

“Depart from Me...”

Bruce R. Booker

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²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. ²² "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

Matthew 7

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Preface

A joke goes:

A man arrived at the gates of Heaven.

St. Peter asked, "Religion?"

The man said, "Methodist."

St. Peter looked down his list and said, "Go to Room 24, but be very quiet as you pass Room 8."

Another man arrived at the gates of Heaven.

"Religion?"

"Catholic."

"Go to Room 18, but be very quiet as you pass Room 8."

A third man arrived at the gates.

"Religion?"

"Baptist."

"Go to Room 11 but be very quiet as you pass Room 8."

The man said, "I can understand there being different rooms for different denominations, but why must I be quiet when I pass Room 8?"

St. Peter told him, "Well, the 'So and So Christian Church' [*Denomination Deliberately Deleted*] are in Room 8, and they think they're the only ones here."

I think the moral of this joke is that most of us who proclaim faith in Jesus as the Messiah have this feeling of the exclusivity of our denomination going to heaven – to the exclusion of others.

In reality, I believe that the folks who actually make it to heaven will be surprised at who is there with them and that many there will be those of every denomination of Christendom!

People who thought that there would be no way that people from a certain denomination would be there will be talking with a person from that denomination there in the New Jerusalem.

On the other hand, there will be those from the various denominations who approach the Master on the last day thinking that everything is all right and that they have earned their place in the Kingdom who will be told to depart from Him into eternal damnation.

Jesus said:

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*.
²² "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE **LAWLESSNESS**.'

Matthew 7

In that statement we also discover the criteria of entry into the Kingdom: 1) One will NOT be going into the Kingdom of Heaven by doing good deeds: not by miracles, casting out demons, prophesying, good preaching and teaching, etc. 2) One will NOT be going into the Kingdom of Heaven by calling Jesus, "Lord, Lord!" 3) One can ONLY go into the Kingdom of Heaven by His KNOWING them! 4) The characteristic that identifies the person ENTERING into the Kingdom is that person's OBSERVING HIS LAW!

It will surprise many that the Lord identifies those who truly are His with Torah observance. In today's Church, the Law is disparaged and looked

down upon as Legalism, not as a characteristic of those who will be entering the Kingdom of Heaven, but that is exactly the characteristic that identifies a true believer in Jesus – since He kept the Law perfectly!

1 John 2, John says:

³ By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵ but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: ⁶ the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

The true characteristic of a disciple of Christ is “walking like Christ” did!

In Luke 6:46, Jesus asks:

"Why do you call Me, **Lord, Lord,** and do not do what I **say**?"

Excellent question! Consider this: Jesus gave the Law (Torah) on Sinai! It wasn't the Father and was not the Spirit! How is that, you ask?

Well, we see nothing in Scripture about the Spirit coming before men in any form until the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16. There He comes in the form of a dove.

What about men seeing the “Father” at any time?

Well, according to Jesus Himself, He said, “*No one has seen the Father at any time* [Emphasis Mine].” (John 1:18)

In John 5:37, He said, “And the **Father** who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any **time** nor **seen** His form.”

This means that *after* the Law (Torah) was given on Sinai and the Scriptures state that Moses and the 70 elders ate the Covenant Meal on the mountain (Exodus 24) – the Person they saw was NOT the Father:

⁹ Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, ¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there

appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. ¹¹ Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank.

Therefore, it was Jesus (pre-Incarnate) Who gave the Law on Sinai! The truth is: the God of the “Old Testament” Who gave the Torah is Jesus! It was NOT the Father! Thus: the “Law of Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:21) that many cite as their standard in the “New” Testament, must be recognized as the Torah that Christ gave on the Mountain of Sinai about 1500 years before He incarnated!

Chapter One – What is Lawlessness (Anomia)???

In the Greek, the word “lawless” is the word *anomia* which means “destitute of (the Mosaic) law” or “departing from the law, a violator of the law, lawless, wicked.”

Whenever you see in a word of Greek origin the letter “a” prefacing a word, it means “not” or “without.” For instance the word “atheist” means “without God.” “A” means “not, and “theos” is the word for God in Greek. An atheist does not believe that there is a God.

So, in the Greek word, *anomia*, the “a” means “not” or “without” and the word “nomos” means law. A person who is *lawless* (*anomia*) is a person without law, in specific here, God’s Law.

