

# Inside Out

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Jesus prayed for all who would ever follow after Him, “That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (Jn. 17:21) Yet the denominational “churches,” that which purports to be the visible bride, body and people of Christ, are decimated with division. Every denomination is built upon a certain portion of the Bible but each one fails to see that certain other portions of the Bible are neglected, ignored or “theologically” explained away from all relevance. Quite often there is a man or a few men whose insights and teachings are used as the focal point of the doctrinal distinctive for that denomination or a new, breakaway denomination is formed in reaction to the mother denomination’s excesses or errors. Why has what some have called Christ’s high priestly prayer for unity been so long unanswered? We are certain to be unable to exhaust the list of answers to that question but let us examine what must surely be the key reasons.

Peter wrote, “Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Pet. 5:8) Ignorance of what Paul called Satan’s devices (2 Cor. 2:11) is so rampant today that many “believers” scoff at even the notion that there is a devil or that he could be dangerous in any way. Since Jesus warned His disciples that deception would be rampant at the close of the age (Mt. 24:4), as Paul also warned (2 Ths. 2:9), we can only conclude that Satan, the father of lies (Jn. 8:44), has been very successful in captivating many people in snares that cause them to be very useful tools in his hands. (2 Tim. 2:26) Surely one major reason the body of Christ is not united is because the devil and his demonic hordes (Eph. 6:12) work long and hard to bring about disunity among the people who claim to belong to Christ. This work is aided along greatly by the negligence of the people to practice appropriate spiritual warfare against these beings and by rampant ignorance, blindness and near-total inability to spiritually discern regarding their schemes and devices.

Paul wrote, “God composed the body [of Christ]...that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.” (1 Cor. 12:24-25) From this description we can only conclude that much of what claims to be the body of Christ – riddled with schism as churchianity is – simply is *not* His body as He designed and composed it. Paul listed some of the sins, works of the flesh or carnality, that would prevent us from inheriting the kingdom of God. At least five of that list are pillars of the “church,” that counterfeit and supplanter of the genuine ekklesia [1577] of Christ and God: Idolatry (“pastor” worship), contentions (doctrinal superiority), selfish ambition (top-down hierarchy and authority), dissensions (believe our way or go away) and heresies (our group based on our man or ideas – see Gal. 5:20 especially in the Greek meanings of the words used.) Surely a second reason we are not unified is that most of what claims to be “Christian” is carnal apostasy and completely unqualified to be called Christian. (Mt. 24:10, 2 Ths. 2:3, 2 Cor. 13:5-7)

Christ proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God (Mt. 4:17, etc.) but, in less than a century, it was the “church” which came into being and prominence. The kingdom of God is that realm where Christ is truly obeyed. (Mt. 6:10) The “church” is that realm where the hierarchies and traditions of men rule and the teachings of men and even of demons (1 Tim. 4:1) are followed. These definitions serve to explain both the differences as well as the overlap in these two realms. But the genuine ekklesia must truly serve the kingdom of God – that is, accomplishing His will and serving His purpose – or else it is merely some man’s “church” no

matter what it tries to call itself. Surely a third reason we are not united is because we do not truly recognize and serve Christ Jesus as our true and only King.

Paul wrote, “Endeavor to preserve the unanimity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Then he goes on to list the “ones” of our life in God: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above and through all, and in us all. (Eph. 4:3-6) From this oneness springs the manifold grace which Paul describes by saying, “But [from this One-ness] to each one of us grace was given according to the measure by which Christ gives it.” (Eph. 4:7) Paul goes on to say that Christ gave some men to be expressions of His grace – listing here apostles, prophets, heralds, shepherds and teachers and using other labels in the lists in his other writings. These men, as they express the grace of Christ to those around them, equip the saints to do the work of service to Christ, His body and even the world (Eph. 4:11-12), empowering them (by means of their personally partaking of the grace of Christ and God through the work of these men) to attend to the orphans and widows and the least of Christ’s brothers (Jas. 1:27, Mt. 25:40, 45) and to love one another as He commanded. (Jn. 13:34-35) When these men, expressing the grace (mercy *and* power) that comes from their oneness with Christ and God, fulfill this work, then – ***and only then!*** – will we see the unanimity of the faith, the unanimity of our knowledge of the Son of God, true spiritual maturity and a tangible and visible similarity and resemblance between our lives and that of Christ Jesus. (Eph. 4:13) Surely one of the major reasons we are so divided is because carnal men seek to achieve doctrinal solidarity apart from the oneness of the Spirit of Christ and God. We have concocted our own “better way” – often in ignorance or in blind obedience to “church” tradition – and, like Cain, we are offended when our carnal offerings are rejected by God. (Gen. 4:5) It is an inescapable part of any true work *of* God that apart from Christ we can do *nothing* (Jn. 15:5) but in and through Christ we can do *all things*. (Phlp. 4:13)

Paul wrote, “I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it.” (2 Cor. 11:3-4) The corruption of the mind by spiritual disinformation is one of the initial strategies of the devil and the demonic which, if successful, will be used as a concealed springboard from which further deceptions and oppressions will be attempted against the individual. This initial corruption of the mind is accomplished in *three* alternatives: a different Jesus, a different gospel *or* a different *spirit*. Denominations that adhere carefully to the Scriptures do not readily fall for a different Jesus or a counterfeit gospel – but they are often *ruled* by a different spirit!

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the body in our time is the lack of ability to spiritually discern. We are not trained to know all men by the Spirit of Christ (2 Cor. 5:16) but instead we are trained to subject one another to our doctrinal tests whereby we think we know who our true brothers in Christ are.

Any group of believers who wish to attain to the unanimity of His Spirit must first ascertain just what God’s purpose and intent for that group is. It is certain that He is *not* building more denominations of like-minded sectarians nor is He forming any more cults that center around some man (his “gifting,” charisma, eloquence, learnedness, whatever) or some false doctrine(s). These indeed are likely to come into existence but not because God is doing it. God simply is not the author of groups who practice enmity against the cross of Christ.

The first purpose of God for any group will be to rediscover and unite with the oneness of God. From that oneness will emerge the work of equipping the saints and building up the body

from which will then emerge the work of all ministering to (serving) the needs of the people both in and around the people of Christ. This is the pattern that was used in the first century believers and it is what overturned the world of that time.

To serve any other purpose first is to turn the gospel inside out, to believe that, having begun in the Spirit, we can complete our course under the power of our flesh and still be warmly received into God's kingdom. (Gal. 3:3, Mt. 7:21) It makes a mockery of the Spirit of truth because what purports to be the kingdom of truth is built upon lies and deceptive practices. The divisiveness practiced by so many "Christians" only excuses the world for not believing that Jesus is the Messiah sent to be the One to take away the sins of the world. (Jn. 17:21, 1:29) And the devil loves that this is so.

Let he who has ears hear – and weep over the fallen state of that which claims to be the bride and body of Christ.

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