

The CHIEF SHEPHERD and His Flock

Sermon Notes (not quite “a transcript”)

January 2010

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Note: I recommend you hear the audio *as* you use these notes. I do not have a secretary and these “notes” will help keep you on track and have the scriptures handy. You’ll get more out of this message if you use these notes *along with* the audio. Starting Jan 2010, I will be using briefer “sermon notes” rather than a word-for-word transcript.

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Greetings. The terms God uses for his people all point back either to Christ as leader, or to God the Father. Sheep of the Eternal’s Pasture, also called elsewhere “the One Body of Christ”, the “Little flock” (Luke 12:32), followers of the Nazarene (Acts 24:5) followers of Christ, “Christian” (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16) – all pointing always to Yeshua the Messiah or to God His Father. “Church of God” (Gal. 1:13; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1). Always pointing back to the true Leader.

The time is coming when we will be one flock. Will take a miracle, but it IS coming.

First, some news: **The website will have a new look and feel soon.** Same messages, want it work simpler and faster and have more upgrading capability as we go along. Give us feedback please.

Last few messages about “can the one body of Christ be divided?”. Corporate groups are set up for legal purposes but have served to divide and keep the sheep apart. People starting to think they belong to this or that COG (church of God).

We belong to Christ, members of His body. He bought us, owns us. His Holy Spirit put us into His body (1 Cor. 12:13).

Song of Songs 6:3 “I am my Beloved’s, and My Beloved is mine.”

So we need to stop thinking we are a part of this or that COG organization, IF that serves to keep us apart from other brethren in other groups.

Last 2 times we clearly showed how it is God’s will to be one (John 17:20-23), have no divisions or schisms (1 Cor. 1:10-13), and let God’s Spirit lead us into all truth (John 16:13) as one body.

What is *each of us* doing to help that happen?

A brother sent me something he had heard way back in Dec 2006. Unknown author, but appropriate:

“Who is going to marry Jesus Christ at His return? We believe it will be you and me. We ‘know’ that it will be all the brethren who have God’s Holy Spirit...who will be the Wife of Christ. The problem with this scenario is that many of the brethren who ‘know’ they are going to be the Bride of Christ won’t have anything to do with one another. The Wife of Rev 19:7 is not a loose federation of divided brethren. The Spirit which is held in common by those comprising the “Wife of Christ” is *the strongest possible bond that exists*. Jesus is not going to return [to marry] an estranged people *who will have nothing to do with one another.*”

Messiah has one Body and will marry *only one Wife*, not wives, which is also called His One Body. His disciples, who have His Spirit, make up that one Body (1 Cor. 12:13). There are not “bodies of Christ” – just one Body (Eph. 4:4). Those people are bound by agape love for one another. Many think unity won’t occur until the resurrection. If we can’t be as one today, what makes anyone think somehow we’ll suddenly love as one, be in harmony as one, and be one body at the resurrection? The love for “One another” not confined to the organization we attend with.

This kind of agape love makes His people live and act now as Christ Himself would. Matthew 25:31-46-- He’s expecting us to treat one another – and the “least of these My brethren” as if it were He Himself we were dealing with.

The writer from 2006’s concluding 5 sentences are exactly what so many of us know in our hearts and what we’ve been saying as well. He says it well, so I quote once again:

“Soon, brethren led by God’s Spirit *will* be together in mind, attitude, and spiritual community. This does *not* mean one earthly organization or group. [Amen] It will be a miracle when it happens. The organizational lines must be crossed – and the barriers *will* come down. Jesus will have only *one Wife*.”

I will add: Yeshua’s one wife will be at one with each other, with Him, and with Father *before* He marries her. We will be AS one as God the Father is one with His Son, just as Jesus said in John 17:20-23, or I’m confident we simply will not be part of that Wife. It’s that simple.

A key theme throughout this sermon: If we have God’s Spirit, we will be acting and living more and more like Yeshua would live if He would trade places with you. This Spirit-filled person will reach out to the dejected and lost sheep as you will see today.

Even we ourselves use our body parts (arms, legs, feet, hands, mouth, etc) to perform what our mind decides to do. ***Yeshua is working in the world today by His Body –you and I.*** We mustn’t wait until He returns to see what He will do. He’s letting us know His mind through His spirit. If Christ wouldn’t want anyone being left out there like a lost sheep, and would seek them out, then His Body will be doing that today. He accomplishes His will through His Body. And so you and I will be acting and living like our Head desires in this matter of oneness just like He Himself would.

TRACK 2

That was a segue to today’s message about One Flock. Corporate walls will never prevail, though they have had the effect of dividing the sheep from one another. Gates of hell will never prevail against God’s church, or His “little flock”. *On top of that, forces of spiritual darkness have declared war against true believers – and so we must not allow ourselves to remain divided.* When the war is fully engaged, they will temporarily shatter the power of the saints (Dan. 12:7b), but WE will prevail in the end and take over their kingdoms (Dan 7:25-27; Rev. 19).