We will find several New Testament passages which use this word:

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE **LAWLESS** DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED." Romans 4:7

“Then that **lawless** one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming...” 2 Thessalonians 2:8

“...realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are **lawless** and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers...” 1 Timothy 1:9

“...who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every **lawless** deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.” Titus 2:14

"AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR **LAWLESS** DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE." Hebrews 10:17

“(for by what he saw and heard {that} righteous man, while living among them, felt {his} righteous soul tormented day after day by {their} **lawless** deeds)...” 2 Peter 2:8

Every one of these passages use the same word for lawlessness and each of them relate to some aspect of sinfulness that Christians should NOT want to be living in!

According to 1 John 3:4, **“Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.”**

“Sin” (transgression of the Law or Torah of God) is *anomia*!

If you as a believer want to be *anomia* (lawless) – *keep on* violating God’s Law! By doing so, you will not be living or walking as your Messiah Jesus did, but rather, you will be walking in the spirit of the Anti-Christ!

This is something that believers in Jesus should not want to do!

The recognition of your walk as He did identifies you as one of His – if you are not walking as He did, then you are walking as the Anti-Christ will. It is your choice.

Chapter Two – Lawless-ness (Anomia) – the Characteristic of the Anti-Christ (Anti-Messiah)

“Then that **lawless** one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming...”

2 Thessalonians 2:8

In the New Testament we see the characteristic of the coming anti-Christ.

We are told by the Apostle Paul in 2Thessalonians 2 that the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus will be preceded by the revelation of the “lawless” one, who we call the anti-Messiah or anti-Christ:

¹ Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of *lawlessness* is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ⁵ Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? ⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. ⁷ For the mystery of *lawlessness* is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. ⁸ Then that *lawless one* will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹ *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, ¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

The characteristic of the anti-Christ is that he operates without God’s Law in his life. He is the “lawless” one. He is the man of sin.

According to 1 John 3:4, **“Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.”** The same word used to describe the characteristic of the anti-Christ is the word used to describe “sin.” Sin is anomia (lawlessness) and those who practice “lawlessness” are sinning!

Everyone who breaks God’s commandments sins and “sin is the transgression of the Law” (1 John 3:4).

Now, let’s look at another characteristic of this anti-Christ: he also **“exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God”** (verse 4).

Hmm...interesting that he does this! What did Satan say in the Garden to Eve?

"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
(Genesis 3:5)

The anti-Christ will display himself as being God! This is the same characteristic as the one who empowers him. Satan has long aspired to be God and tries to carry that aspiration to mankind as well.

You can see this is Ezekiel 28:2 -

"Son of man, say to the leader of Tyre, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because your heart is lifted up And you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods In the heart of the seas'; Yet you are a man and not God, Although you make your heart like the heart of God"

The leader of Tyre is the earthly ruler of the city. He believes he is God. The power behind him is the “king of Tyre” – Satan:

¹¹ Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, ¹² "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

¹³ "You were in Eden, the garden of God;

**Every precious stone was your covering:
The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;
The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;
And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,
Was in you.
On the day that you were created
They were prepared.**

**¹⁴ "You were the anointed cherub who covers,
And I placed you *there*.
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.**

**¹⁵ "You were blameless in your ways
From the day you were created
Until unrighteousness was found in you.**

Satan was in the Garden of Eden. Satan was the cherub who covered the throne of God. Satan was created beautifully and was blameless in all his ways, until unrighteousness was found in him.

What was the unrighteousness of Satan? He wanted to be like God. He wanted the worship that was reserved only for God to be given to himself. Isaiah 14:

**¹² "How you have fallen from heaven,
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!**

You have been cut down to the earth,

You who have weakened the nations!

¹³ **"But you said in your heart,**

`I will ascend to heaven;

I will raise my throne above the stars of God,

And I will sit on the mount of assembly

In the recesses of the north.

¹⁴ **`I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;**

I will make myself like the Most High.'

This is the attitude of the earthly rulers who thought of themselves as "God." Pharaoh thought this and Antiochus Epiphanies ("the Manifest God") thought this, too. So did Caesar. Many earthly rulers thought this. Yet, as God says to the ruler of Tyre, the earthly king, he is just a man and not God.

We have to remember that we are not fighting against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces. Ephesians 6: 12:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual {forces} of wickedness in the heavenly {places.}

Our battle is not against the earthly rulers who think themselves as God, but against the one who empowers them – the one who aspired to be God in the first place: Satan!

