as clear an understanding as one can get on the application of the Greek. We need to educate ourselves so we can all speak about the inspired word of God through the holy spirit in us. Don’t be awed by someone telling you they are a prophet of God and can predict when the great events already foretold in scripture will take place as in the dates. It is a complete waste of our time to do so. Our responsibility rests with having read the scriptures and being so familiar with them that when one of these prophecies is unfolding in our time we can recognize it for what it is and function accordingly. That is a faith-building opportunity from God. Scripture tells us if one comes among us and claims to be a prophet sent from God, we need to see if his prediction comes true. The first time it does not that is proof he is not sent from God.

Deuteronomy 18:21-22, “And if you say in your heart, how shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken? When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.”

Please do not be led astray to a diet of sugar water and certainly do not be afraid or intimidated by them or what they say. We must rid them from our midst and continue to eat the solid food provided to us by Christ who sits with us at the table every time we open our Bibles to let Him in. As brethren we can assist one another in this for we do glean from all four corners of our Master’s field. But we must be sure it is His field we are working in.

We have covered a lot of ground today about a very important subject to the well being of the body of Christ. We have let the scriptures tell us repeatedly how the body will function as to ministering to itself. Most of it has been from the perspective of dangers we are to avoid as to letting someone separate us from Christ and

following them as our head. With all this said we have yet another lesson prepared for us by Christ. It is not an easy one to embrace. It all comes down to whom Christ places in His body. It is Him and Him alone who does this and at times it can appear very bizarre to us.

Let's take the case of the apostle Paul. He has been used to instruct us in righteousness more than anyone else beside Christ in the NT scriptures. On the surface that may not strike some as odd but there was a time when Paul was the most ravenous wolf the church had ever seen. That's right: ravenous wolf. He murdered the brethren, he put them in prison, he scattered them all over the entire region. He was relentless in his persecution and destruction of the early church. Lets do a little review. He was known as Saul at the time. Acts 7:58, "And they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul."

So who was this Saul and why at His feet?

Galatians 1:13-14, "For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers."

Acts 8:1 and 3, "Now Saul was consenting to his death (Stephen's). At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." and "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, and committing them to prison."

Acts 9:1-2, "Then Saul still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked for letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."

Here we have a classic case of a religious organization persecuting the church of God with the states approval. This has happened time and time again, and will again as well. This is the pattern of one of the packs of wolves working with the other to destroy the flock. Saul was the most zealous wolf in the pack. His actions and intents were not cloaked in any way. That is how the wolf pack functions. They are very different from the lone wolf as we have discussed.

Now we know what took place next in Saul's life. He was smitten by Christ on the road to Damascus. I am amazed at Saul's response to Christ when this happened. "So he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what do you want me to do? And the Lord said to him, arise and go into the city, and you will be told what to do." This guy was really an incredible person. He wanted to obey the word of God but he had only known it through the filter of the traditions of the elders or Judaism. He had been a wannabe that made good on his goal of having dominion and prestige over others. That was and is a characteristic of Judaism in many of its sects. When looking for a Biblical definition of a ravenous wolf there should be an equal sign, followed by Saul. He was absolutely brutal to the brethren. Those in Damascus knew about him as I am sure the whole of the early Christian world did as well.

:13-16, "Then Ananias answered, Lord I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name. But the Lord said to him, go for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My names sake."

Put yourself in Ananias' position. How do you think you would have felt about taking this wolf in and baptizing him? Let's be honest with ourselves. A lot of unsavory thoughts would flood our minds.

The brethren in Jerusalem were no different.

Verse 26; "And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple."

What a difficult test from God. We can imagine scenarios about judging them by their fruits but this is to such an extreme it is almost unimaginable. This is where the spirit of God comes into play. If we are left to reason

such things out by the spirit in man we would probably lynch him, plain and simple. At least I know I would. But we have been given another spirit, which helps us to discern the things of God. I was placed in somewhat of a situation like this many years ago. I had been warned about the nature and actions of a particular individual in a former organization. He feigned humility and a change in character and actions from what he was advertised to be in the past. I accepted him at the first after the example of the early church, but in my case I realized I had made a mistake. His teeth started to show so I acted accordingly, but not until harm had been done to the body. I bear that error in my mind today more often than I probably should, but it was a low point in my growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. All too often we overlook or completely miss some very clear signs. We must all be vigilant to not second-guess the spirit of God in such matters. I am sure many of you understand what I am saying since I know you have walked in many similar things.

So what is the lesson God has and is teaching us about a repenting wolf, hireling, he-goat, etc? I think it is obvious but all the same very uncomfortable. Forgiveness is something we are to incorporate in everything we do in the body, however, stupidity is not. Forgiveness is not just given but it is earned only after true repentance. We only have a portion of God's spirit and mind. We can't get cocky and think we have to forgive just because someone says they have repented and thinking we need to demonstrate some type of superior understanding of mercy. We need to see **proof** of it by sustained fruits under all conditions. This is not an easy task we have before us individually or as a body, but it is one we have to undertake when and if it arises. Something to think and pray about so it does not catch us off guard or unawares!

This all falls on our shoulders as the individual members of the body of Christ. We can't be passive about it, but rather be very alert to it. We need to be very active to fulfill our designated functions.

Revelation 19:7-8 can't make those points any clearer.

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the lamb has come, and His wife **has made herself ready**. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the **righteous acts of the saints**.”

