

Where Are You?

“YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God] Is Pursuing Us”

I. SCRIPTURE

Genesis 3:9 – “And YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God] called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’”

II. WHY AREN’T YOU IN CHURCH TODAY?

As a church, when we think about someone’s religious involvement, we are mainly thinking about those people who are attending weekly weekend worship services. Nowadays, more people generally are saying that they pray rather than attend services. But yet, when we think about how we practice our faith with others outside our own home, it almost always means that that we attend weekly church services. And yet, people’s weekly religious involvement has been declining in recent decades. In the 2014 American Time Use Survey, only 21% of (Americans) reported attending religious services. And by that number, 21%, we are not only talking about those that attend a weekly “Christian” service, but also those who attend a synagogue, mosque, or temple.¹ So I wonder, don’t you, how many *faithful* disciples of YAHUSHA [Jesus] are there, really, who are seeking YAHUAH [God] by their weekly assembly in the body of MESSIAH [Christ]? In other words, if we take out the non-Messianic Jews, the Muslims, the Jehovah Witnesses and other religious people groups who do not profess the name of YAHUSHA HA’MASHIACH [Jesus Christ] as YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God], how much less than the 21% are true “Christians”, who are seeking YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God] regularly in church each week?

Let’s look at it for the other side for a minute. What percentage of people do you think there are who never attend a religious service, whether they claim in their heart to be atheist, agnostic, Jew, Muslim, a Christian, a non-Christian believer, or any other religion? Do you think it is higher than the 21% who say that they do attend a weekly service? The answer is that in the same year where we have this Time Use Survey, in 2014, it was higher, at 26%. And this number has doubled from

¹. Chaves, Mark. American Religion: Contemporary Trends. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 41-42.

just 13% in 1990. And so why is it happening, then, that faithful weekly attendance at church is slowing dropping, while those who never attend is rising so quickly? According to Harvard Graduate, Duke Divinity School Professor, researcher and author Dr Mark Chaves, “this is happening because the increasing number of people who never attend mainly comes from people shifting from very infrequent attendance to nonattendance.”² And so it is on this particular day, that when you and I look around the room, we notice that many people who had been more faithful in showing up to weekly church services in the past, are no longer showing up regularly... because they have either shifted from “regular” weekly attendance to “infrequent” attendance, or worse yet, they have shifted, or are shifting from “regular” or “infrequent” attendance, to never attending church again.

III. **“WHERE ARE YOU?” (Genesis 3:1-13)**

A. THEN

“[Then] the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God] had made. And he said to the woman, “Has ELOHIYM [God] indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”

“And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, ELOHIYM [God] has said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.”’”

“Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For ELOHIYM [God] knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like elohiyim [god], knowing good and evil.’”

“So, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”

“And they heard the voice of YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God] walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God] among the trees of the garden.”

². Chaves, 47.

“Then YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God] called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?” So, he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

“And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

“Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

“And YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God] said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’”

“The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’”

B. NOW

Now, Satan is more cunning than anyone else except for YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God], Who has made the beasts of the field... Who made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them...³ Who made [Man] in the likeness of ELOHIYM [God], creating them male and female, and blessing them and calling them Mankind in the day He created them,”⁴ Who Himself rested on the weekly seventh day, blessing the Sabbath day and hallowing it,⁵ and telling mankind, men *and* women, to remember it, and keep it holy.⁶

Now, Satan, the cunning, and his followers, had decided to continue their attack on men and women, whom YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God] had made. He devised a plan that they would attack the religious *men*, particularly the religiously active fathers. And so, by attacking their dads, he would be able to lead the youth away from YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God] and His weekly Sabbath. And Satan was pleased with his cunning, because he saw that between 1900 and 1970, that 25% more families, now a majority 55% of families would be absent a religious dad, and so he has been able to attack weekly Sabbath attendance... by a generational replacement of the *father* role that YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God] intended dads to fulfil within their families. And Satan, in his cunning, knew that if we would be less religious than our parents, and if our

³. Exod. 20:11.

⁴. Gen. 5:1-2.

⁵. Exod. 20:11.

⁶. Exod. 20:8.

children would be less religious than us, then he could keep more of us away from our almighty Creator: YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God].⁷

But Satan, in his cunning, decided that he wouldn't stop there. He would attack the traditional family structure even further. On families with children, he would attack the married with divorce and separations... and on the never married families, he would attack with parental separation.⁸ Yes, in his cunning, Satan knows that if he can affect the religious involvement of our youth, if our kids will grow up in a religiously non-active family versus a religiously active family, then he will be able to break up our weekly Sabbath union with our almighty Creator.⁹

Now Satan, in his cunning, wouldn't attack the men just as religious fathers, but he would attack them even more broadly. He would attack them further by making sure that the attractiveness of being a religious leader was no longer a position of luster, to be desired any longer by men. No longer would being a career pastor, an elder, or any other type of religious leader ... be an attractive thing. Yes, and particularly among the younger generations, a religious career would become much less attractive than other professions.¹⁰

And now, Satan in his cunning, is making today's youth more intellectually talented, more world "smart", so that they can now see with their own eyes, knowing that there is more money and more prestige in other work than being a leader for the Almighty. These youth would now seek any other job besides a job of lifetime service to their Creator. These other professions are pleasant for their eyes to look at and would make a good living for them. Yes, choosing any other position but a religious one, is a tree that is desirable to them, viewed with an outlook that is developed in their own wisdom. And so now, by 2017, all but 2 of every 1000 freshmen, only 0.2% of ELOHIYM [God]'s own young creatures, male and female, remember Him and love Him enough to be interested in serving Him in a religious career... and probably not too much more become interested in serving Him in church, no less than worshiping Him faithfully on a weekly basis.