That is where this anti-God, anti-Law attitude originates from! No wonder why this is such a powerful spirit! And this is the spirit was at work in the Church at the time of Paul!

Paul is simply telling us how to identify this spirit! It is a "lawless" ("anti-Law") spirit! Let's pay attention to him!

Chapter Three – The Mystery of Lawlessness (*Anomia*)

“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.”

2 Thessalonians 2:7

In this passage, Paul wasn't talking about the spirit of lawlessness in the world at that time. There is *nothing* unusual about the spirit of lawlessness working in the world. It has *always*, since the Fall of Man, worked in the world.

What he calls attention to is that this “mystery of lawlessness” is found to be already working in the Church! What was once a zealous, Torah observing group of Jewish believers (Acts 21:20, 21) who walked like the Master Jesus (who also walked in total Torah observance – Hebrews 4:15 cf 1 John 3:4) has become predominantly an anti-Torah group of non-Jewish believers! That's the mystery!

The mystery is: “Why should this anti-Law attitude be in the Body of Messiah when the Messiah Himself walked perfectly before the Law of God?”

That's a contradiction of terms! The people of Christ, the Christians – the “followers of Christ” – should be walking like Christ (1 John 2)!

Such a mystery that the Church should be *enveloped* by an attitude *contrary* to their Messiah! Jesus said in Matthew 5:

¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

If He didn't do away with the Law, no one should do away with them! If He walked according to the Law, we – as His followers – should, too.

Brothers and sisters, we need to be aware of this anti-Christ/anti-Law characteristic in the Church and stand *against* it! We need to realize that a godless spirit has gripped the Body of Christ that was not *in* Christ! We need to see that this is *not* a flesh and blood issue. It is a *spiritual* issue and needs to be dealt with as such.

Do you wonder where your feelings come from when the keeping of the “Law of God” is mentioned? Test the spirits, be sure that you’re listening to the Spirit of God.

Remember, the Spirit of God inspired the *complete* Word of God to be written. Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:

²⁰ But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

The Bible was written by men who were inspired by the Spirit of God to write what God wanted written. This includes the Law, the Prophets and the Writings of the Older Testament! No prophecy of Scripture was written *outside* of the Spirit’s inspiration.

This means that the Holy Spirit, who inspired the writing of the Law, cannot stand against Himself when it comes to the Law!

God is not divided! He does not stand contrary to Himself! Through centuries until the coming of Christ, He endorses the Law through His prophets and the writers of Scripture! He calls His people to Himself and to repentance for transgressing those Laws. He sends His Son to live those Laws and to make atonement for sin (transgression of the Law). His own Son says that He did not come to do away with even the smallest letter of the Law!

What more do we need to convince us that God is *not* against His own Law! *Satan* is! It is the anti-Law spirit from Satan that is causing rebellion to flourish in the Body of Christ; much less the world!

The Law is not made for the godly and righteous people in the Lord. It is made for the lawless and rebellious people.

⁸ But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers ¹⁰ and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, ¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. (1 Timothy 1)

The unrighteous and rebellious people will be judged by the very same Law that they are rebelling against. The godly and righteous person in the Lord will not be judged by the Law because part of living a righteous and godly life is that you are living like the righteous and godly Lord Jesus who did! The evidence that you are a righteous person is that you are living as Jesus did.

It is the unrighteous and ungodly person, those who set their minds on the flesh, who *cannot* live by the precepts of the Law (Romans 8):

⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

As believers, we are not to be like that. Instead, we are to set our mind of the Spirit, not our flesh and in so doing, we will be subject to the law of God.

Chapter Four – WWJD? “What Would Jesus Do?”

[Excerpted and condensed from my book, *A Call to Holiness*]

Over the last several years, a popular item among Christian children (and some adults, I might add) has been a wrist band with the initials “WWJD?” This acronym stands for the words, “What Would Jesus Do?”

While I am not being critical of the practice of wearing things like these to remind us to live holy lives (in fact, I wear one myself), I think that people who promote the wearing of these items sometimes often fail to realize the scope of what they are saying.

It must be remembered that Jesus was *totally* obedient to the commandments as pertained to an Israelite (a citizen of Israel). As believers in him, we are all made part of that same commonwealth (Ephesians 2:11-22) whether we are Jew or non-Jew. Because of this, all the laws of this community apply to all within the community. The sojourner follows the same laws as the native. There are no separate laws for Jews and another set of laws for non-Jews; we are all one.