Place of safety: I believe there is a Place of Safety. But don’t make it your god or your goal. Yahweh will want to be sure we’re willing to stand up for Him, even alone if need be, before we’re going to any “place of safety” during the Great Tribulation. Standing up for Him also means standing up for one another, for we are His body.

Start crossing church organizational lines. Visit with many church groups. Show you're part of the spiritual body, and not just one organization! Stream on computers with many groups. Be emailing, using Facebook with one another, reaching out. Invite people to your home. Go see people. Call people. Apply Matthew 25 especially those who are disillusioned. **It starts with our repentance, which many scores of brethren in 6 countries participated in, on Dec 19, 2009.** I found out later that was the first day of the 10th Month of the Hebrew calendar, and the last day of the Feast of Dedication, the Rededication of the Temple. We came together in spirit to fast, to repent. Don't let it stop there. Continue to come together – even as you worship in your small local group. It's a mindset as much as anything else.

We've read the end of the Book, haven't we? So be ready for the fight of our lives, brothers and sisters. It is time. Put on the complete armor of God, so we stand in the day of evil. And be one with your brothers and sisters around the world, for a house divided against itself *cannot* stand, but a unified house *shall* stand.

I've found we have faithful brothers and sisters still even in our parent organization, and we stand with them, and they stand with us. **Those who have God's spirit are ONE, and always have been one, and always shall be one. We may attend in various organizations, but our Leader and my leader is Yeshua, the coming King of Kings and we recognize each other as parts of that family. All the rest of us are equal brothers and sisters with different functions, but equally loved and equally wanted by our Father in heaven. Time is short. If you see it some other way, time is short.**

Everything I am saying is to point us back to our Father – not to human leaders, except and unless they follow God. We certainly should not brand ourselves by any man or anyone's theology except Yeshua's.

Every name given to the early believers pointed to either God or Christ as their leader! They were not known by men's names – like Wesleyan, Calvinist, Lutheran or Roman something or other, or Mormon, or Baptist after John the Baptist. NO! The apostle Paul was dismayed that brethren were calling themselves followers of Peter, Paul, Apollos. (Hear audio on this point). So we're not "Worldwide Church of God", we're not "United Church of God", we're not "Living Church of God", we're not ANY of these groups grabbing the name of God on to themselves – except we belong to HIM, as the body of Christ. I hope the leaders of these groups would agree!

Father wants us worshiping Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24) – and so, *not from or in a single place anymore*. Not in Mt Gerizim or Jerusalem, or – by extension -- **through any one organization, place, or structure.** *Let's quit limiting God to having His children be in one church group or place.*

Let's OBEY MAL 3:16. Use phones, email, Facebook, Twitter, personal visits – but meet up and talk. Father notices those children and writes their names in His Book. *As we'll see later – especially true when you talk with His dejected, rejected, lonely sheep. I know Yeshua has a special place in his heart for rejected Sheep, as HE WAS ONE Himself!*

Is Unity impossible? *Some of you want to believe this "unity thing" and oneness is impossible in this life before the resurrection. God does things according to our faith (Matthew 8:13; 9:26, etc). Nothing is impossible with God. Don't limit the Holy One of Israel in anything HE says is HIS WILL.*

God will never give us a command to be “one”, a command not to have schisms and divisions, if that would be impossible at any given time.

Divisions/schisms are the same thing as “the Scattering” as you flee a city

I need to also say this: we should not confuse the divisions/schisms we see today -- with the “scattering” that happened in Acts 8:1-3, caused by persecution. Even as they scattered physically to flee the city of Jerusalem for their very lives, the church remained unified as one body for many years. In fact they returned to Jerusalem in Acts 15, many years later, as one, to sort out the doctrine of circumcision together, as one.

By contrast, we have not been scattered by persecution, but by infighting. We have scattered ourselves into different factions or organizations, not cities as we fled for our lives – but those organizations are not acting as one at all, like they did in Acts. Nor are we resolving doctrinal conflict as one body, as they did in Acts 15.

I've also been asking how a *great-great grandpa and his wife* would feel if their expanded family came to honor them on their 50th anniversary, but the great-grandkids won't play together. In the same way, how does Abba feel when we don't worship HIM *together*!? The holydays and Feast of Tabernacles, for example, are HIS feasts, to honor and worship Him. But we can't do it together?

It's time brethren. It's time. It's time for us to come as Abba's children together, and say, “Abba, dear Father, we're sorry. We've fasted and repented, and as your children, we're going to worship you as one now. *You* have put that into our hearts, and now we ask you finish it – and show us HOW to worship you as one, in spirit and in truth. We're done with the infighting, the accusing, and the divisions. Please show us how.”

God allowed this division, but what God allows and what His perfect will is – are not always the same thing. That's why we have to pray “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”. He will make this division thing work out for good in the end.

LESSON OF ESTHER

Please turn to Esther 4. Esther had this problem going on with Haman, a descendant of King Agag, the Amalekite who was supposed to have been killed, along with all Amalekites, by King Saul (see 1 Samuel 15). But apparently some descendants of Agag slipped through. Haman the Agagite, who tried to avenge his great-great grandfather, was the result. Haman's aim was to wipe out all Jews from the face of the earth.

