

Notes: Shabbat – July 26, 2014

Start: 10 am

Order of Service:

Meet and Greet
Liturgy – Ma Tovv
Introduction (if new people)
Liturgy – Sh'ma
Announcements
Prayer
Praise Reports
Praise and Worship Songs
Message
Aaronic Blessing
Kiddush
Oneg

Introduction:

Last week Revelation 2:9

Rev 2:8 "To the angel of the Messianic Community in Smyrna, write: 'Here is the message from the First and the Last, who died and came alive again:

Rev 2:9 "I know how you are suffering and how poor you are (though in fact you are rich!), and I know the insults of those who call themselves Jews but aren't — on the contrary, they are a synagogue of the Adversary.

Smyrna was a wealthy seaport, a competitor of Ephesus, and a center of emperor-worship.

Similar to verse 2 from last week regarding false emissaries:

Rev 2:2 "I know what you have been doing, how hard you have worked, how you have persevered, and how you can't stand wicked people; so you tested those who call themselves emissaries but aren't — and you found them to be liars.

First...Yochanan is talking here about Gentiles who pretend to be Jews.

It obviously refers to false apostles.

Here many commentators have accepted the literal sense of the verse with no further consideration to other potential meanings.

But here the language is metaphorical

The interpretation by many commentators tends to follow this direction:

Yochanan is talking about Jews who reject Yeshua as the Messiah instead of the literal understanding that these are non-Jews who lie and say they are Jews but in fact are Gentiles. In this way a verse which says nothing about Jews is given an antisemitic understanding based on the literal sense. The result is that over the centuries Jews have had the epithet "synagogue of Satan" hurled at them by Christians who thought they understood the Bible.

But nowhere in the New Covenant writings are unbelieving Jews called non-Jews, Nor does anything in the present context call for a violent outburst against Jews. A good rule of interpretation is that when the literal sense makes

good sense, seek no other sense. The only explanation I can see for its nearly universal disregard in this case is the anti-Jewish mindset that infected the Church, including its theologians and commentators, so that even those without antisemitic feelings rejected the *p'shat* in favor of imposing on the text their own *drash*

This way of thinking is contrary to the what was happening in the first century:

In the first century, the Jewish religion was highly regarded; many Gentiles became Jewish proselytes.

We read of Cornelius's heart and what he does as a Roman:

Act 10:2 He was a devout man, a "God-fearer," as was his whole household; he gave generously to help the Jewish poor and prayed regularly to God.

It is not surprising that other Gentiles preferred a short-cut, reaping the advantage of Jewish identification without the burden of adherence to *Torah*. Sha'ul had already encountered such types in Galatia (see [Gal 6:12-13](#)).

Gal 6:12 It is those who want to look good outwardly who are trying to get you to be circumcised. The only reason they are doing it is to escape persecution for preaching about the Messiah's execution-stake.

Gal 6:13 For even those who are getting circumcised don't observe the Torah. On the contrary, they want you to get circumcised so that they can boast of having gained your adherence.

If you recall, earlier in Acts, the talmadim of Messiah were instructed not to keep silent:

Act 5:40 After summoning the emissaries and flogging them, they commanded them not to speak in the name of Yeshua, and let them go.

Act 5:41 The emissaries left the Sanhedrin overjoyed at having been considered worthy of suffering disgrace on account of him.

Act 5:42 And not for a single day, either in the Temple court or in private homes, did they stop teaching and proclaiming the Good News that Yeshua is the Messiah.

We have this issue today where people are calling themselves something they are not. I have talked extensively regarding people calling themselves Jews, Hebrews or Israelites, based on what originated from "The British Israelites" belief that regards the British as the Ten Lost Tribes.

The Mormons not only consider themselves to be the Ten Lost Tribes but regard themselves as Jews and everyone else (real Jews included) as Gentiles!

To name just a couple...

All of these groups are outside the realm of Christianity. In addition, scattered about are well-meaning Gentile Believers whose strong identification with and love for the Jewish people has made them believe-without a shred of evidence-that they are actually Jewish themselves.

1Ti 1:3 As I counseled you when I was leaving for Macedonia, stay on in Ephesus, so that you may order certain people who are teaching a different doctrine to stop.

1Ti 1:4 Have them stop devoting their attention to myths and never-ending genealogies; these divert people to speculating instead of doing God's work, which requires trust.

This in no way is the same thing where one discovers that hidden in their family tree is Jewish ancestry.

Without exception this phenomenon of Gentiles imagining and asserting they are Jewish, Hebrew or Israel, when they are not leads to strange patterns of doctrine and practice. In some cases they create a greater burden than is required of Gentile believers, thus placing those that espouse to follow them under a yoke of legalism. Even by their outward expression these people are not accepted by Jews as Jewish; nor, as this verse shows, are they to be accepted by Christians as Christian.

Isolated and self-defensive, they can easily become prideful, neither obeying the *Torah* as intended nor showing brotherly love to Yeshua's real followers. It is easy to see why Yeshua does not regard them as harmlessly neutral but pegs them as **a synagogue of the Adversary**.