Since Jesus showed us by his life how an Israelite is to live, the acronym “WWJD” is quite appropriate. When confronted by various situations in life, we *should* ask “WWJD?” What Would Jesus Do? When examining the Scripture, what day would the Lord rest on? WWJD? Where would He be on the Sabbath day? WWJD? What kind of things would He eat? WWJD? Would Jesus celebrate the pagan practices of the Caananites or other peoples surrounding Israel? “WWJD?”

If we didn’t know the answer, where would we turn to find it? Of course, we would go to the “Old Testament,” the TANAKH, since that was all He had.

Having now found the answer in Scripture, the person wearing the “WWJD” band implies that they will follow what He would have done in the *same* situation.

Now, I realize that we will *all* fall short of what Jesus would have done (that is what sin is) and won’t always do what He did. Yet, having said that, we often excuse ourselves in our sin by saying, “I’m just human...” or, as the saying that was popularized by Flip Wilson goes, “The Devil made me do it...” and we go on sinning anyway as if we have no choice.

Well, Scripture says we *have* a choice: the choice to do good; the choice to do what He did. This choice is the choice to be free from the bondage of sin. There was a time in our lives before we became believers in Him that we had no choice. We were in bondage to sin (Romans 6) and sin reigned over us, but now we are freed from sin (verse 18). We have a choice to do as Jesus did!

When we ask the question “WWJD?” we are saying that our choice is to do what He would have done in the same situation. What we need to do is to broaden the question to see if there are areas in our lives that do not live up to “WWJD?”

When we consider the implications of the question “WWJD?” we find that it is greater and deeper than we first realized. The question goes to the essence of what He was and what we should be: holy. The answer to the question speaks to us and says:

The one who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same manner as he walked (1 John 2:6)

When we say that we are believers in Him, we are saying that we will walk as He walked. Not only must we walk His walk in the more obvious ways, but we must learn to walk His walk in those less obvious ways that are just as important to holy living. If we don't, we are making the Messiah a partaker in our sin.

When we became believers in the Lord, we became one spirit with Him. Our body members became members of the Messiah and His Holy Spirit dwells in us.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Messiah? Shall I then take away the members of Messiah and make them members of a harlot? May it never be!

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:15, 19

When we sin, He is in us; He is partaking with us: we are defiling His temple. I am sure He doesn't like that, though He realizes as believers we will sin from time-to-time. We often ignorantly sin because we don't know the Scriptures as we ought or were mis-told.

Sometimes, we do it deliberately; even though we know what the Scripture says. But when we truly repent of our sin (turn around from our sin), ask forgiveness for our sin and choose to do what is right, God will forgive us and heal us.

Since He dwells in us, the Lord expects us to live holy lives. We should *care* what we do with Him living inside of us. We should ask the question "WWJD?" and search the Scriptures diligently to find the answer. To do that, we must put aside human tradition and doctrine in favor of the Scripture's position and seek to walk as He walked in Holiness!

Chapter Five - What is Holiness?

[Excerpted and Condensed from my book, *A Call to Holiness*]

In God's Word we find Him commanding us to be a "holy" people. Yet, with so many "holy" things in this world, how are we to know what "holiness" truly is?

There are many things deemed to be holy: "holy water," "holy garments," "holy war," "holy communion," "holy sacraments," "holy priesthood," "holy animals," "holy matrimony," "holy sacrifices," "holy men," "holy women," – "Holy mackerel!" How are we to know what is truly "holy" or not?

In Hebrew the word for holy is "Kadosh" which, according to Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament means **pure, clean, free from defilement of crimes, idolatry, and other unclean and profane things.**¹ In the Greek New Testament "hagiasmos" is rendered as **sanctification, signifying a separation to God, and the resultant state or conduct befitting those so separated.**²

It stands to reason that since the Bible is a Hebrew book, we need to understand what holiness is from its Hebrew definition and not from our own subjective background. Holiness is not simply a title but an attitude of the heart reflected in how we live our lives. The character of holiness is defined within the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), providing the framework upon which all the other Books of the Bible depend.

Holiness is not only a separation of ourselves unto God as His own personal possession, but also a separation of ourselves from the worldly ways. Many of the Laws found in Torah (such as the kosher (dietary) laws) *do* have an effect of separating God's people from their unbelieving neighbors.

