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Did You Know that human beings in their natural state are not interested in God. They are really not interested in learning about deeper spiritual matters. It is not part of our natures that we are inclined to live in Godly ways or to seek after Him! HOW THEN DOES ANYONE BEGIN TO DRAW CLOSE TO THE ALMIGHTY, HOLY, GOD OF HEAVEN? HOW CAN SOME DARE TO TO SAY THAT WE PERSONALLY KNOW HIM? HOW CAN HAVE PERSONAL FELLOWSHIP OR INTIMACY WITH HIM?

### **PREFACE to "The Gospel Without Religion"**

What do you think it means to be a Christian? How does Christianity differ from other religious beliefs and worship practices? Are you a Christian? What is your basis for making this statement? Perhaps you are among those who has rejected Christianity because you have found the forms and rituals of the institutional church empty or uninspiring. Have you searched for proof that God is real? Where will that search take you? What will be the end of all of this? What will be the ultimate destiny of your soul? To what extent does religion impact eternity?

Anyone who has ever entered a book store knows that there are probably thousands of books written to address the questions above. Hundreds more are produced and sold each year adding to the already glutted archive called RELIGION. The motivations of such writers however motivated, mostly support some traditional doctrines while sharing a new precept or two that may have arisen through study. I believe that what I will share here echoes many new voices who are beginning to view the "spiritual life" as something that can exist and flourish outside of religion. But, make no mistake, I am one who became a Christian who has become a believer and student of the Bible; and this has come after many years of being a partaker of traditional institutional Christianity.

In the pages following we will examine some of the topics  
below:

You may wish to find links to several of my video commentaries on  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/cornetcharlie>

[Disparity and Contradictions in the World of Christian Religion](#)  
[Redefining: What is A Christian](#)  
[The Search For God](#)  
[Recognizing Features of the True Gospel?](#)

Traditional forms of Christianity have been the sustaining foundation and moral backbone of American history. For generations the values system of Christian teachings and beliefs have provided a positive moral framework and influence to the the nations. It is apparent that the Christian Religion, even despite any detriments, has provided a social foundation for millions. Children are best nurtured in a home

where traditions of Bible based life values are practiced. Unfortunately the fundamental social foundations of Christian values are rapidly dissolving. The secular media offers imagery and stories that omit any allusions to the truths of Christianity. Fewer each passing year, will say, "I am a Christian believer." or even understand what that means. Church houses are losing membership and seek new ways to attract congregants and often in so doing move further from the essentials of the Gospel. Knowledge *about God* will not replace knowing God. Those who know God may testify that they've personally tasted of the Grace and goodness of God through Jesus Christ the Messiah.

Today, tens of millions of nominal "religious" Christians might be called 'faithful church goers,' but how many are really passionately interested in God. No one seeks to know God unless God personally draws us by His Spirit.

Many have a history similar to mine. I found God or should I say God allowed me to find Him - at a time in my life when I was experiencing a spiritual emptiness, a hunger, a desperate need. It is at such times that we make our first **serious** effort to seek after God desperately, to ask, and to knock! The quickening of this inner desire to know God may well be the result of another believer's prayers on our behalf. The **Grace of God** is set in motion by these prayers. It is this Divine Grace (an enabling gift) from God which brings us to a new human state of *awakening*. It only takes a moment for God to answer our heart's cry and bring us from darkness into light; but, in my case, it took years to prepare my soul to be ready for this to occur. Pride and idolatry have many forms that first need to be addressed.

God has always loved us. He loves us all. He grieves humanity's loss of understanding and weakness. He has made a way of rectifying this fallen and alienated state. The way is through Jesus the Messiah. God provides a necessary '*measure of faith*' is given to help those who seek to find the answer to their spiritual hunger. A supernatural transformation is available once believes in the Gift of God with assurance. If you believe in the Yeshua Jesus, God's Son he will open your eyes. He will speak to you. His name Jeshua means Jehovah is salvation, Jesus. It is through him and him only that you will partake in the wonders of the world to come. Through the Grace of God we experience that supernatural event, the miraculous change in our spirits called regeneration into "the new man, the regenerated spirit, or the new creation. So re-quickened by Almighty God, we are inwardly compelled to grow in the knowledge of this life giver and lover of our souls. We seize the life ring thrown to us. This is the beginning of the Spiritual life. We have opened the door of the *Kingdom of heaven* and begin gradually discovering our status as a Son or Daughter of God.

