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(Transcript)

By Warren Zehrung – 4/12/2014

We have been given the inestimable blessing of being a part of God's true Church – the spiritual body of Christ. The specific purpose of this sermon today is to drive home the point that though we will be many **scattered little groups** of brethren keeping Passover – across the nation and around the world – from God's perspective – we are **one** people.

There are those church leaders who are working hard to confiscate some of God's people for themselves and their purposes. They tell those that they are able to influence, "Don't have anything to do with those brethren in other groups – if you do you will be put out of our group." Or they tell them, "You'll lose your salvation if you leave our group."

The Bible teaches no such thing. Brethren, let us understand that the Church of God is not a physical structure; the Church of God is not made up of separate corporate **organizations** that can be seen and perceived.

The Church of God is ONE **spiritual entity** comprised entirely of all of the **converted** brethren. It is all those who have been called chosen and faithful – led by God's Holy Spirit to obey the Commandments – all those who have repented and believe in Jesus Christ our Savior. Those who have had hands lain on them to become Children of God.

When Jesus considers the Church of God, He recognizes only **one body**, and that is His body of believers. Jesus Christ has only one spiritual Body, with many members. They possess the Spirit of God, and they are scattered all over the face of the earth. Let's read what God says. Let's read it for ourselves. Let's read it and believe it!

1 Corinthians 12:

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into **one body**, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into **one Spirit**.

Remember brethren, we are members one of another. What is important is the we understand that **it is God** who has inspired these words in the Bible. When a Scripture is quoted – it is not **opinion** – it is fact! Thy Word is Truth.

John 17:

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: **thy word is truth**.

Brethren, we are to go into the Kingdom of God together. That is the way that Jesus Christ pictures it.

Ephesians 4:

4 There is **one body**, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Ephesians 4:

5-6 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

That is the only way we should be looking at one another. But, many of God's people do not feel that they possess or excel at the interpersonal skills necessary to be able to communicate and interact with other people – especially when it comes to conflict resolution.

We've all heard someone exclaim, "I'd like to go off somewhere and get away from it all." "Just you and me Lord." "I've had it with people." "It would be nice to just head for the hills." "I'm an independent Christian." "People are just not my strong suit."

The trouble with that way of thinking is that God intends for His people to learn now how to work with, serve, and get along with others – lots of others – and with those of differing perspectives. If we are to serve with Jesus Christ in the millennium – our primary duty **will be** working with people – lots of people. We will be teaching great numbers of them to walk in the way of the Lord.

Isaiah 30:

21 This is the way – walk ye in it.

Though the Church of God is a small and separated flock now, God's people are destined to grow to astronomical numbers.

Luke 12:

32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.

On a **Passover evening** almost four-thousand years ago our Lord promised Abraham that the number of his children would be like the stars of heaven. It was a night much like tonight; God brought Abraham to a grassy knoll as the sun had just set in the west. On the eastern horizon – a huge full moon was just beginning to rise. God told Abraham to count the stars as they came out. And he did as one by one the stars began to appear. 1... 2... 3...

Then dozens of stars could be seen. After a few minutes there were hundreds of stars – and then thousands – and before very long there were **too many** for Abraham to count. The number of stars in the sky is truly astronomical.

Genesis 15:

5 The [Lord God] brought [Abram] forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, **if** thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

That is how many children you will have Abraham! Wow! As time grows short for the return of Christ let us avail ourselves of the remaining time to learn this one vital lesson:

God fully expects us to think of ourselves as a part of His **one community of Christians** who equally share one Father - *Our Father* (Matthew 6:9).

Those two words, *Our Father*, express the understanding that God is literally our personal Father. And yet Jesus Christ went to great ends to make sure that we realize that our relationship with God the Father is **not** a relationship that is exclusive of others – but rather a relationship with God the Father that mutually encompasses all of us.

God loves all His children – and He does not appreciate the infighting and squabbling that is going on between those groups that will not recognize **the others** as being God's children also.