Remember what Mordecai said to Esther? She was reluctant to say anything to the King for she hadn't been bidden and she could lose her life to approach him unbidden. *Let's apply what he said to ourselves, to all of us. It's time for each of us to speak up, it's time for each of us to stand up, and it's time for each of us to be counted and to stand in the breach for oneness of the Body.* (More on this in the audio)

Esther 4:13-14 (from the Holy Bible in Its Original Order)

“And Mordecai commanded *them* to answer Esther: “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's house any more than all the Jews. **14** For even if you are completely

silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house shall be destroyed. ***Yet who knows whether you have come to a royal position for a time such as this?"***

Brethren, you have also been called into royalty, to be a child of GOD, to be a royal priesthood, and who knows if YOU have come to a royal position "for such a time as this"? It's time – time to stand up for your people, the church of God, to stand up for your King, to stand up for His one body. It's time! It's time to stand up for oneness. To speak up for oneness. To tell your pastor that you want to be one. That you will be visiting multiple church groups. It's time for us to be counted. It's time for us to stand in the breach, for oneness of the body. It's time for us by doing so to stand up for Jesus the Christ, Yeshua the Messiah, who IS that Body, the one we're representing!

Now let's learn more about the sheep of God's pasture.

TRACK 3

Scripture also describes people as "Sheep". Today: The Chief Shepherd and His Flock. We are sheep of HIS pasture (Ps 74:1-2). 1 Peter 5:2-4 says, The Messiah is the Chief Shepherd. He owns us. Shepherds He calls to oversee are "pastors" (which comes from the Greek for "shepherd"). In fact, 95% of the time, it's translated "shepherd".

"Pastor" has come to mean a RANK, but that is not its original use. "Minister" (from Greek *diakonos*) means "servant". They are shepherds and servants of God and should also serve the brethren as well. Scripture has much to say about Shepherds, sheep and flocks – and it has everything to do with the state of the Church of God today. But first let's focus on the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:2-4).

THE TRUE SHEPHERD AND HIS SHEEP

Pease turn to John 10 and let's start studying more about our Shepherd and the flocks.

We usually just jump right in and start reading John 10, but by doing so, we miss so much. The background to John 10 is of course John 9. What *is* the context? A man *born blind* had just been healed but ended up being thrown out of the synagogue when he stood up for Yeshua as his healer. He was, what we'd call today, "thrown out of the church".

To be disfellowshipped back then was serious business. The only church in town was Judaism. Others were forbidden to get close to you, or do business with you. Parents were so afraid of that too, so they also distanced themselves from the Healer (John 9:20-23). What should have been cause for a major celebration was becoming disastrous for this ex-blind man. He knew who Jesus was and was not ashamed to say Who He was.

When there should have been a great party to celebrate his healing, look what happened. He was alone, hurting, even banished from social contact with his own family it seems. Let's see what happened, for it sets the *theme* for John 10.

John 9:30-41 (audio starts v. 33)

The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! ³¹ Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. ³² Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind.

³³ If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing."

³⁴ They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" ***And they cast him out. [So, was he left alone?]***

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" ³⁶ He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" ³⁷ And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you."

³⁸ Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him.

³⁹ And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind."

⁴⁰ Then *some* of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?" [Now, I guarantee, this is starting to really 'tick Christ off']

⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.

Obviously Yeshua had gone looking for the blind man. Yeshua felt badly for the discarded sheep. This is the background to the more familiar Chapter 10. Remember this!

*I'm convinced this is part of what we all will have to go through sooner or later; the same thing the blind man did: **be willing to stand alone among mortals, but look up to our salvation above.** Many of us were raised to give more credence to our standing in an organization, than for standing for Yahweh. We were not encouraged to have a personal relationship with Him. That is why the theme of this website is "That I May Know Him".*

This blind man, who now could see, was allowed to SEE what FEW at that time could see: Who the Son of God was. Only 4x before this, was the term "son of God" used in the book of Christ.

We cannot remain divided and think we will get to intimately see the Christ. When our eyes SEE, when our eyes are opened to this, we must do what this blind man did and glorify GOD. Be willing to acknowledge the Body of Yeshua. His body is what we all comprise, together, as one – or not at all.

WHEN did this healing and talk about John 9-10 happen by the way? On a sabbath day, during the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22) – about rededicating the temple of God. If it was on the last day of the Feast of Dedication (now commonly called Hanukkah), that would have been Dec. 19, in 2009. *We fasted on the very day when John 9 and 10 were happening, and which commemorated a new start (it was also a new moon in Israel), and commemorated the desire to rededicate God's temple. What's the temple today? I didn't know any of this when we "arbitrarily" picked Dec. 19 as the day of fasting, by the way. It was only later than a brother in the UK pointed this out to me.*

Some of you hearing this were like the blind man, who could *see* spiritual things – and when you stood up for truth, when you questioned, when you spoke up, you *also* were thrown out of your

church. Yeshua prophesied it! He said they'll think they're doing God a service by throwing you out of the church (John 16:2). But we're to rejoice when that happens, for that's the way they treated God's true prophets from the beginning! (Luke 6:22-23). John 12:42 says *many* wanted to stand up for the Christ, for the Truth-- but didn't. Why? Because they were afraid of being thrown out of church, or the synagogue.