From this supernatural beginning we new believers, as tender saplings can be bent many ways: We can be taken prisoner by those who preach **other gospels**. We can be snared by an incomplete "**Gospel**" and incomplete form of Godliness; or we can follow the spirit of Christ with the spirit of liberty accessing the Word of Truth with proper mentors, there is a whole new spiritual world OF LIFE to discover. There is a life of blessing and hope to access. (2 Corinthians 11:3)

The true **Gospel** hasn't changed but it has been dangerously distorted or in some cases nearly lost by religious tradition. The **Gospel of the Kingdom** of God remains that which was first taught to the disciples by Jesus Christ. I will attempt to share in

humbleness and simplicity, without motive of gain what I consider the simplicity of being a Christian. I hope it is not *too* simple, for historically religion has made believing in Christ into matters of theology and formalism. Such things need not be so.

The teachings I share on these pages will appear **didactic**, meaning that it presented as accurate and **factual**. While derived from study, this knowledge has not accrued from second hand accounts or through religious indoctrination, but from serious study of scripture as well and experiences that **bear witness** to the realities of Christ and the "Kingdom" he rules. Study of Scripture illuminate the believer as the Holy Spirit brings light and understanding.

These commentaries are not the product of religious indoctrination, nor of a denominational slant. I believe these precepts and understandings reflect the truths revealed by the apostles and prophets of Israel who proclaimed the True and Living Way.

For my part, these writings are only a part of the great revelations of Truth contained in the Bible. Though certainly incomplete they are presented as valid and faith experiences of truth and validated by the Word of Truth. (The faith first delivered to the saints - - the faith for which we must contend. (Jude 3)

## **WORLDLY VIEWPOINTS**

Today, modern societies have grown to reject a world governed by facts in favor of a cornucopia of opinions. Black and white are rejected in favored of the nuanced blend of infinite points of view. The Gospel however, is born out by first hand experience but more importantly **is verified by reliable witnesses**. These witnesses are the holy and long standing voices of the Christian faith, recorded in Scripture. These voices are a more sure testimony and become the litmus test of any doctrine or experience that one might promote.

The truth of God is known in varying degrees by many, though shockingly too few. The masses have been victims of **religious paradigms** that have grown all too familiar over the past 17 centuries. Christian theology today is becoming increasingly a repudiation of Apostolic doctrine.

The religious paradigm is now being challenged and is slowly passing away. There is more hunger and thirst for spiritual fellowship, more liberty, more simplicity and more power. Traditions are being replaced by the living presence of God. Simply being a spectator in a church service (program) is being replaced by the desire to participate directly as a disciple following the Spirit of God.

I suppose what I write here may be challenged by religious *experts*, theologians, academicians, and others who can embrace the doctrines and dogma they were taught. Religious people respond vehemently to any message that assails their religious paradigm. Here is a profound Gospel fact, shared by the apostle called Paul in his first letter to Corinth, "**Man through knowledge can not know God.**" But the Spirit of God can turn ordinary people into instruments of His Glory!

## **Awakening Faith and Belief**

Is God an interesting subject? Yes, Infinitely. Do questions about the reality of God

affect us or impact our lives? Yes, absolutely and eternally! Is the subject one that we should resolve within ourselves? Yes, absolutely! Religion abounds in the societies of the world. It is inextricable in the cultures of every nation. It is a full time concern to many who see religion as a life style or a career path. My definition of Religion is a codified belief system. It is the platform from which debates and disagreements launch with the result too often being from vehement disagreement to genocide.