Jesus could have instructed His disciples to begin their personal prayers with, "My Father in heaven..." But He did not use My; instead He instructed us to pray, "**Our** Father." In fact Jesus worded our instruction so as to be specifically **inclusive** of all others. That is the way He wants us to think.

Sadly, many of the brethren are being taught a **fatal** point of view that excludes of most of the members of the body of Christ. Perhaps we would like to have an exclusive relationship with the Father, but the very word, "**our**" indicates that God's will is to be Father of all mankind.

When we pray and worship we are to come before the Almighty God of the universe in awe and respect, as only one person among **all** of His creation.

It is an improper and arrogant concept to think of ourselves as having the **inside track** with God to the **exclusion** of others. That is the reason that Jesus did not teach us to pray, "**My** Father."

Remember this: God intends that first – the Church brethren be a part of His great Design and Plan – and then that all mankind be a part of His great Design and Plan.

2 Peter 3:

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing **that any** should perish, but that **all** should come to repentance.

Jesus made it possible for man to have a one-on-one relationship with the Father – but not to the **barring** of a single one of our brethren. The establishment of a close, personal relationship with our Father is what He desires. This "closeness" is of paramount importance in the development of our spiritual character – but only when we are **not ruling out** others.

Very near the end of his life, the last remaining apostle, the beloved John, expressed this concept of harmony and fellowship among all the brethren – including himself in the number. This is where the Title of today's sermon comes from – notice the **inclusiveness**:

1 John 1:

3 That which **we** have seen and heard declare **we** unto **you** (plural), that **you** (plural) also may have fellowship with **us**: and truly **our fellowship** is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

We do not find John saying, "I; My; Me; Mine..." but, "We; Us; Our..."

This was written at nearly 100 AD. All the other apostles had long been dead... John could have written "I and me" instead of "we and us." But God is teaching us to be inclusive of all the brethren. In fact, the Church of God consists of the true believers who God the Father has called to be a part of the Body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:

27 You, brethren, are the Body of Christ, and members in particular.

It is in Paul's epistles that we find the concept of the Church brethren being the **Body of Christ** being expounded upon. There is **no** justification for scattered groups to disregard, let alone have contempt for other brethren who are lead by God's Spirit. Watch closely how Paul transitions from the **actual physical body** and blood of Jesus Christ to—the Church brethren being one body of people.

1 Corinthians 10:

16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? The bread which **we** break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ?

Please notice the **"We."** Paul is speaking of the **one body of believers**.

1 Corinthians 10:

17 For **we** being many are one bread, and one body: for **we** are **all** partakers of that one bread.

When Jesus looks down from His throne in heaven, He sees only **one body of believers** who share a unity of the Spirit. Not a lot of groups separated by artificial walls of **division**. We must understand that the Church of God is not physical – but a spiritual entity. The "Church of God" is the body of true believers that God the Father has called to be a unified part of the "Body of Christ."

1 Corinthians 1:

10 I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be **no divisions** among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

When we are connected with Christ – we are connected to **every one of the members** of the Church of God. When we do not count all the others to be our brethren – then we are not connected to Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:

15 You [brethren] are called into **one** Body; and be ye thankful.

We are the Church of God. That means that we belong to God. We have been bought for a price.

1 Corinthians 6:

20 For ye are **bought with a price**: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

We belong to God – we have been redeemed - **bought with a price** – we are not our own. We are God's Church – God's people.

1 Corinthians 12:

18 But now hath God **set** the **members** every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. Who do men think they are to then sub-divide God's people for their own designs? Jesus Christ has only one spiritual Body which is all the Church of God – the Bride of Christ – all of the saints – the called out ones who will reign and rule with Him in the millennium.

Ephesians 1:

22-23 And [God] has put all things under [Jesus'] feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to **the Church, which is His Body**, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.

If the Church of God fully appreciated these words we would not be in the scattered state we find ourselves today. Instead we would all be loving and recognizing one another and *growing in perfection unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ* (Ephesians 4:13).