⁷. Chaves, 50-52.

⁸. Chaves, 53.

⁹. Chaves, 48.

¹⁰. Chaves, 75.

IV. A HOUSE DIVIDED

And now, Satan, the cunning, and his followers, would continue to divide YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God] church, the men and women whom had had made to be His family unit, a body united in their belief and following of His Son YAHUSHA [Jesus]. As so, He would bring a large political divide within the church. He would lead the more actively religious be become more politically and socially conservative. In his cunning, he knew that this would drive away more of the less actively religious from His body, His church. “Let’s make a greater divide in society’s social fabric, and in its politics,” says Satan. “We will allow the ELOHIYM [God]’s own word, His law, to become loathsome and become a wedge to divide His house, His body.” As Satan continues, “and so in this way, the actively religious, those who continue to attend services on ELOHIYM [God]’s weekly Sabbath, will chose the unpopular, the ‘politically-incorrect’ side... the side that the world hates but that ELOHIYM [God] loves: the side that hates abortion... the side for more traditional born-man and born-woman roles. Yes, Satan would create and bring a *conservative voters’* side inside of ELOHIYM [God]’s church, that would create a divide within His church between their positions and a more liberal voters’ side. Yes! Satan says, “this plan will polarization, divide ELOHIYM [God]’s house, and it shall surely die.”¹¹

“Yeah,” he continues, “I will have one political side take a stand against ELOHIYM [God]’s law. This side will be pro-choice! They will support LBGTQ rights! And, their side, their fight will be brought against ELOHIYM [God]’s own house, inside His own church and His own body, and tear it apart.” He continues, “and that way I can make ELOHIYM [God]’s command that “**you shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die**” seem like nothing more than an old biblical myth.” But dear brothers and sisters here today, do you know what? ...

Our Father, YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God], has a better, more unique way of telling us how much He wants us to follow Him instead... to listen to his still small voice, where He is saying “Rich, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates...., “**you shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die**” (Notice that “nor your wife” is absent) He is also saying “Rich, tell My congregation today, My body... In fact, tell anyone and everyone who will listen: ‘**you shall not eat it’** for it is a cunning deception, “**nor shall you touch [nor pursue any of] it...! lest you die**”.

¹¹. Chaves, 101.

V. ELOHIYM [God] IS FAITHFULLY PURSUING YOU, FOR YOU TO BE FAITHFUL TO HIM

You know, our Father, YAHUAH ELOHIYM [the LORD God] has a unique way of telling us things, like how much He loves us... and how often He has pursued us while we have been unfaithful to Him. Let's look now at one of those unique ways... How He showed one of His prophets before, Hosea, about this.

YAHUAH [God] uses Hosea to be a lesson study for us. You might remember from reading the Bible, that Hosea had married Gomer, who was his unfaithful wife. ELOHIYM [the LORD] used Hosea and Gomer's relationship as an object lesson to show how His people had sinned against Him by following other elohiyim [god]s and how the true ELOHIYM [the LORD] yet remains faithful, even when His people aren't.

ELOHIYM [God] gave Hosea an unusual command: "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to ELOHIYM [the LORD]" (Hosea 1:2). So, Hosea obeyed by marrying Gomer, and the couple had two sons and a daughter (verses 3–8).

We do know that, after bearing three children, Gomer left Hosea to live with another man. ELOHIYM [God] then gave Hosea another, even more amazing, command: "Go! Show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as ELOHIYM [the LORD] loves the [Church], though they turn to other elohiyim [gods]" (Hosea 3:1). Hosea obeys His ELOHIYM [God], buying his wife back with fifteen shekels of silver and some barley (verse 2). And so, by Hosea's faithful love, undeterred by Gomer's unfaithfulness, our ELOHIYM [God] means for us to see a picture of His love for us: His wayward, idolatrous men and women, whom He has created to please Him, by our faithfulness to Him,"¹² and by remembering His weekly Sabbaths.

Let's not be a body of people, a church like Gomer. Instead, let's be the church, the body that YAHUSHA [Jesus] prayed that we should be. Let's offer His prayer now... for a unity within His body, a church that is unified as he envisioned it...

¹². "Who is Gomer in the Bible?" Your Questions; Biblical Answers. Accessed February 6, 2021. <https://www.gotquestions.org/Gomer-in-the-Bible.html>.

VI. OUR CLOSING PRAYER

Dearest Father,

I pray for me and I pray for your people... all of us whom have been unfaithful to you... like Gomer who was unfaithful to your prophet Hosea. For each and all, I pray that we will not pursue the things of the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — that we will “not eat it, nor touch it” for it is not of you: our Father and our Creator, but it is of the world, and we will surely die in the day that we do.

I pray now that we may be one just as you dear Father and our ADONAI YAHUSHA [Lord Jesus] are one – You Both living in us by Your RUACH [Spirit], that we might be made perfect in you, and in one body... through our faithfulness to you each day and in our weekly Sabbath gatherings... that we are those Whom you have loved and pursued, that we may be made perfect in You, that the world may know that You have sent us, and have loved and pursued us, as Hosea loved and pursued Gomer.

I pray this now in the blessed name of our ADONAI YAHUSHA [LORD Jesus].

Amen.



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