Thousands of books continue to be written about God in an attempt to offer spiritual answers to those who are seeking a spiritual life. Subjects might range from World Religions, Comparative Theology, Biblical Study or Analysis, and of course prescribed pathways to enlightenment by self promoting gurus. This is not a book about theology. I am not a theologian, I have none of the required credentials, nor do I have any desire to become one, to seek certification or to be validated or approved by theologians. I am, therefore, one tiny voice in the marketplace of ideas.. another voice, crying out in the wilderness, So now I give thanks to God the Father for allowing me to experience His living presence and guiding hand. This is a testimony of God's interaction with the human race we call '**grace.**' Moreover, his love and grace have empowered me both to **seek** him and to **know him** and draw wisdom from His Word. Moreover, I believe that this message can encourage and aid those thousands who, like myself, were never given answers to deep spiritual questions but who remain hungry, asking, "Is there is a God, and if He is, how can I get Him to notice me."

### **Reared in dead religious tradition**

My questions and spiritual curiosity were not answered by denominational churches that I attended from my youth to adulthood. The services or ceremonies that were offered on meeting days revealed nothing of God's reality or demonstrated his 'presumed' love and power. It was however, God whom I ultimately met and who impacted my life, **outside of religion**, personally and powerfully. I hope sharing these experiences bring hope and assurance to others.

### **Receiving this message**

How will you respond? Some who are perfectly happy with their beliefs may register mere disinterest, indifference; Others who have already established their own theological conclusions, particularly through formal theological training. Such may register disdain believing that my assertions are un-scholarly, presumptuous, misleading or even dangerous; But there may be some who have been looking for a spiritual life without the flimflam of religion who will receive this account with gratitude.

I suppose that those who are invested in the status-quo will no doubt be harsher to voice objection to teaching that depart from time worn traditions. And of course, there is always that population of unbelieving secularists, the politically correct crowd who are disinclined to read anything of this topic in the first place. Even though the Gospel (*good news*) has always been gentle and peaceable, it none the less, always meets with resistance and "offense." It appears that a simple gift is too often rejected even when wrapped in the promise of hope, love and comfort.

Opposing belief systems do not give up without a fight. Our highly charged human egos are born and nurtured within the domain of materialism, worldliness, and self-absorption. Religious institutions today, are deeply imbued with values derived from **worldliness**, worldly power, worldly recognition, and earthly reward. The world's religious systems have their own vested interests. To be blunt, religion as we know it represents a significant economic and political power.

This book is written principally for believers. Unbelief is still rampant in church-goers to the extent that they have been blinded by orthodoxy. For unbelief is the enemy of God's people as much as for 'unbelievers.' Unbelief is not limited to the un-churched but also remains a constant foe in living the Christian life. For church house Christians, both laity and clergy it is a terrible thing to know only religion and not God! The Lord declares, "*Many will say in that day, Lord, Lord -, but I will say, 'Depart from me I do not know you.'*" Matt. 25

Among all the billions of people upon the face of the earth, it is ultimately a matter of knowing God. Scripture teaches that everyone will eventually be confronted by this reality as every knee will bow before Him, the "Lord of all life." But for millions this knowledge will come too late and the door of life will have been closed. There is a difference between knowing about God and knowing God.

### **The Confusing Disparities of Christian Religion**

**The world of religion**, What a world! Almost everyone is in their own particular place regarding a search for a personal belief system. How would we graph our place as a believer or an unbeliever? Do you know what you believe? Do you know why you hold these beliefs? Some have a belief in a **God** of some description, others may not. Some pray, some believe in an afterlife, while others have no faith in any God nor any life following this one. There are so many religions inside and outside of Christianity. There are so many named Gods and paths to appeasing them. Within these myriad forms of belief or worship some have developed a set of moral values in accord with these beliefs. Indeed many of these values promote peace and brotherhood toward the greater community. Meanwhile, other religious beliefs may generate hatred and intolerance toward those outside of that faith. Now some religions compel its followers to convert the world to their viewpoint and to, in a word, cause the whole world to believe according to that religion.