How about you? You have been given eyes to see. ***Now you and I must do what the blind man had to do. Stand up. Speak up. Do something. There will be consequences. But, like the blind man, stand up for Christ – and now it's standing up for His one body.***

Remember – we are to follow ministers ONLY as they follow Christ (1 Cor. 11:1); ONLY as they are faithful to God's truth!

One reason for the doctrinal changes in the mother organization: to see who would be willing to stand up, speak up, to filter out those being approved – whether you stayed in or left the mother organization.

1 Corinthians 11:18-20

“For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. **19** For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.”

Some are STILL standing for truth within the organization, and many felt they had to leave. Whether you stayed, or whether you left the parent organization, do not judge the action you or others have taken. It's not our place to judge. But we who hold to the truth – whether inside or outside of the parent organization – have had to stand up for the Christ, sometimes alone. That's a good thing! We'll talk more about that in detail in a minute.

Those of us who left the organization came to realize the Body of Christ is a SPIRITUAL organism, not a physical organization. We can leave organizations, or you may have decided to stay in organizations – but whether you are “in the Body of Christ” is entirely and exclusively dependent on whether you have God's Spirit.

Action, active seeking of the hurting/lost is required

If we're achieving oneness with Yeshua, we'll also be achieving oneness with His entire Body - the rest of the brethren scattered in other groups. Please ponder that. You'll be actively reaching out – maybe for the first time in years!

I'm finding a lot of people claiming to have no ill will for other believers in other groups – but they're not doing anything to be closer. Remember the sheep and goats in Matthew 25? The ones condemned were those who saw Yeshua –but disguised as a least brother or sister – and did nothing!

Here's what Scripture is telling us: ***If we are MEMBERS OF THE BODY of Christ, we will ACT like Christ acted, or, “walk as He walked” (1 John 2:6). What did HE do?*** He didn't just leave the man thrown out of the synagogue to remain alone. He *sought* for him, as a Shepherd would search for a lost sheep or a hurting sheep. Scripture says, verse 35, “when He (Jesus) had found him...” — that implies He went looking for the lost sheep. *Does that not speak to you?*

You will act just like the Head of the Body, if you are really part of His Body.

TRACK 4

Let's now continue in John 10. Remember there were no chapter breaks. Messiah is really, really miffed at this point at the way they were manhandling one of the sheep. So with that, He launches into John 10. He's *reacting* to what has just happened, and He's hot under the collar.

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. ² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the doorkeeper opens, and *the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out*. ⁴ *And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice*. ⁵ Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

Have you noticed something here before? V. 3-4 talks of the Good Shepherd, GOD – leading HIS flock out of a fold sometimes. Sometimes we'll see the Chief Shepherd leads us IN to the sheep fold and sometimes He leads us OUT. We must be following Him – whether in or out. And His sheep follow HIM out of that fold. They don't stay in the fold, or follow shepherds with a strange doctrine (strange voice). Please listen and think about this carefully.

When you hear a strange voice, strange doctrine, something different from what Master teaches – our Savior says flee from that stranger to the Word of God! In **John 10:26-28**, Yeshua tells some of the audience "You don't hear me, for you are not of this flock." His sheep stay with HIM, stay with the truth, for He *is* the truth. Don't hang around error. Don't follow false leaders who lead into error. Christ said "I am the TRUTH..." He doesn't want you following false teachers or hanging around them.

We are to follow overseers ONLY as they follow Christ (1 Cor. 11:1), who is Truth (John 14:6) personified. We should not follow them if they are not walking with Christ in the same direction, with the same words, with the same teachings from His Word. Why? Because if you follow THEM when they're headed in a different direction, you'll soon be far from GOD and His Word.

Ministers: be willing to let God's sheep visit other flocks. Let them follow the Chief Shepherd out of your sheepfold, if that is what the Master wants. Be willing to tear down the organizational walls you've erected or allowed to be built that keep the sheep from one another. Brethren are NOT your sheep. They're the sheep of God. (*I'm not saying to let them go to follow a wolf in sheep's clothing*).

If you subscribe to the doctrine of Government, remember Head of the Kingdom, and the One we bow to, is *God*, not man. *We follow leaders ONLY as they follow God (1 Cor. 11:1)*. When God said Israel had rejected HIM when they asked for king, remember **Samuel** was a *faithful* man of God at the time (**1 Sam 8:6-9**). When **Korah** rebelled in **Num 16**, Moses was a *faithful* man they were rebelling against.

