Chapter 1 Case Study of the 7 Churches of Asia Minor

Prologue: Backsliding and apostasies are normal tendencies in human nature!

Every kingly authority has a means of assessing its realm, dominion, and domain to see if life is lived in accordance to precepts of the constitution or governing document. In the natural, nations have what they call an Inspector General or Auditor General who assesses the finances, resources, and utilization of same to locate: Strengths and weaknesses thereof; opportunities for greater efficiency in resource allocation and utilization, threats to the nation and state; and recommendations on the way forward. In advanced nations like the United States, the independence, clarity of thought, and ability of the Inspector General of any department of State is a necessary facility for assessing how well governance delivers promises and expectations.

Natural kingdoms normally borrow from what is in operation in the spiritual realm! In the Kingdom of Yahweh, Yeshua Ha Mashiach, Jesus the Messiah, who happens to also be the Living Word, and by that measure the Constitution, is the basis on which everything will rise or fall. Well did Paul the apostle tell the people of Rome and Athens that Yahweh will judge every one by Yeshua whom he sent.

> **Romans 2:16 (KJV)** 16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.
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> **Acts 17:30-31 (KJV)** 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

If the principle of assessment is so regarding humanity in general it is more so regarding the church which is the Body of Yeshua, Jesus. This was why Paul exhorts us to be mindful with what and how we build the church:

> **1 Corinthians 3:10-15 (KJV)** 10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

The idea anyone claiming to be led of Holy Spirit can build whatever he or she likes and call it 'church' flies in the face of reality! The church is not a human or religious organization that can be built anyhow. It is not a personal estate one can structure anyhow. Those who are part of the New Covenant should learn from those who lived under the Old Testament. Though chosen as a kingdom of priests and peculiar people unto Yahweh, the stiff neckedness of Hebrews, who Moses and the Prophets led reveals an earful of divine wisdom: The merciful and compassionate Yahweh is also the just judge of all flesh! When his set patterns are flouted by humans, they should realize consequence of such iniquity can be devastating. In this regard, let us cast our mind back to what happened when they sinned against the Most High in the wilderness:

> **1 Corinthians 10:1-12 (KJV)** 1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our

fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition , upon whom the ends of the world are come.12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Context

These things have been written to lay a foundation that Holy Spirit will give utterance to build upon in the pages ahead concerning the assessment of the church by Yeshua, Jesus the head. It is a very necessary thing for saints to prayerfully read the whole of the book of Revelation and seek divine illumination. No excuse should be allowed to deter us from doing so. It is the only book specifically sent forth with a divine blessing!

> **Revelation 1:3 (KJV)** 3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

It is a book which offers a heavenly perspective to life on planet earth from the day it was written till the day when all things are consummated with the new heavens and new earth.

In this study, we will focus on how Yeshua, Jesus saw the church he redeemed barely 62-65 years after ascending to heaven. The revelations granted John, the beloved, are generally believed to be dated about AD 95, which means they fall within the first century or what can be called the Alpha Church. Several church writers and commentators believe this was about the time Emperor Domitian (AD 90-95) severely persecuted Christians in the Roman Empire. The response of heaven was not to stop the fire of persecution but to reveal the deeper meaning of life and the end of both the righteous and the sinners!

In Revelation chapters 1-3, Yeshua did not commit the assessment of the church to a human or angelic Inspector General. He did the assessment by himself! The words he spoke and context in which he spoke them must be studied and understood by all ministers of the gospel and indeed anyone who claims any kind of calling relating to the church. If generality of the church was already falling out of the narrow path and embracing the broad ways of the world within the first century of the church, our imaginations can fathom the depth of falling away that has happened about twenty centuries later. This trend did not take Yeshua by surprise neither should it take us. Well did Yeshua warn in the Sermon on the Mount:

> **Matthew 7:13-16, 24-27 (KJV)** 13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. 15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits.

Matthew 7:24-27 (KJV) 24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Within the same time frame in which the book of Revelation was written, Paul the Apostle was used to confirm the downward slope of the vast wing of the church which became careless with grace and tendency of the old man to rule, when given but a little chance:

1 Timothy 4:1-2 (KJV) 1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

2 Timothy 3:1-5 (KJV) 1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

John, the beloved, was also used to reveal the reality that backsliding from a vibrant relationship with Yeshua based on the truth and apostasy were already underway in the glorious Alpha Church of the first century:

> **1 John 2:18-19 (KJV)** 18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Why do people backslide so easily?

The answer is simply found in the human nature! The human nature tends to rebellion because it was distorted at Eden to seek independence and non-accountability! As a matter of fact, that was the core of the temptation of Satan which got Eve, more than anything else, as can be seen when we read between the lines, especially verses 4 and 5 and its effect on her:

> **Genesis 3:1-6 (KJV)** 1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? 2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. 6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Since that day, the heart of humans became a study in rebellion!