Religion may be an intellectual study for some, a mandatory career indoctrination for others. From an anthropologist's point of view, religion simply revolves around the belief in "spirits" as defined by Margaret Mead. Religions lead to wars and conflict. The crusades were a demonstration of **wrong Christian beliefs**. The inhumanities done were executed through a form of religion and not in conformity to the Gospel of Christ. The crusades and the inquisition were chapters in Catholicism that further demonstrated an abuse of power that is presumed when the *rule of God* on earth is already manifest in a *political* church on earth.

Christianity in the age of grace presents a message of love, acceptance and forgiveness. **There is no violence or reprisal allowed in the practice of Christianity**. Destruction and judgment against unbelievers has never been a part of the true Gospel. Where this has occurred was not a conformity to Bible teaching. **In the Gospel of Grace**, there is an invitation to come freely and receive. We partake in

the power of Jesus' love, and forgiveness. There is no sword to convert the unbeliever, but rather the demonstration of the supernatural power of God motivated by Love. It is this power that converts the heart and persuades each that there is a loving God in heaven. This is the loving Father who desires that no one dies under condemnation. "God so loved the world - - ," John 3:16 is the often quoted basic text. **Discernment is to reveal those who you can pray for. Condemnation never comes from the hand of a believer who is commanded to walk in the same love and forgiveness that Jesus modeled to all.**

There is still great ignorance and confusion about Christianity. Christianity is something that has come to be viewed within the limiting frame of institutional religion not its true [spiritual aspect](#) which is both simple and profound. The world knows Christianity as a system of belief but more than that as traditions and lifestyles which surround particular churches. America was founded as a Christian nation as our founding fathers made clear testimony. The United States has a history of goodness founded on the belief in, and standards of, Biblical truth. But at the present time, if the truth were known, I believe that we would have far fewer who would qualify as Christians than census documentation reveals. Those who are called Christians in polls and surveys most often reflect an involvement with church organizations through membership and activities. This, I assert, is quite irrelevant to the nature of being or not being a Christian. Among those who profess to believe in Christianity I denote three distinct breeds:

### **Kinds of Christians**

Political Christians: This category designates to distinguish them from other ethnic or cultural sects. We see these referred to frequently in the media to designate the sects within countries or political regions. Most of the time these are contrasted with contrary ideologies; often at war, or embroiled in strife with other groups. Typical of political religious rivalry is that of the current 1990s conflict in the former Yugoslavia, dated back to the factional disputes of the 15th century. Here were three ethnic factions, Muslims, Serbs and Croats, religious- political groups seemingly without true knowledge of a spiritual life that brings peace. In Ireland divisions remain after generations of religious and political strife, Irish Catholics in hatred and strife continue to war against Irish Protestants and Protestants against Catholics. In the decade prior to World War 2, so-called German Christians began to commit outrages against German Jews in the name of racial purity. A practice tht was totally UN-Christian spirit. in Earlier in the 12 and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries 'Christian' crusaders waged Holy Wars against the Muslim Turks in the Holy Land and at the same time thought it was pleasing to God to torture and destroy any called Jews.

Religious Christians are actively involved with some form of institutional Christianity. Within this group are tens of millions of churchgoers who fill the pews in myriads of church congregations each week. Each of these religious 'churches' or denominations follows long-held traditions of their respective denomination. Christian denominations have extensive power and interests both social and economic. The *business* of religion founded in an orthodoxy that is morally well founded and righteous. These traditions are rarely questioned within the established tradition.

The clergy, religious leadership, has long been esteemed has a high and noble calling, although an occasional skeleton may turn up in the closet of some clergy

person now and then. The lands and real estate assets of churches are immense. Each denomination builds great buildings as centers of worship and strictly supervise and train their clergy to act as *priests or overseers of the faith*. The sad reality is that the denominations of today are little different from any ancient priesthood, the Scribes, and Pharisees of Jesus' day, of whom the Lord Jesus had little good to say.

