

# Religion: A Dividing Force

A House Divided Can Not Stand

What Subtle Spiritual Forces

**Work to Separate us from the Gospel Truths?**

There are two active spiritual forces. The first bears the influence of the Kingdom of God, of which Jeshua (Jesus) is Lord and ruler. The other bears the influence of the kingdom of darkness with its own ruler, Lucifer or Satan, also known as the 'deceiver of the brethren', 'prince of the powers of the air', 'the lord of this world', and 'the enemy of our souls'.

The Lord of heaven, Jesus, is a gathering power. He gathers together, restores the broken hearted, delivers the captive, brings liberty and hope. He saves. He heals. He delivers. Satan, conversely, is a dividing force and a devouring force. His strategy is to divide and conquer as well as deceiving and destroying.

Satan is continually at work to cause strife and division among the people of God. It is Satan's purpose to also divide us from enjoying peaceful relationships with one another. The devil beguiles and encourages self will and vanity. This was what brought him into condemnation. We remain separated from God until the time when we call upon God to rescue us from our own chosen destructions. We choose the time to serve self and vanity and ultimately whether we will cease to follow the self directed life which keeps us from knowing God.

The times that we are changing our life's purpose and orientation to a new one are our crossroad experiences in God. These are significant **times** (Gr. *chairis*) in God's timetable. At such times God's hand reaches forth in grace and begins to strengthen a man or a woman and raise them up to be a testimony, a voice that speaks of change and redemption. Until such times we remain in a kind of inertia both as individuals and as institutions. Finally the wind of God blows across the landscape of our lives and heavenly showers bring forth life, hope, and fruitfulness upon a once parched and barren land.

Periods of religious **revival** have occurred when men or women of God became empowered by the Spirit, to break through the malaise of tradition. Men and women receive something from heaven. The fire of God begins to consume their spirits. They break forth proclaiming that *God really is and is a rewarder of all that seek him*. They call a sleeping church to awaken; they refresh a world to hope.

Religious belief systems are probably born in a time when spiritual power was in evidence, and this witnessed first hand. Eventually in succeeding times, or generations people fall out of the spiritual loop. A religious person has been told that there is a God but they personally have **never experienced Him**. They are told God answers prayers, but they've never experience answered prayer. They are told that God once spoke to people but he doesn't speak anymore.

But, God is a God of the living not of the dead. God is a right now being. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Religious traditions tend to turn the reality of God's "now-ness" into God's "then-ness." Religion for all intents and purposes becomes a kind of "**oral tradition**", and no more. So it comes to pass that one group's oral tradition comes in conflict with another's and the house divides further.

Eventually we have a hundred denominations or sects; few of whom see one another as brothers and sisters in the faith; few of whom enjoy the "nowness" of God; and even fewer

who see themselves as the true disciples who Jesus prayed for in John 17 when he commissioned us to be as He is in the world.

### **Fellowship is bonding power of unity.**

#### **Agreement is the power of faith.**

Fellowship is bonding power of unity. Agreement is the power of faith. Everyone has an area of interest or interests. It is natural to seek those who share your interest, whether it is an interest in playing cards, playing golf, collecting stamps, fishing, or drinking beer at a honky tank. We seek people who like what we like. We are pained when we are around someone who share nothing in common with our interests.

We are all craving fellowship, belonging and acceptance

A bond of fellowship is formed when we share in common values and interests.

We all have an area of personal interest or interests. It is natural that we seek those who share our interest, whether it is an interest in playing cards, playing golf, collecting stamps, fishing, or drinking beer at a honky tank. We seek and accept people who like what we like. We are pained when we are around someone who share little in common with our interests.

Religion divides believers. Division weakens and hinders the purposes of God and his Kingdom. Jesus prayer recorded in John's Gospel, chapter seventeen, prays for unity of all his people. It is prayed for his disciples, and ultimately for all who will know him as Redeemer and Deliverer. Jesus prayed for the disciples who were then at his side and for the disciples who would believe in him at a future time as new disciples are made, thus extending the line of discipleship to the present generation. The substance of this prayer is the culmination of his earthly ministry and articulates his wishes for all of the children of God both the Jew and Gentile to be one, perfectly one in Himself.

Oneness in Jesus Christ's is to have the same fellowship with the Father that he knew and experienced. In addition, Jesus prayed that we should partake of the same glory which had been given to him. Finally the Lord expresses that it is his desire for us to share in the commission of his ministry upon the earth. That he Jesus, in fact, would be replicated in each disciple to continue his own life and ministry in each.

The same charge of service (ministry) that Christ had received from the Father has been turned over to the **disciples**. All of the petitions in Jesus' prayer were spoken with the express understanding that the Father would bring it to pass. Everything Jesus prayed was of the Father's own will for this is how Jesus always prayed. These prayer petitions encompass the divine parameters for the Christian life. We see these parameters restated and amplified by the apostles later in the scripture with further elucidation and instruction to believers in the apostle's own writings (the epistles of John, Peter, Paul, etc.).

The divisive power of "religion" thwarts the intentions spoken by Jesus in his "high priestly prayer." Traditionalism enables the dividing spirit to perpetuate. We are instructed by our human religious mentors in matters of belief and manner in which to live our lives. We have as much or as little of the truth of the Gospel as is understood by our mentors or expositors of our tradition. We are limited by the areas of ignorance which limit our mentors.

The apostle Paul states at various times, Brothers, *I do not want you to be ignorant about Spiritual matters but you were brought forth into this idolatry even as you were led, (1 Corinthians 12:1 paraphrase)* .

Because we have been mentored into ignorance of the truth, we can not extend ourselves into the realm receiving spiritual life through spiritual promises because we have no faith to move into these dimensions. It is within the dimension of the Spiritual where we desire to move;

wherein are all of the promises of God pertaining to our forgiveness, health, blessing, reconciliation plus authority over the realms of darkness. These promises are for any and all believers because God has promised these to all without prejudice. Any and every believer is *an inheritor of all of God's promises*.

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