Shame on every church leader who has **not** publicly and honestly reached out to all the other church leaders to allow all the brethren to observe Passover as Jesus Christ intended we keep it. As **one** people!

Brethren, if you were to go to every **church leader** today – the head men of any, and all, of the groups who call themselves “Church of God” and ask them why they do not obey God’s command to be one body – do you know what they would say? If you went to every one of the **Pastors** in all the congregations of those corporate Church organizations – and ask them why **WE** THE PEOPLE are separated as we are – do you know what they would say?

Each leader would say, “I can’t do anything about it...” because I want to be able to say “My way or the highway.” Each pastor would say, “I can’t do anything about it...” And, what they mean by “I can’t do anything about it...” is “I can’t do anything about it without adversely affecting my **control** and my authority over everything. “I can’t do anything about it without adversely affecting my salary and retirement.” “I can’t do anything about it – and still stay in the good graces of my political structure at headquarters.”

Brethren, from time to time, I like to share comments to the weekly “Countdown to the Return of Jesus Christ” that we receive:

“Yes, it is a sad state of affairs in the church, especially in the corporate churches, who for the most part, have not changed their M.O. – modus operandi – exclusivism – the action or policy of excluding people and groups.

“Barring a great miracle from God, I don't foresee that things are going to change much before the return of Christ. The signs are all around us that this nation doesn't have much time left. An economic crash seems imminent. Life as we have always known it is about to end.” [End comment]

Brethren, if we as members of the Church of God would discern who the members of Christ’s Body are, and hold our Church leaders accountable to Christ, we would not be in the poor spiritual health we find ourselves today.

1 Corinthians 11:

29 For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation / judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

When reading the phrase, "the Lord's body," many will mistakenly think about the **dead** body of Jesus. They will then begin to try to "discern the dead body." That is not what is meant here. We must answer the question,

What does Paul mean by the "Lord's body?" Paul was speaking of the **Church of God** brethren! The “Body of Christ” was a common term meaning all the converted people of God.

Colossians 1:

24 For [Christ's] body's sake, which is the Church.

We keep the Passover to commemorate Christ's sacrifice, a sacrifice made necessary by our sins. In recent years especially, many of the sins of God's children have become more apparent and more **divisive**. Many of us no longer walk together, either because of our sins or those of someone else, or both. Even if we personally did not cause division, yet we have sinned in other areas. We all have gotten our feet a little dirty on the dusty road of life.

Adding the Footwashing ceremony to the **Passover Service** was **not** a spur of the moment thought that came to Christ because of the strife among the disciples... they had been arguing over who would be greatest among them.

Mark 10:

37 They said unto [Jesus], Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

Mark 10:

41 And when the ten [disciples] heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

We will see that Passover is about **others** – not only about self.

In John 13 we see that Jesus was about to do something really big – it is so important that John records that Jesus has been given all the **authority** of God in heaven -- to perform what He is about to do – Institute the New Testament Footwashing!

The Footwashing – when properly and fully understood – drives home the **“We”** concept... as opposed to the “I; My; Me; Mine...” of a selfish world.

In God’s Church the Footwashing has been played down – relegated to a minor status – as though it were of little importance. We too, are to be servants – as Jesus Christ showed Himself to be a servant. We get our feet “dirty” – we go places through the year in our minds and hearts we ought not to go – and we dirty our feet. We are not dirty all over – we were once washed all over by the blood of Christ at our baptism. We remain in that covenant relationship with Jesus Christ as long as we have not turned our backs on God and walked away.

Because we have all sinned throughout the year, the Footwashing is a yearly renewal and rededication of our baptismal covenant and washing of regeneration and determination to sin no more; the Footwashing illustrates the self-sacrifice of laying down our lives for each other; it is a reminder of the obligation to forgive others – confirming that we must humble ourselves as Jesus did, (Philippians 2:1-8); and the Footwashing teaches us the essential truth that we must be spiritual servants to our fellow man.

By His example, Jesus taught us how to serve others just as He has done.

The Footwashing is about learning to serve one another in a spiritual way.