**Today I believe that traditional forms of religious Christianity may be the single greatest hindrance to effectively experiencing God** in this nation as well as in all the nations where that institutional Christianity has been exported. **Why?** Because the Gospel is not philosophy nor an intellectual concept. It is rather the Power of God that impacts lives at the deepest possible level; transforming a man or woman into an adopted son or daughter of God. Church is not meant to be a place where Christianity is practiced and administered by priests but a means of growing through sharing your life and experience with others as our knowledge of God increases (edification by/of the body.)

*Religion: a metaphor: It seems as though religious Christians have been injected with something, call it religious formalism, which seems to make them immune to experiencing the authentic Spiritual Life of the Kingdom of God.* Let me hasten to say however, *that there are believers among the denominations, these men, women and children have received the knowledge of God through the Lord Jesus Christ in a profound and intimate way, not because of their religious affiliations necessarily, but in spite of that affiliation. The kingdom and the power of God are not the privy to any brand of religion but work around and through it.*

### Third Category: True Christians

**What is A Christian?** *Are we born Christians, Are we Christians because we were not born Buddhist or Muslim? Are we Christians because our parents were Christians? Are we Christians because of a religious rite?* The Bible reveals that we become Christians not by a religious rite, but by a spiritual encounter with God. God receives us in "friendship" and extends fellowship to us. This fellowship is granted in the name of **the** only *begotten son of God*, Jesus, Jeshua of Nazareth. This knowledge is one thing but the actualizing power of Grace is quite another. The Gospel is a gospel not only conceptual fact but actualized in power. It is a life-changing, spirit-renewing power, that sets on fire the love and life of God within a believer. This life-changing encounter is central to what I hope to present in this writing, and I will cover it broadly in the following pages. A believer, in actuality, has no religious rites or obligations or rules to follow in order to win God's approval. A believer's job is to believe. Faith is choked by unbelief! Through faith we gain access to the scriptural promises of God. These promises are awesome and spectacular and when apprehended can lead us to experiencing the kindnesses of God and entering into our divine inheritance. That is the long and the short of it. Religion in any of its many aspects has entered in obtrusively to complicate or confound the simple way and truth that Christ has declared and made known for all; that each man, woman, and child can know God and experience wholeness through Him.

*My hope and prayer is - - May those seeking truth, both religious and non*

*religious, Christian and non Christian, continue in the Word which can open the door to the Kingdom of God, with its power and glory. May the God of all creation reveal Himself to you, draw you into His family, and bring forth his kingdom, his love, his life and liberty in your life.*

### **Reconstruction of the Human Spirit**

Spiritual Christians are created and established only by Divine will and action. Those who constitute the membership of the Kingdom of God, without regard to any earthly institutional affiliation. The true church is a spiritual body, it is called the "Body of Christ. " This body is

universal, apart from any designation of race, creed or nationality, it is without any denominational labels and without sectarian or geographical boundaries. The Bible reveals that we become Christians not by a religious rite, but by a Spiritual encounter with the person of God. God receives us in "friendship" and extends the fellowship of his family to us. This fellowship is granted in the name of the Begotten son of God, namely Jesus, Jeshua of Nazareth, Jesus the Messiah. Acknowledging this doctrine is one thing, the actualizing power of it is

quite another. The Gospel is a gospel not only of historical fact but of **power** . It is a life changing, spirit-renewing power, that sets on fire the life of God within a believer.

Religion is an admixture that infuses the gospel that confounds the simple truth that Jesus Christ has made a way for each man, woman, and child to know God and experience wholeness in Him; to experience peace, joy and liberty in a meaningful life with Him. My hope

and prayer is that those seeking truth, both Christian and non Christian will continue in the life giving word which opens the door to the Kingdom of God. May the God of all creation reveal Himself to you in order for you to continue to bring forth His kingdom.