When the people obeyed the government of God through UNFAITHFUL Aaron (Ex. 32:1-6) when he made a golf calf to worship, they were wrong to follow Aaron – and those 3,000 died, by God's own

command. That was a case of obeying a man ordained by God – but a man who had gone wrong on the gold calf decision. So we must not follow error. You follow Christ, you follow truth (for HE IS truth personified), and especially when *HE* is calling you OUT of the sheepfold. See John 10:3-4 again. Yes, he uses men, and those men may themselves be imperfect. So focus on HIM. More on this later.

There's more. The sheepfold was a place where many sheep from different flocks could come together for safety and protection. Sheep from varying flocks would MIX. In the morning, the shepherd would leave the fold, call His sheep out, and they would *leave* the fold *to find pasture*. If the sheep stay in the fold, they'll eventually starve, because there's no pasture there. But again, notice verses 3 and 4: Messiah leads His sheep *out* of the sheepfold. I hope you're thinking about what Scripture is saying to each of us – and to you – in these verses.

So who is YOUR shepherd? Your minister? In a lesser way, yes, and 1 Peter 5, which we'll read in a minute, says so. But really "The LORD – or *Yahweh* – is my Shepherd, I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1). "*He* leads me beside still waters...*He* leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake..." (Ps. 23:2-3). He's our Shepherd King. We'll follow other appointed shepherds *only* as they follow HIM – in spirit and truth, in paths of righteousness. Otherwise, don't follow that shepherd! Turn to 1 Pet 5 where the "elders" – the *presbuteros*-- older, elder brethren are addressed, presumably ordained men but not necessarily just the ordained men.

1 Peter 5:1-4

"**The elders** who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² Shepherd [pastor] the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ *nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock*; ⁴ and when *the Chief Shepherd* appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."

Ministers and pastors: we've got to stop "lording it over" God's flock. We're all brothers and sisters with different *functions*. The master is Christ. He is at the top, and even His head is God the Father. (1 Cor. 11:3-4).

A pastor once told me, "It's lonely at the top".

I asked, "Did *God* tell you that?" He missed the point of my question.

He replied: "No, I'm telling you that from experience".

I replied: "I thought 'the top' is GOD, and God alone, and I *don't* think HE is lonely so I don't understand what you mean."

I'm not sure he got the point I was making. Why would any man consider his position "the top"? *Yahweh*, the Father of *Yeshua*, is the Highest. There's no other "top" to be had. So in our vanity, once we're ordained, we act like we're at the top? Are we insane? We need to stop that nonsense.

Another minister once wrote to brethren: "Another big name is joining our group".

I responded: "The *only* 'big name' in the *universe* better already be here, or we're in trouble".

It's time, brethren. It's TIME that we ALL learn to worship and magnify Yahweh - - and Him only. He alone is on a pedestal. He is the one we follow, *He* is our Leader, our Shepherd, and *He*

owns us, and we belong to HIM. Quit thinking you follow a man, any man – unless that man also follows God, in spirit and truth. The group – the Body – you belong to is a spiritual organism.

TRACK 5

When God uses a MORTAL to “lead” Us

One man said to me recently, “but Philip, God always uses men to do His work”. Well, by the way, sometimes He uses *women*. Imagine that! Ever hear of Esther, Judge Deborah, Anna the prophetess, the woman at the well, Mary of Nazareth, Mary (Miryam) of Magdala, Ruth, Naomi, Sarah, Miriam, Jael, and Priscilla... need I go on? In Christ, “there is neither male nor female” (Gal. 3:28). Besides that, **people must never take our focus off who our real leader is. Quit thinking you’re following a man.** Or a woman. We’re following the Christ! (1 Cor. 1:12-13).

So if someone is a part of the “government of God”, how far do we follow him? Do we stay with him even in error? Do we attend their worship services, even in apostasy?

We mentioned how Aaron was part of the wilderness “government of God”, later to be the ordained High Priest by God’s orders given prior to the Gold Calf incident (Ex. 28 vs. Ex. 32). But those who followed and obeyed Aaron, got slaughtered. Why? ***Because Aaron was no longer pointing them to the truth, and to God, or to the real government.*** Had Moses not interceded for Aaron, even Aaron would have been executed by God (see Deut. 9:20). By the way, even with this egregious sin, Aaron was still ordained as the High Priest, called a saint of the Lord, and was forgiven by Yahweh.

Obeying the real government of God is about obeying GOD. Remember what Peter said when the *government* ordered him to quit preaching in Jesus’ name? What did Peter say? ***“We must obey God rather than men”*** (Acts 5:29).

When there’s a discrepancy between what even an ordained man who is part of the government of God says, and what God says, “we must obey God rather than man”. The lesson of Aaron and the gold calf should make that very clear.

Really be on guard when an ordained man starts to put any attention or focus on himself or orders you to obey to do something against God’s word because you’re under government! Don’t do it! That’s “lording it over”. Obey your REAL king, your REAL master, Yeshua the Messiah! Turn now to Numbers 20.