The reason for this separation from ungodly people was so that God's holy people would not begin to practice the wickedness that those people practiced. In brief, if you don't eat with them and fellowship with them, then you are less likely to build a relationship with them. If you don't build a relationship with them, then you are less likely to become like them.

¹ Gesenius' *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, H.W.F. Gesenius, BAKER BOOK HOUSE, Grand Rapids, MI, Copyright 1979, page 722

² *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, W.E. Vine, THOMAS NELSON PUBLISHERS, New York, Copyright 1985, page 307

God placed the dietary laws (a form of separation) and other laws in His Torah to protect His people from becoming like the world surrounding them.

It was good that He did this. If He didn't, over time there would not have been a distinct group of people through whom the Messiah ultimately would come. The Hebrew people would have assimilated with the other nations and would have been no more.

God *still* has these forms of separation for His people today or we, too, would assimilate into the world and be no longer a distinct people.

As people who obey God, do not let yourselves be shaped by the evil desires you used to have when you were still ignorant. On the contrary, following the Holy One who called you, become holy yourselves in your entire way of life; since the Tanakh says, "You are to be holy because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:14-16)

Peter gets this quote from Leviticus 11:45. He is saying here that we, as believers, are to imitate God – as depicted in the walk of Jesus – our example.

Literally, God is saying, "Be separate from the world, for I am separate from the world." Holiness is separateness from the world and its lusts. True holiness is being in the world, but not having friendship with the world system which is based on selfishness and greed.

1 John 2:15-17 says:

Do not love the world or the things of the world. If someone loves the world, then love for the Father is not in him; because all the things of the world – the desires of the old nature, the desires of the eyes, and the pretensions of life – are not from the Father but from the world. And the world is passing away, along with its desires. But whoever does God's will remains forever.

You unfaithful wives! Don't you know that loving the world is hating God? Whoever chooses to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy! (James 4:4)

Sadly, many believers attempt to walk a razor thin line – trying to be friends with the world *and* with God. They compromise what they know to be true from the Word of God and act like the world.

They are living in the world much as Lot was living in Sodom: Lot didn't start out *living* in Sodom, he set his tents *just outside* the city (Genesis 13:12). Yet, the next time we see him mentioned in Scripture, he is living *in* the city (Genesis 14:12). You would think that this was bad enough, but when we see his name once again in the Scripture, he is now sitting in the *gates* of the city (Genesis 19:1)! This means that he was regarded as an elder of the city, for it was in the gates of the city that the elders would sit to judge between individuals coming to them for justice. Lot was no longer simply a visitor or stranger in Sodom, he was part of the citizenry!

Did the ungodliness of Sodom rub off on Lot and his family? Two passages indicated it had: The first, when the angels sent to rescue Lot and his family came, the men of the city wanted to have sexual relations with these angels. Lot does not simply say, "No way. Get out of here!" But, instead, he offers his virgin daughters to these men to do with as they like. The second passage was after their rescue from Sodom when Lot's daughters made their father drunk with wine and had sexual relations with him, producing offspring by their father.

From these passages, it is important to realize that you can't walk in a pigpen without getting some of its filth on you. A believer in Jesus who thinks they can walk in worldly ways without getting defiled is deceiving him or herself.

Yet, over the centuries, the church has incorporated within itself many of the worldly ways and has played the "harlot" to the nations. From the passage in Revelation 18:1-5, it is evident that *some* of God's people are found within this harlot Babylon, or God wouldn't have to call them *out* of her. This doesn't mean that the true believers found within the harlot *are* harlot Babylon, but rather they are a part of this religious system and need to come out of her.

God has always warned His people against the religious practices of the nations – Exodus 23:24, 32-33; 34:12 and Deuteronomy 7:2-6, 25-26. Yet, so often the Jewish people fell into the pagan practices of the nations

surrounding them. When they did practice the religious observances of these nations, God likened her to a prostitute – Ezekiel 16, Hosea, etc.

So, does God offer comforting, kind words for them so that they would continue their rebelliousness? No. Instead, we see a different word coming from God to His chosen people (Jeremiah 2:20-3:10). Following are a few of these passages:

For long ago I broke your yoke; when I snapped your chains, you said, “I won’t sin.” Yet on every high hill, under every green tree, you sprawled and prostituted yourself.