### **Searching For God**

**Highways and Byways in the Quest** Some of us, in our individual quest for truth, look for a religion that will accommodate our own world view or moral viewpoint, though in our natural state we are all morally distorted and unregenerate in nature. Some others search for a religious form which promises personal power and influence over others. This power quest has one end; corruption of the soul. Personal aggrandizement leads toward corruption and pride, the domain of the enemy of God, Lucifer. Power to control or influence others, power to get wealth for its own sake is as witchcraft, a rebellious snare. Some search for a religious program which accommodates fame, personal notoriety, adulation or self-worship. Self enhancement is acquired at the expense of coming under God's dominion.

For others the search is to find personal healing or inner contentment to salve the aching of their souls. In Him we find solace, peace, love and wholeness. There are numerous motivations which lend themselves to religious choices. While we say we search for God are we really sincere or insincere? In the final analysis it is we who must conform to God's book and acknowledge His rules and plan for ourselves and not visa-versa.

### **Beginning a Spiritual Search**

While we are shopping this smörgåsbord of religion there are many choices. How will **you** choose? What are your resources and criteria to make these choices? Can we

choose using our own intellectual equipment? Those who are proud of their intellectual achievements will probably choose wrongly; since they will choose to remain in control of their own lives through the exalted faculty of reason. The wise of this world say, "Only a fool denies reason."

Some religions make no demands upon us to give up anything, idolatries, pride, sin, hatred, etc. When we are well satisfied with who we are; when we are pleased with ourselves, with our name, rank, and achievements; When we are puffed up with our own sense of superiority, looks, talents or strengths; How can we choose to believe something which asks us to, "*deny yourself, take up a cross and follow me?*" How do we choose a belief system which states, "*In myself, I can do nothing;*" or "*- unless a seed falls and dies it abides alone, but if dies it brings forth much?*" Is there any beauty in sacrificing our selves? How can we as 20th, soon to be 21st Century beings, choose to decrease to ourselves and choose that which is *mEEK and lowly of heart*, not arrayed the outward trappings of finery; not displaying intellectual cleverness, nor personal flamboyance. "*He had no beauty that we should desire Him.*" (Isaiah 53:3)

So we seek. We shop and we look and we ask about. During this time we continue to have as much power and self control, self satisfaction, and personal liberty as any other human seeker. When does the seeking come to an end? Is there a priceless pearl to be found? What is the nature of this pearl which beyond price? How do I begin my quest for God?

Scripture asks this question,

**"What does a profit someone to gain the whole world but lose his or her soul?"** There is a risk associated with a search thwarted or the search incomplete. There is a risk associated with substituting the true with the counterfeit and the living with something tainted with corruption and death. There is indeed a true Gospel, having **the right Jesus**, the **right Gospel** and the **right Spirit**. (2Cor 11:3) There is also a **counterfeit gospel**, awaiting any who choose an alternative to the previous 3 criteria. Among these alternatives lies the way to deception or possible destruction.

In this process of seeking, some who hear the message, come to believe in the Lord Jesus, (Jeshua of Nazareth called the Messiah or Christ.) The Word of God declares, "Those who seek will find." Those who seek and continue seeking, will find that pearl of inestimable value. It remains hidden to those who are lost. Great hunger is rewarded with satisfying '*manna*' from God and great thirst is rewarded with a satisfying drink that Jesus called 'living water.'

Many others never come to believe in or profess biblical Christianity but another belief system. The way of the Christian life once discovered provides a feast for the body, soul and spirit, a feast that brings eternal satisfaction, the knowledge of the friendship of Jesus is thirst satisfying indeed.

The Way, however, remains a narrow one, it is self limiting. It does not accommodate those who wish to take their own intellectual baggage in, this burden of extraneous stuff must be unloaded. Who among the seekers is willing to do this? Who are really sincere and not looking on a superficial curiosity level. Jesus has counseled to walk the crucified life. Daily carrying our cross, dying to self, turning from the raucous cries

that would distract us in this world.