We have experienced first hand the divisiveness and potential harm people like this can inflict on a congregation.

As then, this issue is still prevalent today to the point where instruction given to both Timothy and Titus are beneficial for today:

1Ti 1:3 As I counseled you when I was leaving for Macedonia, stay on in Ephesus, so that you may order certain people who are teaching a different doctrine to stop.

1Ti 1:4 Have them stop devoting their attention to myths and never-ending genealogies; these divert people to speculating instead of doing God's work, which requires trust.

Tit 3:8 You can trust what I have just said, and I want you to speak with confidence about these things, so that those who have put their trust in God may apply themselves to doing good deeds. These are both good in themselves and valuable to the community.

Tit 3:9 But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, quarrels and fights about the Torah; because they are worthless and futile.

Tit 3:10 Warn a divisive person once, then a second time; and after that, have nothing more to do with him.

Tit 3:11 You may be sure that such a person has been perverted and is sinning: he stands self-condemned.

As I have conveyed many times, the mindset we convey is one of a community, consistent throughout scripture.

If you weaken the community, you weaken the individual.

If each individual is strong, then the community is strong.

Smyrna is one of the two communities that Yeshua does not find fault.

He offers the following encouragement,

Rev 2:10 Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. Look, the Adversary is going to have some of you thrown in prison, in order to put you to the test; and you will face an ordeal for ten days. Remain faithful, even to the point of death; and I will give you life as your crown.

Rev 2:11 Those who have ears, let them hear what the Spirit is saying to the Messianic communities. He who wins the victory will not be hurt at all by the second death." '

Each letter is addressed to a community of believers, not an individual.

Three weeks ago I talked about how the emphasis on the individual has affected the health of other congregations.

There was a topic on LinkedIn this week where the poster was asking the question, why are churches declining in attendance.

When the focus is on individualism. When you focus on a message of individualism, you produce talmadim with an individualistic mindset.

I know of people that call themselves believers yet there is not a speck of fruit produced. Their lives are chaotic and without root. They do not consider scripture authoritative, yet call themselves believers.

To paraphrase scripture:

Does an apple tree produce oranges?

If what you are presenting and teaching is an individual emphasis why would you expect a different outcome?

Adonai established Israel as His nation...comprised of people that descended from Abraham.

Throughout history, individualism has impacted Israel, yet when the focus was on community, this is where Israel was strong.

It took the commitment of the entire army of the community to walk around Jerico whereas it took just 10 individuals

to circumvent Adonai's plan of entering the land they had already been given.

We as a congregation are only as strong as our weakest individual.

However, the weak are strengthened within the congregation by those that are strong in their faith.

Tit 2:1 But you, explain what kind of behavior goes along with sound teaching.

Tit 2:2 Tell the older men to be serious, sensible, self-controlled and sound in their trust, love and perseverance.

Tit 2:3 Likewise, tell the older women to behave the way people leading a holy life should. They shouldn't be slanderers or slaves to excessive drinking. They should teach what is good,

Tit 2:4 thus training the younger women to love their husbands and children,

Tit 2:5 to be self-controlled and pure, to take good care of their homes and submit to their husbands. In this way, God's message will not be brought into disgrace.

What Sha'ul is conveying is along the same lines regarding Torah, but extended from the family to the community.

Deu 6:6 These words, which I am ordering you today, are to be on your heart;

Deu 6:7 and you are to teach them carefully to your children. You are to talk about them when you sit at home, when you are traveling on the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Older not in the sense of age but rather maturity in Messiah.

It is the responsibility of mature believers to teach.

Some of you have come from other denominations or groups where as I cited earlier... strange patterns of doctrine and practice existed.

The more mature you are as believers, the less susceptible you are to "strange doctrine and practices. Notice I said less and not immune

Consider the harshness of Sha'ul's words to the congregation of believers in Galatia...

Gal 3:1 You stupid Galatians! Who has put you under a spell? Before your very eyes Yeshua the Messiah was clearly portrayed as having been put to death as a criminal!

Gal 3:2 I want to know from you just this one thing: did you receive the Spirit by legalistic observance of Torah commands or by trusting in what you heard and being faithful to it?

Gal 3:3 Are you that stupid? Having begun with the Spirit's power, do you think you can reach the goal under your own power?

Sha'ul is expressing his exasperation, he tries to arouse his charges with ridicule and shame. Yet all this is in the context of his loving them dearly; one piece of evidence for this is that he calls them "brothers," 9 times throughout his letter - a term of endearment among the early believers, and still used today.

We as a congregation can learn much from the challenges experienced at Smyrna.

We as a congregation will experience attacks from the enemy ha satan

We as a congregation will experience words of hatred because of who we are and what we believe.

Slides - <http://news.yahoo.com/photos/worldwide-demonstrations-against-israel-s-military-agression-in-gaza-1406323944-slideshow/>

We will attract people of differing views.