(Verse 20)

How can you say, “I am not defiled, I have not pursued the ba’alim?” Look at your conduct in the valley, understand what you have done.

You are a restive young female camel, running here and there, wild, accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her lust – who can control her when she’s in heat?

Males seeking her need not weary themselves, for at mating season they will find her.

(Verse 23-24)

Adonai says, “If a man divorces his wife, and she leaves Him and marries another man, then if the first one marries her again, that land will be completely defiled. But you prostituted yourself to many lovers, yet you want To return to me?” says Adonai.

(Chapter 3, verse 1)

If God spoke this way to His people Israel, whom He loved and called “chosen,” should He only speak sweet things to His church (who should know better) when we do the same things?

As had occurred with Israel over the centuries, the Body of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, has incorporated into its religious observances the practices *forbidden* by God – the practices of the neighboring nations. As a result the church universal is defiled and in need of cleansing, just as Israel was.

Yet, in spite of what He said in Jeremiah, He still invites His people to repentance (Jeremiah 3:12-4:12).

Go and proclaim these words toward the north:

“Return, backsliding Isra’el,” says Adonai. “I will not frown on you, for I am merciful,” says Adonai. “I will not bear a grudge forever. Only acknowledge your guilt, that you have committed crimes against Adonai your God, that you were promiscuous with strangers under every green tree, and that you have not paid attention to my voice.” Says Adonai. (Chapter 3, verses 12 and 13)

Just as God was inviting Israel to repent and put away her foreign gods and practices, so is He speaking to the believing community today. The passage cited earlier on page 3 (Revelation 18), speaks to *every* believer in Christ to look at their practice of faith and see if they are found within this “Babylonian religious system.” It is incumbent upon every true believer who loves God to hear this call and remove himself or herself from the harlot, though it may be costly. If not, they, too, will be a participant in Babylon’s sins and will receive of her plagues.

Through this message I do not say that believers who practice unscriptural things are condemned by God, rather, that true believers who practice these things need to take Biblical reproof and cease such unscriptural practices.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living; thus anyone who belongs to God may be fully equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

It must be stressed that Scriptural reproof and correction is *not* condemnation! When a loving father reproves his children, he does not condemn them nor disown them. He disciplines them and though the chastening for the present does not feel good, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto those who are exercised by this discipline (Hebrews 12:7-11).

The time of the end is near, and more than ever the Bride of Messiah needs to **“make herself ready”** (Revelation 19:7) by once again embracing the holiness that God requires of her as found in His commandments, a holiness that is not in name, but in truth.

In reality, true holiness is not simply a title as some think but a state of being. God does not merely want us to be *called* “holy,” but God wants us to *be* holy or separate from the world and how it operates. We are to pursue holiness as a people (Hebrews 12:14), for without that holiness, no one will see God. The question is, “How are we to be truly holy, to be what God wants us to be?”

A follower of Messiah should want to follow Messiah in all ways, not just the paths that he or she likes, but even unto death, especially death to self. To do this we have to put aside pride and self-righteousness and admit our errors and the errors of our people, even as Daniel did:

I prayed to Adonai my God and made this confession:

“Please Adonai, great and fearsome God, who keeps his covenant and extends grace to those who love him and observe his mitzvot! We have sinned, done wrong, acted wickedly, rebelled and turned away from your mitzvot and rulings.” (Daniel 9:4,5).

It is when we do this that God will restore to us the place wherewith He has called us a “holy people of God.”

Chapter Six - Where do we go From Here?

[From my book, *A Call to Holiness*]

Most of us in the Body of Messiah have not been walking as He would; though as believers in Jesus, we should ALL want to do what He did!

When all is said and done, it is up to the individual to choose what to do when presented with the facts. Perhaps it will be decided that he or she will continue on with their current practice, unaffected. Perhaps it will be that there will be a complete renunciation of pagan practices in their life.

Regardless, we will all have to account before God for what we did with the light we were given. For those of you reading this who have decided to do nothing, you will not have to go any farther in this book; it will not make a difference in your life anyway.

For those of you who decide to make partial or complete changes in the relationship expression of your faith in Jesus, I will attempt to help you get some direction of possible things that can be done. I will assume that the reader wishes to make a complete change in their practice of faith, which will require a necessary change in lifestyle.