John 13:

7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do, you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.

The purpose of the Footwashing is for us today to truly learn to spiritually serve one another and not exclude others. It would only be after they had received God's Holy Spirit at Pentecost that the apostles would understand the meaning and importance of the yearly Footwashing at Passover.

Jesus made the **Footwashing** a requirement for our **salvation** – it is that important!

Though we were once washed at baptism, the Footwashing symbolizes our renewed commitment to walk in the newness of life that we made at our baptism. The Footwashing takes place just before we partake of the Bread and Wine – representing Jesus making His abode in us. We must be thoroughly clean to receive Him.

Passover is the First and Greatest of the Feasts of God. Because we are yet sinners, the yearly Footwashing indicates our desire to "clean our slate," so to speak, in a reaffirmation of our baptismal vow.

John 13:

13-15 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought [must, obligated, duty-bound] to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

The Footwashing shows that Jesus tells us to do as He had done in service to others. In the same way that we want to be clean before God, Jesus Christ requires us to help **other** brethren to be clean before God in our common spiritual quest.

How did Jesus love us? Jesus laid His life down for us, so we must lay our lives down for others - but how do we do that? Are we willing to serve in the same way – by laying down our lives for others – putting it "all on the line" to help them come out of their sin.

John 13:

16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord/master; neither He [Jesus] that is sent greater than He [God the Father] that sent Him.

Jesus is making the point that He reversed the roles to show the supreme requirement to be servants to others. Jesus was the greatest and yet He became our servant – it is not asking too much that we become the servants of those in need.

John 13:

17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

John 13:

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

We love one another by keeping the Commandments – we don't **steal** from one another, we do not **hurt** each other, we don't **lie** to one another, etc...

Here is the evidence that you are a Christian: Here's how to tell:

John 13:

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, **if** ye have love one to another.

Brethren, throughout the year we all come short of God's perfect standards – we sin and fall short of the perfection of Jesus Christ. We must acknowledge and admit our sins and shortcomings in a timely manner – as we come see them. God makes His forgiveness of our sins contingent on our forgiveness of others. ...Our willingness to work with others. We are the body of Christ. Paul explains that though we suffer, Jesus lives in us as we are living sacrifices for others.

2 Corinthians 4:

10-11 Always bearing about in the body [we carry in our body] the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

That verse says a lot – study it. Paul is speaking of Jesus living His life in us so that His life becomes apparent in the way we live – laying down our lives for each other and sacrificing for others. Paul shows that our very salvation depends on our caring for one another.

1 Corinthians 1:

13 Is Christ divided?

Absolutely not! The Scriptures are clear – Christ's body is supposed to operate as an integral whole. Each member of the body of Christ has a responsibility to live according to the rules of the Kingdom of God – now – at this time. We are not waiting for Jesus to return and force us to recognize and love one another and the brethren in other corporate organizations. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ right now.

If we are not now behaving, as Christians should, we will not be in the first resurrection, nor the Kingdom of God. Passover emphasizes the unity of the body of Christ - the people of God's Church. The brethren should share a unity with one another, and help each other into the Kingdom of God. Passover is so important for us that Jesus said to Peter (and to us) during the footwashing:

John 13:

8 If I wash thee not, thou hast **no part** with me.

It is interesting to think about how the brethren spiritually depend on each other - the individual members of the "Body of Christ." Everyone is needed because of the personal spiritual gifts which fulfill different functions of the Body.

One of the main lessons of Christianity is this: As members of the Body of Christ, we all need each other, just as our physical bodies need all its parts to work in unison properly. Speaking of the Church brethren:

1 Corinthians 12:

7 The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for the profit of all [the brethren].

1 Corinthians 12:

12-13 For as the **body is one**, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body.

Let's renew a zeal and enthusiasm for the Truth that is contagious to others in the Body. Let's regain our "first love." The result is that our faith is reaffirmed, and the entire Body of Christ is edified.

Ephesians 4:

12 For the perfecting of the saints..., for the edifying of the Body of Christ.

End: We