That is very, very personal. No one can do it for us. Our Husband will assist us in becoming complete according to His desire. That is His work at this time. Choosing and preparing His bride so she can be presented to Him as a righteous unblemished wife for eternity. She will then assist Him in all the family functions. Let's let Paul once again review part of that process with us. Then we will review what our Husband and Father both expect of us.

Ephesians 5:22-32;

“Wives submit (willingly yield) to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (no surrogates or meddlers allowed and certainly no hireling)

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the savior of the body.

Therefore just as the church is subject to Christ, so the wives to their **own** husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ 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.

So husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

This is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

No mystery to us brethren! To those who are infected by the spiritual disease of dominion over another it is a complete mystery. They are deluded to the point that they feel they have authority to step in between Christ and His church and direct it as they deem necessary. That always results in a complete redirection and

separation from the simplicity in Christ. Our Husband, Jesus Christ will finish His own work, not some hireling or wannabe. No benefactor or surrogate allowed.

These hirelings have wreaked havoc on the called of God and we have all been dumbed down by them and their system at one time or another. I know that was the case with myself. Let's see how Matthew 25 addresses this point and its eventual outcome.

Verses 1-13;

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

But while the bridegroom was delayed, they **all** slumbered and slept. (This is a very important point here. Both the foolish and the wise slumbered and slept. I used to know a fellow who declared he had never done either. If that's the case he would not be listed among the virgins of Christ. What's the alternative! My point being here is none of us can look down our nose at another regardless of how wise we may think we are.)

And at midnight a cry was heard: behold the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!

Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out. (Think long and hard about this point and example here. We have some of the called of God who didn't know how to replenish their oil in their lamps. Why? Because someone had always done it for them. They relied on someone else to do it. They had not spent enough one on one time with Christ to learn to do it themselves. But the other virgins had. They knew where to secure the oil as well as how to secure it. They also knew it was not theirs to give. They had purchased it with time and effort.

9: But the wise answered, saying, lest there should not be enough for us and you; go rather to them who sell, and buy for yourselves. (that would be from the Father and the Son)

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding: and the door was shut.

Afterwards the other virgins came also, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us! But he answered and said, assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.

Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man is coming.”

What an incredible illustration and lesson to the bride of Christ. We need to keep the lifeline unbroken between ourselves, and our husband. He and He alone will sustain us for it is He who purchased us with His blood. The Father has called us but it is the Son who will do the choosing. Then it is up to us to remain faithful to Him. No letting down, no letting an interloper in between us for any span of time.

All of these scriptures we have been reviewing today instruct us in Biblical patterns of instruction. God calls His church a flock, a bride, and a body. The pattern of instruction associated with each teaches us the very same lessons. They are precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little there a little.

I personally believe the most instructive series of scriptures as to our description, as to what we are to be doing to fulfill our calling as the bride of Christ are found in Proverbs 31:10-31. It is focused around the activities and character of a bride of great value. One who has prepared herself to serve her husband and his household. It is a complete resume of what our spiritual activities should be in that regard. Please apply spiritual applications to each of these functions.

“Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far beyond rubies.

The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain.

She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

She seeks wool and flax and willingly works with her hands.

She is like the merchant ships, she brings her food from afar.

She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household and a portion for her maidservants.

She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard.

She girds herself with strength and strengthens her arms.
She perceives that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out by night.
She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hand holds the spindle.
She extends her hand to the poor, yes she reaches out her hands to the needy.
She is not afraid of snow, for her household is clothed with scarlet.
She makes tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.
Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.
She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for the merchants.
Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come.
She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness.
She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.
Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her; 'Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all'

Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.
Give her the fruit of her hands and let her own works praise her in the gates."

What an incredible description of the relationship between Christ and His bride. It is awesome and yet tender at the same time. Our Husband and for that matter our Father as well will not settle for anything but the most dedicated individuals to occupy the function of the wife in the family of God for eternity. That is why we read in that context in scripture that many are called and few chosen. They are coming out of the time span of two marriage covenants. As we can see there is no room for anything even closely resembling a hireling, or anyone infected with the spiritual disease of dominion over another. It is a calling of service, and more service, to all who are called by the Father into His household. And it does not end there for it covers a very broad landscape of people and needs outside of the household as well.

We all need to do our part to qualify for this tremendous goal of our calling. We must not let anyone or anything come between our Husband and ourselves. Our Husband will finish the work He has started in us. He will never leave nor forsake us. Never!

We need to be vigilant in maintaining our true identity. If we lose sight of that we may fall prey to the deceptions of the angel of light and be lulled into a state of slumber or sleep. We have come out of it once, there may not be a second opportunity to do so again.

Evaluate the conduct of those who have oversight in the body. If they act or if they preach another doctrine other than that spoken in the scriptures as to their conduct, confront them. They do not have dominion over our faith or over our fellowship as far as that goes. If they wish to serve the body let them prove it to you. As we have learned today, the body do not need a hireling, but a hireling needs us.

The scriptures describe what a true pastor is. Blessed are you if there is one within your midst for they are truly few and far between.

We are called at this time in the plan of salvation to be the second Eve unto the second Adam. We must never let down and let another whisper false understanding in our ear contrary to what our Husband has taught us.

The Father's household rules are very clear. He is the Patriarch of that household. Our system of governance is patriarchal and not a gentile hierarchical replica. Yes we are to have love one for the other and willingly yield to one another under our head, Jesus Christ.

What an awesome calling we have been called to brethren!

Our peace we give to you.

Brian Convery