I am reminded of the interview which King Herod of Judea attempted to have with Jesus on the occasion of Jesus' trial and Pilate's disposition of this matter of legality. What possible need or interest could this powerful, worldly, self indulgent, sensuous monarch have in questioning Jesus, the Messiah of the Jews? Herod had indeed heard of Jesus. He had heard of his influence upon the people and heard of the signs and wonders worked by his hand. Herod probably was reminded of John the Baptist whose head was the price paid for his stepdaughter Salome's sensuous dance performance. Vain curiosity was probably the motivating factor. Herod may have had some guilt or even fears associated with destroying the non conformist, unyielding, cooperative prophet, John the Baptist.

### **Herod interviews Jesus: The world against the spirit**

It was time for a confrontation, though perhaps not yet a showdown, It was a face-off between worldliness, sensual opulence, and temporal power and the veiled spiritual wonders of the Kingdom of God; it was flesh against the Spirit. What happened in this confrontation of flesh and spirit? How did Jesus respond to the queries of the coarse and curious Herod, did they share an intellectual discourse? Jeshua remained silent not a word was offered. What place has the kingdom of God with worldliness or idolatry? Jesus had not one word to share. There was no dialogue. There was no effort made to plead the case for a religious or political agenda. No. Jesus answered not a word! The kingdom of God and Herod's world were irreconcilable, worlds apart, kingdoms apart. You see, Jesus will not respond to those whose lives are filled with surfeiting, with self importance or with insincere curiosity. Jesus answered the worldly Herod, not a word!

### **A doorway opens unto repentance**

In my case, I had reached a crossroad in my middle years that led to 'an end of myself:' When my need was greatest, ground down to nothing, I finally believed, and was willing to take the next step to cry out, "*Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!*" So? Let us see where the inquiry will take you. Will it be into the wilderness (outside of the distractions of worldly distractions, where intimacy with God is finally revealed? Or will you be lured into the another wilderness imbued with worldly values having no intimacy with God, having no power to fulfill Christ's hope and calling.

Contained in "**The Gospel Without Religion**" is a series of commentaries compiled from this believer's study of the "Word of God" and his personal spiritual insights and experiences thereafter. I was not always a believer. What was I before I became a believer, before becoming a Christian? I was the same as many of you are. Before becoming a believer I practiced a *form* of Godliness; **I too was religious**. I was actively involved in institutional forms of Christianity with its many traditions, forms, and flavors and yet without **knowing** Christ. Before becoming believers, we called ourselves by any of hundreds of denominational names, not realizing that Christ is One and can not be divided. In this state, we had no true witness of the reality of God; we had no true witness of our own spiritual nature and destiny. We may not have known that God is **real** or that He rewards those who seek him with wonderful gifts. Before becoming a partakers in the "**gift of God**", we **called ourselves Christians**.

Meantime, not knowing that being a Christian meant more than just attending church, more than learning a catechism, more than going through a rite of membership.

***Being a Christian is not an intellectual assent to a doctrine or belief*** where you can say,

"Yes that sounds like it might be true, I guess I join up and become one of those.

"You don't join an institution or a church to become a *Christian*, rather, you are "translated" into becoming a son or daughter of God. You are translated into a different kingdom and a different reality; You become a new order of being. You are translated from death into life, from darkness into light. We who once cared nothing for the life and properties of God now share in that life and are consumed by it. It is a work that God does in us and not one that we do on our own.

**Discerning the True Gospel, 3 factors** determine its authenticity:

**The right Jesus:** Jesus the Messiah is not an angel, not a mere prophet; not a great man, not merely a teacher of moral excellence; Not a highly evolved illuminate; **but** The only begotten Son of God, the Jewish Messiah.

**The right gospel;** The Gospel is a gospel of good news; that humanity may come to the giver of life to receive a supernatural gift; eternal life and forgiveness without cost, without the mediation of a priest; It is not a gospel of works, nor is it a gospel of faith and good works; the door is open to any who call upon the name of the Lord. The source of truth and understanding of this gospel is the Holy Bible.