Anyone wishing to stop short of any of these suggestions may do so, remembering that is not me they have to answer to, but the Lord. With that in mind, here are some things which may guide you:

1. Stop observing the “obvious” pagan practices found within the Body of Messiah. Those practices incorporated into the Body of Messiah from very early on with pagan origins have no place in the Body of Messiah: Christmas, Easter, Lent, Good Friday, Halloween (or All Saints’ Day), and the Sunday “sabbath” are all pagan in orientation and origin. They subvert the purity of the faith and contaminate its practitioners. [Once again, I would like to reiterate that one may worship ANY DAY, for in the Temple, worship occurred EVERY DAY. You may worship on Sunday, or Monday, or whatever day you choose, but Sabbath means “rest,” and one is to REST on the SEVENTH day of the week. I would also like to add another fact: the Hebrew reckoning of the names of the days of the week were, and still are, the numbers of the day – *except* the Sabbath (Shabbat). In other words: Saturday at sundown starts not Sunday, but “yom rishon” - “day one.” At sundown on what we now call Sunday, “day two” starts. Thus, reckoning of

the days goes: “day one,” “day two,” “day three,” “day four,” “day five,” “day six” and finally “Shabbat.” For the Disciples to change the Shabbat is ludicrous, even if they could, because then you would have two days called “Shabbat” in the Hebrew “Christian” community! How would they distinguish which day is the “real” Sabbath, especially since they still used the term, “the first day of the week” as evidenced by the Book of Acts? It could get very confusing.]

2. Begin to observe the clearly Biblical commandments that can be seen in the Scripture such as: observing the Biblical kosher laws, not committing forbidden sexual practices, not eating blood, and regarding the period of time from Friday evening to Saturday evening as the truth Sabbath in which work is not to be performed, as clearly specified. Then, as you read the Word, the Holy Spirit will bring to your attention other commandments and will show you sin in other areas of your life. As He does so, understand that He does this for your benefit and blessing.

3. Begin to learn how to observe the Biblical feasts and Holy Days and begin to incorporate them into your life to replace all the pagan traditions. You can do this by preferably visiting a Messianic Jewish synagogue, because of their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. If one is not available, call a local rabbi and find out how they’re celebrated. Perhaps they may let you observe their practice and you can go from there. (Remember, they may be observing these out of a legalistic perspective in keeping the Law. The Law is NOT to be kept this way, rather, out of love for the Lord). May I suggest reading Messianic Jewish books on God’s appointed feast days and times to help you?

4. Begin to learn about the Jewishness of the faith and go back to the Jewishness of the First Century believing community. If believers don’t insist upon this, their Pastors will continue the pagan traditions of the believing community; it is so much easier to “keep on doing things as usual.” “Tradition, Tradition, TRADITION!” (So the song goes...).

Expect persecution from fellow believers. The believing community is the only group that seems to kick, beat or shoot its wounded and hurting. Those who have lived righteously have always been misunderstood, stoned, or otherwise maligned for doing what God wanted them to do. 2 Timothy 3:12 speaks to the fact that **all who desire to live godly lives will be persecuted**. Sadly, it too often comes from our brethren in the faith. Stand firm and hang

in there! Don't give up on what the Bible says to do to show your love for God. You'll probably not receive a pat on the back for keeping the Biblical kosher laws; instead you'll find other Christians deliberately setting traps for you to break it. Don't be surprised; this has happened to me and many others at times. When all is said and done, it is better to err on what the Word says than what man-made traditions say. Remember, they *won't* be standing there along side you when you are accounting for your deeds before Almighty God.

Finally, begin to use spiritual gifts as outlined in Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-16. I believe these gifts will become much more pronounced and effective once the garbage of paganism is removed from your life. As we truly become more holy (separate) from the worldly practices, we will be more of an unclogged conduit for God's power to flow through. I believe the final Revival will be marked by a great outpouring of God's power that was not equaled, even by the early Believing community.

The most important question to ask at this point is: "Do we want to be used by God this way? If not, we can continue just as before and let Egypt, Babylon, Greece, and Rome rule our religious practices. We're comfortable with these traditions; they've been around a long, long time; and we're doing okay (so we think).

On the other hand, if we choose to get our lives cleaned up, and we, as the "Bride making herself ready for the Bridegroom," go back to the Biblical principles outlined in the whole Bible, we will see God making manifest His love, grace and power in the lives of millions. The choice is not an easy one...choose wisely.