

Out of “Church”

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Some people cringe whenever they hear anyone speak of having left the “church,” assuming that anyone truly following Jesus could not nor would ever desire to separate themselves from the carnal, unspiritual, rebellious and apostate “church.” Those who cringe at these “harsh” realities most often seek to preserve something of the “church” because of their own nostalgic feelings for all the warm-fuzzy moments they’ve had in the past at some “church,” some of which, quite literally, involved making very real contact or connection with God. Such people are many times ex-“pastors” or “leaders” who have not yet come to grips with all the spiritual realities they have been and sometimes still are entrapped in.

Many people who claim to follow Christ have an immature, myopic, “Sunday school” notion of what it means to be spiritually mature. These view and understand life in Christ in much the same way a child views and understands the life of an adult – meaning not much, if any, genuine understanding of what it means to be an adult resides within the child. Unfortunately, too many of these spiritual (or even carnal!) juveniles have taken up positions of spiritual leadership and promote themselves (whether overtly or subliminally) as *the* appropriate way to follow Christ, supporting their claims to leadership with references to their eloquence, to their intellectual prowess or Biblical knowledge, to the number of their loyal followers or to the number of years their institution has been doing “the work of God.”

Such as these most often downplay the deceptive role of the devil and the demonic, scoffing at even the idea that there is power in deception (at least in their own lives!), never knowing that they themselves are deceived, very useful tools in the hands of the enemy of our souls. For the genuine follower of Christ, however, being afraid of being deceived is just as foolish as considering oneself entirely immune to all deception.

The devil and the demonic have enacted powerful schemes that have been in motion from the time of the apostles until now. One major scheme is the one called “church.” This deception can perhaps be best seen by simply looking at the meaning of the word “church” as found in any worthwhile dictionary:

- 1) a building;
- 2) the clergy;
- 3) the “Christian” religion; and
- 4) the people who follow Christ.

The word “church” is used to translate the Greek word *ekklesia* [1577], a word which refers *only* to people, specifically those people called out of the darkness of this world in order to attend to Christ’s kingdom of light. The contrast between “church” and *ekklesia* is presented very well in this – three parts deception with one part truth.

Even those who recognize the flaws of “church” or who have been challenged to speak of the people of Christ only as Paul and the other apostles spoke, still want to retain the deceptive word “church” because it is so deeply rooted in their nostalgia! For the genuine follower of Christ, *ekklesia* is built whenever two or three believers meet and obey the King. (Mt. 18:20,

6:10, etc.) Ekklesia must truly serve the kingdom of God in some way or else it is merely some man's deceptive "church." The deceptions arrayed against this truth are many and powerful indeed, especially in the lives of those who think themselves above and immune to demonic deception.

Jesus gave a veiled picture of the counterfeit "church" in John's *Revelation*. "Mystery Babylon" (Rev. 17:5) is a composite description of

1) the Catholic "church" who martyred its rebels, dissidents and "heretics" even as it produced (and enforced!) its own peculiar dogmas as "absolute truth,"

2) the spirit who deceives men into practicing false religion (a practice that goes all the way back to Cain and all the way forward to the end of times – Gen. 4:3-5, Jude 11), and

3) the worldly kingdom that embraces and personifies this spirit in the end times.

Such a broad picture, veiled as it is and presented in such broad strokes, cannot be painstakingly laid out here. Rather, it stands as an illustration that the great prostitute, Mystery Babylon, will seek to usurp and act within the role and place that rightly belongs to the bride and wife of Christ. Those who would follow Christ and God in spirit and truth must come out of her. (Jn. 4:24, Rev. 18:4)

What has eluded so many is the power of the deceptions of the end of the age. The "church" has taught an escapist "rapture" theory, which, if there is any validity in the theory at all, is more likely to apply only to a tiny, faithful portion than it is to that large group of lukewarm, apostate "Christians" commonly called "the church." Being "fallen from the faith," though it is clearly spoken of in the New Testament (1 Tim. 4:1, etc.), conflicts with many people's doctrines and "theology" of "eternal security" and is therefore wrongly considered to be "foreign" to the New Testament. The New Testament is replete with warnings that *many* will be deceived and will follow the *many* deceivers who lead the *many* away from truth and life. (Mt. 24:5, 2 Tim. 4:3-4, 2 Pet. 2:1-2, etc.) *Many* will be offended (stumbled – Greek *skandalidzo* [4624]) and will betray and hate one another. (Mt. 24:10) Hatred and betrayal is *not* the way of following Christ! It is because lawlessness (Greek *anomia* [458], doing what is right in one's own eyes because one does not have Christ as king – see Jdgs. 21:25) is rampant that the love of Christ grows cold in the hearts of the many who are becoming apostate, fallen from the faith. For the true follower of Christ and God, continuing to love all, even those who oppress, persecute and even execute them, is the way to salvation. (Mt. 24:12-13)

Perhaps the "church's" gravest error is its failure to recognize the dual streams of power that routinely attend those who embrace deception and error – and no assembly of human beings is ever entirely free of sin, error or deception. (1 Jn. 1:8, etc.) Some "church"-ites propound the deceptive theories that "God just won't share the apartment" and that "a Christian simply *cannot* be demon possessed." These deceptions fail to incorporate the realities of the omnipresence of God (Psa. 139:7-8, etc.) and the ability of spiritual demons to conceal themselves behind or upon the deceptions within a soul corrupted by false beliefs or carnality (lies, their "native language" and resource – Jn. 8:44)