**The right Spirit;** There are many spirits in the world, some of God, others demonic. Spirits abound in the atmosphere in individuals, in communities, of every nation. The church houses of religions can nurture or teach a doctrine which has a wrong, (un-Christlike)

This sort of subtle spiritual influence has existed for thousands of years leading people away from the God-life. The reality of demonic spirits addressed by Jesus and his disciples are still present to seduce, impede, and steal from the life, liberty and spiritual potential of all.

The kingdom of darkness has this agenda; to steal, to kill and to destroy, *especially a believer*. The spirit of the world is a spirit of self exaltation and pride. Of course modern thought and psychology discredits belief in spirits as a primitive and obsolete belief system. However, it is to be noted that Jesus the Messiah came to "*destroy the works of the devil*," Satan, the ruler of all fallen beings. It is God's ultimate purpose to restore the proper line of earthly rule under the dominion of Jesus Christ. In due time, nations will recognize him as the Holy One of God, appointed Lord of all things. Evil or wrong spirits include, pride, rebellion, witchcraft, defilement, sensuality, gluttony, drunkenness, etc.

**A common Secular Argument: One god equals any other?**

The *broad-minded*, ecumenical world would like to assert that any God is essentially on a par with any other. They declare that there are many paths and they all eventually lead us to the sublime higher *One*. Today, I am a Christian believer, but was not always so. Disillusioned by religion, sensing its superficiality, the hypocrisies, and lacking any proof in the God of the Bible I went on searching and doubting, and trusting that I was **good enough** not to fall into condemnation in if and when I came face to face with my Creator. I had heard the term "Good News" referring the Gospel of the Messiah Jeshua (Jesus). But my experience in Christianity was valued only in

a sentimental way. I had memories of church experiences with my family in youth. During these days I yearned to touch and experience something that was real, powerful and persuasive. This, I believe, is exactly where so many seeking people are at today. Hopeful, wanting to believe, but without proof that God is real or reachable. My religious experience offered no proof of God's reality. Any Gospel expressed as *the Power of God* able to transform human life, was outside of my religious experience.

The Gospel, is denoted as ***the power of God***, (1Corinthians 1;2.5) powerfully persuades us to believe, in a God of love and a God who can impact human lives in remarkable life-changing ways that exist out of the realm of church life. This Gospel is not a shallow, tradition-ruled religion. Rather it teaches knowing God who reveals himself as Savior and sovereign of the universe. Even more amazingly, the Bible proves itself to be entirely believable and consistent in spite of its *progressive* detractors. Theologians who work continuously to discredit any belief in Biblical accuracy or consistency. Today when I hear of a God who walked with man in a spiritually perfect world, called Eden. I believe it; when I hear of a God who did wonders in the days of Moses or the prophets I do not doubt that fact for one moment; when I read the infallible prophecies of appointed men of God who declare the end from the beginning I have no doubt in the veracity of any of those words.

God spoke through prophets with inerrant accuracy to declare the coming Messiah and his mission to redeem fallen humanity and all these prophecies came to pass. Jesus as the lamb of God came to close the divide between God and humanity. The resurrection of Jeshua, as irrational scientifically unsound it sounds on the surface, remains the foundation of Christianity. Resurrection establishes the "Power of the Gospel" and enables any believer to partake in His divine nature.

Religions of the world may vary in name and beliefs but all seek to establish a worldly kingdom. They aspire to have a launching pad to promulgate those beliefs and in many cases, beliefs that are contrary to the Gospel. Christian religions sects, including, Catholicism, LDS Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and most of the protestant denominations distort the simple Gospel. They bring forth errant doctrines, formalism, and *human authority*.

(See the characteristics of Religion in book two. "The attributes of Religion"

Churches (buildings with congregations) are what people usually think of when we imagine Christian practices. When ceremony and ritual are the practiced, and where obligations or extraneous demands are taught, these are contrary to the original Gospel, e.g. the Apostolic epistles found in the New Testament.

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