Moses was doing so great as long as he focused on Yahweh. Moses was under enormous stress. The **second time they needed water from the Rock, Moses was to speak to the rock. But he lost his temper and focused on himself instead of God.** The first time, Moses was to strike the rock, just as we must accept the Rock (which pictures Christ – 1 Cor. 10:4) *as a stricken Rock* (crucifixion). AFTER that, when we need more refreshing grace or Holy Spirit, we don’t crucify Him again, no! We *speak* to the Rock, which pictures Christ. See the parallels here in Heb. 6 and 10. Christ will not be “crucified” (stricken) twice (Heb. 6:4-6).

Numbers 20:10-12

And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! *Must we bring water for you out of this rock?*" ¹¹ Then Moses lifted

his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

12 Then Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, *to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel*, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

Some years later, Moses' successor was **Joshua**. That's the English form for Yeshua, or Yehoshua, meaning "the Eternal Saves". Joshua - Yeshua in Hebrew – was preparing to conquer Jericho and crush the Canaanites as he led them into the Promised Land. When Joshua was planning his attack on Jericho, he also needed a reminder of Who is truly the head of Yahweh's government.

Joshua 5:13-15?

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?"

14 So He said, "No, but *as* Commander of the army of Yahweh I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?"

15 Then the Commander of Yahweh's army said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand *is* holy." And Joshua did so.

The One who became Yeshua the Son of God, was telling Yehoshua/Yeshua his namesake, who the real commander was. Joshua was but a type of who really is in charge. *We must never forget Who is really in charge. God uses people – but their purpose is always to point back to the real leader.* And don't forget: God wants *true* worshipers to worship him in Spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). The earthly Joshua got it, real quickly, and bowed to the ground to the real Yeshua, the real commander.

[I meant to cover this next paragraph in the audio, as it is SO important, but I don't think I did]
The angels under ancient Lucifer's command: Lucifer was, after all, ordained by God as "the anointed cherub" (Ezek 28:14). When Lucifer started to rebel and teach against God's truth, should the angels assigned under him continue to be faithful to Him and His leadership, or should they have stood up for God and His truth? Lucifer was, after all, the anointed cherub, ordained by God Himself! No, no, no, brethren! In the same way, there are times the Good Shepherd is leading us *out* of folds to follow a *faithful* leader.

Are *we* getting it? Do we know when to follow a man – and when not? Some do, some don't.

Too many of us today focus on human leaders and not on Yahweh directly. Leaders especially who are charismatic, good speakers, fun and with a good personality, can make us take our eyes off what we should really be looking for. Human leaders are God's leaders whom we should honor and obey *as long as they point us to worship and obey God*. When they don't, we must still respect their office, and be respectful, *but we can't follow them, go to their worship services, or endorse them against God's word!* Remember the lessons of Aaron/gold calf and Lucifer and his angels under him.

Numbering people – a type of focusing on the wrong thing

Every time one of God's human leaders began to glorify himself, there was a severe price paid.

When King David started to number Israel, 70,000 of his human sheep died for his vanity (2 Sam 24:10-25).

We still number today and it makes US feel good: attendance, subscriptions, hits on the internet. I think we need to be very careful with this. *You see, it's never about us. It's about Father and His Son. That's also why on my website I do not and will not have an "about us" link.* It's not about me. I don't care about me. You don't need to know about me and I don't want you to know about me anyway. *But the message – now that's different.*

If we want to measure growth, let's see how many lives have actually changed. How many people have accepted Yeshua as their Savior, how many are now a loving husband or wife. But always be careful of anything that brings glory to a man. Danger, danger!

If you want to measure yourself, measure yourself against that the standard which is “to a perfect man” – are you there yet? – “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:13).

The early New Testament leaders were humble men who, after their conversion, always pointed to Christ. If we're converted, we will also point to the true Leader.

John the Baptist downplayed his importance. I'm “just a voice” (John 1:23); unfit to be the Messiah's slave (Matthew 3:1-10). He didn't mind it when his disciples left him to follow Messiah (**John 3:25-31**). Do we see THAT happening in the various groups? Ministers, the brethren are not your sheep. You oversee the MASTER'S flock. Sometimes as we read in John 10 He leads them into – and out of – various sheepfolds.

Peter always focused on the Savior. He **had no desire to teach the doctrine of “the primacy of Peter”, or that he was the chief apostle. He didn't insist they call him “Mr. BarJonah”.** No, he was simply Peter. He *did* say he was the apostle to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles, but that was the extent of it. *He didn't require people acknowledge him as something special before he would baptize them (Acts 2).* **We don't need titles to respect someone.** So why are some of you ministers requiring that prospective members have to acknowledge someone was an apostle before you will baptize them? Where do you find that in scripture? Was that man crucified for those people? Let's knock it off, ministers.

Paul was horrified that anyone would claim they belonged to, or were “of” Paul. He called himself the least of the apostles (1 Cor. 15:9) and “least of all the saints” (Eph. 3:8). He even called himself “chief sinner” (1 Tim. 1:15). Where does that leave you and me? Ministers: the focus should not be on the ministers. It should always be on God.