Balaam, who used sorcery or enchantments to deliver the word of the Lord (Num. 24:1), who counseled the women of Moab how to stumble the men of Israel into sin against God (Num. 31:16) and “who loved the wages of unrighteousness,” practicing error for profit (2 Pet. 2:15, Jude 11), stands right beside Cain and Korah as one of the primary types of those who lead the departure from the faith. And Balaam is the perfect picture of the “pastor” who uses Greek intellectual “sophistry” to teach the Bible while leading people into whatever lawlessness seems best in their own eyes while enjoying the lucrative income that attends scratching as many ears as one can draw into one’s own “church.”

The genuine seeker of Christ and God can find facts, even truth, and even make real contact with the true Christ and God in the context of the most aberrant of cults or the most divisive sect (“heresy” [139] or division Greek *dichostasia* [1370]) – those institutions and organizations that today are commonly called denominations but which Paul warned would keep us from inheriting the kingdom of God! (Gal. 5:20-21) The true follower of Christ and God *must* learn to discern that which is of God from that which is merely human tradition and that which is demonic deception from that which is divine truth.

The one unable to discern these things stands in a precarious position indeed because he or she will be likely to gladly receive a man or demon who comes in some role or place that truly belongs to God, Christ or His Spirit. (2 Cor. 11:3-4) This *is* the work of the spirit being the New Testament calls *antichrist* (1 Jn. 4:3, *anti* in Greek conveying both “against” and “in the place of” – [500]) God moves wherever His name is spoken and where even one heart responds in true faith and the demonic schemes against any and all who have any true faith, even the tiniest of sparks or seeds. (Lk. 17:5-6, etc.) This war in the spiritual realms is ongoing and will not end until Jesus again says, “It is finished!” (Rev. 21:6) The true follower of Christ and God must come out from all “Christian” idolatry (2 Cor. 6:17-18, 1 Cor. 5:10-11), following only the Lamb who leads by His Spirit of truth (Rev. 14:1, Jn. 16:13, Rom. 8:14, etc.) and rejecting all human tradition and demonic “theology” that does not originate from the true Word of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of truth. (see Heb. 4:12-13, Jn. 1:1, etc.) Any lifeless inanimate object – any “it” (creed, doctrine, “theology,” belief, even “truth” held apart from the Giver of truth, whatever *thing*) – that we desire, follow and embrace will divert us from *Him* and becomes an expression of mere idolatry.

James wrote, “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.” (Jas. 3:10-12) James then goes on to contrast earthly, sensual, demonic wisdom with divine wisdom from above, both of which were apparently being touted as appropriate “Christian” behavior in their meetings.

A superficial reading of this passage would seem to suggest that a believer indeed cannot produce a dual stream of both demonic and divine power. Yet let us look again at the examples he is using. The natural spring, the fig tree and the grapevine are all elements of creation that are mindlessly subject to the rules of creation. Paul wrote, however, that “the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is *not* subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.” (Rom. 8:7) Jesus said, “You cannot serve God and mammon (riches, wealth)” (Mt. 6:24) and Paul wrote, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons.” (1 Cor. 10:21) Neither Jesus nor Paul are speaking of physical practices that can be performed no matter in what direction the heart is moving but rather that one who in his heart pursues wealth cannot also truly seek God and that one who spiritually partakes of the

cup and table of demons is denied spiritual access to the cup and table of the Lord. As Jesus said, “Either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.” (Mt. 6:24) As James said, “My *brothers*, these things *ought not be so*” (Jas. 3:10) and yet equally obvious is the fact that even in James’ day, and not just in our own, these things *were* and *are* so.

Coming out of “church” is not just a matter of leaving the building and no longer sitting at the feet of the “man of God” behind his pulpit. That is the easy part. The real life in Christ after exiting the “church” is then a matter of getting rid of *all* remnants of leftover “church” deceptions so that one can move toward being genuine ekklesia in the kingdom of God – or, as Paul wrote, “cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Cor. 7:1) It is a matter of no longer embracing and following *any* doctrines (teachings) of men or demons but instead following the Spirit of truth and actively being true sons of the kingdom that shine brightly in a dark and dying world. (Rom. 8:14, Mt. 13:43, Phlp. 2:15) It is not enough to come out of “church” – we must then get all of the “church” out of us! Anything less will only result in yet one more form of “church.”

Wherever even one element of deception remains in power over our lives we will not be the spotless, perfectly attired, holy and blameless bride of Christ for whom He will return. (Eph. 5:27) This ought to sober us greatly (and instantly!) and prompt us to diligently attend to the wonderful salvation He has so graciously given us (Heb. 2:3, etc.) even as those who have long ago traded Him for some “it” will deride and dismiss us as “heretics” and divisive, betraying us to one form or another of carnal or secular authority, hating us because we expose their “godliness” as mere fraud, sham and façade. (2 Tim. 3:5)

“God knows those who are His – and – Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from all unrighteousness.” (2 Tim. 2:19)

Let he who has ears hear.

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