1. Humanity fell with Adam and Eve and the consequence was separation from Elohim.
2. By Genesis chapter 6, human nature had a total melt down on a global scale which necessitated the flood in the days of Noah.

   Genesis 6:1-7 (KJV) 1 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, 2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. 3 And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. 4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. 5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7 And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.
3. Even among the family of eight saved, the human nature cropped up not long after the Flood: Both Noah stumbled and Ham his son had a moral fall of epic proportions.

   Genesis 9:20-22 (KJV) 20 And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: 21 And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. 22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

4. Even the patriarchs, prophets, and kings of Israel stumbled off the righteous path at various times, though massively blessed by Elohim: Abraham lied under pressure (Genesis 12:11-13); Moses missed the promised land for not sanctifying the Lord before Israel in his anger and disobedience (Numbers 20). In Exodus chapter 32, we see Israel backslide en-masse and got into apostasy despite the awesome visitations from their days in Egypt. David, the friend of Elohim, could not resist the allure of sinful pleasure with Bathsheba and to cover it up, had Uriah killed. In the New Testament, Peter stumbled at the thought of losing Yeshua to death and disrespected him (Matthew 16); The disciples ran away when Yeshua needed them most. In these and the myriad of instances in the old and new covenants, the problem can be located in three realms of the human nature and how they are wired in a default setting since the fall:

The Heart – wired to hide evil/negative motives, it is the engine on which life rotates.

> **Jeremiah 17:9-10 (KJV)** 9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? 10 I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

The Mind – this is the central processing unit where opinions and perspectives are formed. It tends to interpret truth either from past experiences or what is convenient. In the end, one can have a wrong understanding of something, be unwilling or unable to admit same, and act in a way which is wrong! That is why many people are sincerely wrong by clinging to their perspectives!

> **Proverbs 23:7 (KJV)** 7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.

The Will – this is the place from where humans make choices of what they want to do. If the will is not totally surrendered to Elohim to any degree, a believer or minister is apt to make decisions which will take him/her outside the will of Elohim. This is often the case when ministers try to build fancy religious ideas which are contrary to the holy writ and yet feel justified in what is clearly rebellion! This is also the case when ministers or brethren in a local congregation or network consciously or unconsciously try to re-configure a vision they are called into with their self-ideas, not realizing they are walking not in liberty but rebellion!

Yeshua succeeded in his earthly ministry because his whole heart and mind was transfixed on pleasing the Father in all things. He in effect surrendered his will to wholly embrace and do the will of the Father.

> **Hebrews 1:9 (KJV)** 9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

For this reason, he surrendered his will, ability to choose, entirely to Yahweh his Father!

> **John 5:30 (KJV)** 30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.
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> **John 6:38 (KJV)** 38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

One scripture in the New Covenant warns saints against being conceited to the degree of thinking they are eternally secure, despite what they do:

> **1 Corinthians 10:12 (KJV)** 12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Eternity is not accessed by chance! It is by faith in Yeshua and abiding in him! Let us abide in him irrespective of the billows that seek to buffet us. Let us continue in the narrow way relying on his grace to live in righteousness, honouring

our heavenly Father with the choices we make and lifestyles that are irreproachable (John 15:1-8).

For those in leadership, let it be noted, without any equivocation, the onus is on us for making sure what substances we build ministry with, the structures we put in place, the motives that drive us, and the methods we employ are fully in consonance with his approved pattern. While deviations from the divine pattern may bring seeming success, fame, and money, let it be known without any shadow of doubt such can be illusory and even dangerous in the extreme! This is because, at the end of the day, the fire of Elohim will try every motive and substance with which spiritual work was done!

> **2 Corinthians 5:10 (KJV)** 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.
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> **2 Timothy 2:19 (KJV)** 19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

As we consider the 7 Letters from Heaven, it is needful to prepare our hearts to see what counts with the King and what has no value with him. The Utilitarian gospel teaches the semi-truth that we are to believe on Yeshua, Jesus and receive all we need. To merely believe on him and get stuck in using him to get what we want is cheap! There is much more than believing on him! We are also called to follow him as disciples who obey his word by his grace. Furthermore, we are also called to be like him, live like sons of Elohim in the earth realm just as he lived, occupying our allotments and spheres of influence, until he returns (Luke 19:11-27).

This holistic faith in Yeshua, Jesus produces a cutting-edge spirituality that is constantly pressing into the fullness of him, just like our brother who has gone into glory, Paul of Tarsus (Philippians 3:1-14). Once we see kingdom life as a journey

with an end, our passion to make it to his throne will take away any presumptuousness of having arrived at prematurely! May this course be used by Holy Spirit who inspired it to perfect all participants in the Master Class and brethren who are receiving the overflow!

Assignment:

(1). Please share with us, as briefly as you can yet with clarity at least 3 main things you learnt from this chapter.