James, the flesh-and-blood brother of the Messiah, doesn't make anything of that as his claim to fame. He simply states he was a “*slave of God and of the Master Jesus Christ*” (James 1:1). He does not say, “Hey, I'm the half brother of the very Son of God! And an apostle, pastor of the Jerusalem church.” Pastors: here are our examples. Why must you insist on big titles?

Back to John 10. What kind of Shepherd do we have? What should our human shepherds be like?

John 10:7-10

Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹ I am the door. *If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.* ¹⁰

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. ***I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.***

ABUNDANT LIFE – God wants our religion to be a JOY! In His presence are pleasures forever (Ps. 16:??). Abundant living. What Yahweh created was good and was given to man to use. *Yahweh is not by nature dour, grumpy or miserable.* He is best known by those who truly know Him as incredibly patient, forgiving, giving us another shot at His Way, giving us another chance to get things right, *He laughs, He is joy personified, He adores His children. And it makes Him incredibly sad to see the way we're acting toward each other.* And He wants you to marry His Son.

He wants us to get ready to marry His Son. He's not preparing us for that joyous wedding by sticking us in a broom closet and knocking the stuffing out of each of us every Sabbath! Some of you ministers think you have to prepare God's Bride by knocking the Bride on the head every Sabbath. Where did we get that idea from? ***Is that any way to prepare the Bride of the Son of God to be joyfully prepared for the most exciting day of her life?***

Come on, pastors. Let's show people the abundant, joyful, unified life under the true God.

John 10:11-15

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ¹² But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³ The **hireling** flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴ ***I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.*** ¹⁵ As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

We have an amazing Shepherd in Yeshua. Ordained ministers who copy His example are also amazing. Many don't emulate Him however. Our true Shepherd even gives His life for His sheep. We usually think of sheep giving their lives for the shepherd! Our Shepherd, literally also was the Lamb of God, sacrificed for us. Shepherd David actually risked his own life to save some lambs from the jaws of a lion or bear! (1 Sam. 17:34-37). Think about that! Would you or I have risked our own lives like that for a lamb? It shows an attitude: that the lamb was important. Maybe at that moment even worth more than his own life. Either that, or David impulsively reacted out of outrage that something was hurting his lambs!

We have lambs of God (the brethren) being taken by the lion we know as Satan, who is the roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). Pastors, let's be a David-kind of shepherd. I often failed to be a David shepherd myself, and I acknowledge that publicly and have repented often of it and repent publicly. It's time. It's time to be a David-shepherd and go battle the lion that has been devouring the sheep of the flock of God. And brethren, you are to resist Satan the Lion by being "steadfast in the faith" by the way (1 Pet. 5:9), not by compromising any of the faith, the set of beliefs that are true.

God states, "I looked for a man to stand in the breach ... and there was none (Ezek 22:30-31)". Are you willing to stand up for the lambs of God? Are you willing to risk pain and suffering to fight the vicious lion called Satan and fight FOR the lambs of God? Are you willing to find the lost sheep of the house of Israel? Are you willing to go past your comfort zone and act like the Head of this Body would act and did act?

I'm asking, for the sake of unity, and oneness, are you willing to go find your brother and sister in Christ and start building oneness --- one person at a time?

Have our human shepherds even asked about, looked for, gone after the disheartened sheep who have quit coming to the Body? But let's forgive our shepherds if you see them changing, and being real shepherds. Please forgive one another – even me, please – even me.

Shepherds of Israel – our example is a forgiving, accepting, healing, reconciling Shepherd. Tear down these walls that men have erected between God's sheep! Let Yahweh's sheep mingle.

Encourage them to mix with other groups. Encourage them to visit other brethren in other fellowships – even on the Sabbath. **And you Sheep of God: YOU reach out.** YOU make phone calls and send cards to brethren you have left alone for many years. Even those who remain faithful at the parent church.

Many of us who left the parent organization years ago have smugly abandoned our brothers and sisters who have remained faithful to the truth, though they remain with the mother organization. Do NOT condemn them any longer! ***I pray somehow, some way, we may be reunited with all of those who remain faithful over there, just as there were 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. REACH OUT to them. They are there!*** Those faithful ones need to know we are all still one family. Did you know that quite a few of them, especially in Ephraim, fasted with us Dec 19th?

GOD is telling us something! Listen to HIS voice and reach out to them. And watch what happens in that organization in the coming months and years. Pray for your brothers and sisters over there that somehow the faithful who remain over there will somehow, in Master's way, be merged with the faithful who left. Many who left the parent organization have not remained faithful either, by the way. Pray we will become one.

Please do it if you feel the tug of God's spirit calling you to first repent, then to turn your heart to our heavenly Father – whom I assure you – wants us to then turn *our* hearts back to *one another!* Fulfill Mal 3:16. Don't be intimidated by the false walls put up by some of the pastors. I see brethren reaching out all the time at weddings and funerals. The brethren do talk to one another. It's the *leaders* who too often have kept us apart so they can keep their power, the tithes and their view of things. More on that next time.

Just as hard as it was for Jews to accept Gentiles as their equals, so we must accept there may be other sheep out there that may have never heard of the "church of God" organization we know.

John 10:16

And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there WILL be one flock and one shepherd.

Will we be welcoming and accept it if God grants people His Spirit, people we're not used to seeing, including Russians, Kenyans, Chinese or Rumanians who have their own customs and backgrounds, but have God's spirit. How about Indians, Thai people, Bolivians, Mexicans, Cherokee or Mohawk Indians, or Filipinos. That would be wonderful.

This is as much a part of my message as anything: LOOK PAST just the COG (church of God) groups to be children of God led by God's spirit. We will be merged with other spirit-led children from other folds before this is done. Mark my word.

Mark 9:38-40

"Now John answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we saw *someone who does not follow us* casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us."

39 But Jesus said, "*Do not forbid him*, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. 40 *For he who is not against us is on our side.*"

This tells me that we leave it up to Yeshua to decide whom He lets in the door to the Marriage Supper – and who not. We know elsewhere He Himself says it's more than just calling Him "Lord, Lord". But we are to forbid them not. That's HIS call. Messiah is saying, "Philip, that's MY call. Butt out!" But what does He want US doing? He wants us to be GATHERING TOGETHER his people, as one.

Luke 11:23

"He who is not with Me is against Me, and *he who does not gather with Me, scatters*".

It's very clear that He wants us to be among people *gathering* together the flock of God. Don't do *anything* that scatters the sheep. Nor should we think He WANTS the sheep scattered. As we'll see next time, He allows the scattering especially from persecution, but never confuse scattering to flee persecution with the brethren "scattering" because we're breaking into schisms and divisions. Two very different things!

HOW will unity, one flock, one body, oneness come? I don't need to know how. I do know WHO. The answer is UP – not around us, not all the problems we see, not all the reasons we give why something CAN'T happen. It won't be any man doing it. It will be the Chief Shepherd who will do it, but HOW He is doing it is through HIS BODY.

There are also warnings that there will be men who are likened to spiritual wolves and false ministers, who draw away followers after themselves. ***I want to be sure you all know that I've said on my website all along that I am simply sharing Bible studies and do not seek any following.*** My website has said for 6 years now that I hope you stay where you are getting fed, and if I can help in any way, I would be thrilled. *We are starting no church, no following.* In Acts 20, Paul warns of false ministers and men seeking to draw people away from other groups into their own.

So if you're getting fed, have good fellowship, and have a loving pastor – stay where you are.

Acts 20:28-30

"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. 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in *among you*, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."

So in this message today, I wanted to get across very clearly these points:

- Christ is going to marry one body, one church – not fragmented, loosely federated groups of people who won't have anything to do with each other.
- The Messiah sought sheep that had been cast out; his body members will do the same thing.
- We must learn from the blind man, that when we're given sight to see what God is doing, we stand up for Him – and by extension, stand up for his body.
- We follow men only as they follow truth, and follow God (1 Cor. 11:1). Remember those who followed Aaron, God's anointed high priest, into the gold calf incident, were killed.
- We must fight for unity, stand up for oneness. We must not give up on our faithful brothers and sisters who are with the parent organization. God will bring us together if we pray for this unity. It may not come the way you're assuming – no matter what side you're on right now.
- Don't reject people you see claiming to be God's followers, who don't follow the Messiah quite the way *you* think they should. Jesus said, "Forbid them not". He also said, we're either gathering or scattering. Which one describes you? (Luke 11:23)
- What are YOU actively doing to reach out and help "gather", to create oneness in the Body?

NEXT time we'll talk about the other shepherds, the pastors and we'll also talk about the brethren, and how each – pastors and brethren – have played a role in the divisions and schisms we see. I'll give you scriptures and verses that will make it very clear. We'll be getting into Ezek 36, Jer. 23 and other passages.

I'm the last person who should be saying anything negative about pastors. And indeed we have many wonderful and faithful pastors. I've certainly had my own many faults. But in Yeshua's name, let's come together. Or if you prefer, in Jesus' name, let's come together. Let's forgive one another of the hurts – whether it's from pastors or brethren.

Jeremiah 50:6

"My people have been lost sheep. *Their shepherds have led them astray; They have turned them away on the mountains. They have gone from mountain to hill; They have forgotten their resting place.*"

Besides FALSE ministers, there are ministers who know better who also scatter the sheep by their tactics. Yahweh is furious with these ministers. Notice at least ONE cause of the scattering according to God: the harshness from many in the ministry. We certainly can't say *persecution* has scattered us so far -- not yet!

Jeremiah 23:1-4

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" says Yahweh. ² Therefore thus says Yahweh, 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 Yahweh. ³ **"But I will gather the remnant** of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their

folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. ⁴ I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking," says Yahweh.

There's still a lot to read about sheep and shepherds which we'll do next time. Let's be praying about unity. We belong to Yahweh. "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine". We will be one. Christ will marry only *one* wife.

Help spread this message and the 2 before this on Christ's body not being divided. Until next time, in Yeshua's name.... Philip Shields saying God bless you!