

Secession (Part Two): Spiritual Separation

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The Church of the Great God is coming up on the 22 year anniversary of when we seceded from the Worldwide Church of God. There are hundreds of splinter groups that have broken off since, primarily because of false doctrine. It has been a spiritual separation.

During the late 1980s and on into the early 1990s, when the leaders of the Worldwide Church of God pushed the church into apostasy, it became very clear it was man-made Worldwide Church of God, Inc. that leading the doctrines of the spiritual church of God.

When we baptize people we say that we are not baptizing you into any organization of man, but rather into the family of God, and this is because God is not limited by organizations of men. God uses organizations to do His work as long as most of the doctrines are correct and most members are reasonably righteous.

God can use anybody or any group. However, when the majority of any church organization's members have become corrupted with false doctrines and improper behavior, or the unconverted tares have become the majority, the physical organization representing and containing members of the spiritual church can no longer be trusted to teach and lead in spiritual matters. The members of the spiritual church can no longer trust their spiritual leaders to teach spiritual matters. Now Paul cautions the church in Rome in Romans 16:

Romans 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

So doctrine is the main reason for the distrust of the leaders. Sometimes there is only one recourse for converted members of God's church. They must separate or secede from the parent organization that has gone into apostasy, and that is what thousands of converted members of God's church were forced to do in the 1990s. It was an agonizing decision with many sleepless nights and long prayers and deep Bible studies.

One member who had been quite apathetic about God's truth, even though he attended Sabbath services every week, said something that I will never forget: "I didn't realize how valuable God's truth is until they tried to take it away."

Remaining under false religious leaders and teachers will involve compromising which leads to sin and this is why separation is necessary. There are many reasons people give for leaving a church of God group and usually it is not the real reason but rather just an excuse. But there is really only one spiritual reason that is valid for seceding and that is when false doctrine is being taught.

The people who place their faith and loyalty in the benevolent and righteous government of God will have separated themselves out of, and away from, the philosophy, the character, and the outlook of the Babylonian system of government which has been founded, promoted, and sustained by Satan and his demons but who are, at Christ's return, imprisoned in outer darkness.

Revelation 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, [speaking to "my people," not the world here] lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.

Jeremiah was inspired to say very much the same thing in warning ancient Israel: "Come out of her, my people," he said. Even in its Old Testament setting, this was no mere warning to leave the actual city of Babylon, much less here in Revelation. It means leaving the system of Babylon, their way of thinking, and outlook of Babylon.

The apostle John was inspired to exhort the churches to shun the charms and ensnarement of the great immoral woman as her qualities are manifested in the world they live in. Wherever there are idolatry, immorality, self-glorification, self-sufficiency, pride, complacency, reliance on luxury and wealth, avoidance of suffering, violence against life, there is Babylon.

Luxury leads to boastful self-sufficiency, while the desire to avoid suffering may lead to the dishonest pursuit of luxury. This is what the world seeks today in a greater way than ever before. We are bombarded by it with the media, our lives at work, and the internet especially, which is right in our own homes.

Christians are to separate themselves ideologically and, if necessary, physically from all forms of Babylon. Already in Revelation 2 and 3, Christ through John, has warned the churches of her deceit and snares. If they refuse to separate themselves, they will "share in her sins" and also in the divine judgments, that is, the plagues.

So it is a very serious matter to come out of Babylon, because if we do not, we remain a

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part of it. If we love its social atmosphere and entertainment, we may very well share in her sins and suffer those judgments and plagues. We must do something about what is happening in our lives.

The church is to secede from the ideas and beliefs of the world's way of life, and if necessary, physically secede. Physical secession can in some ways compare with spiritual separation, as we saw in my previous sermon. We see that we had to physically secede from the Worldwide Church of God, as well as spiritually, but it was the spiritual separation that motivated us.

Revelation 18:4 is not one last call to repentance addressed to the beast worshippers, but rather, like the warnings in the letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3, it is addressed to professing Christians who are being seduced by Satan through the wiles of the great immoral woman to abandon their loyalty to Jesus Christ. What is required is an inner transformation of attitude, feelings and responses.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The emphasis there is what are we thinking, and what is motivating us? If they were seduced by Satan, Christ would have to, by their own decision, blot out their names from the Book of Life and include them in the plagues designed for Babylon when she is judged. God will not forget her crimes and her punishment will fit her, meaning Babylon's crimes. In a way we are receiving some of the judgments on Babylon, because we live in a world that man has so polluted.

Now we will see as we go through this topic of spiritual separation, or ideological secession if you will, that we have a duty to save ourselves. Yes, it is God to whom we give the credit and give all thanks to for our salvation, but we do have work to do and a lot of it.

This is not to say that God is not active in our spiritual deliverance from the world, but that we have our own responsibilities to fulfill in this and we know that God is active in our lives every day. So it is not a matter of saving ourselves by ourselves, because God is always there to help us do that.

On Pentecost 31 A.D., the apostle Peter preached about how the Israelites were guilty of a horrendous sin. Individual Jews could be spared from God's judgment if they would

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repent and they would be set apart to Christ and His church if they would separate from the oppression of the twisted Jewish leaders who promoted their polluted traditions and skewed ideology which blinded them to Christ.

Acts 2:36-39 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus [or Savior], whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” [They wanted to do something, they wanted to do the works part of faith, but they did not know where to begin.] Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

So this scripture is very important particularly to those who are going to be baptized but for the rest of us as well. They were asking “what shall we do?” and he tells them repent and be baptized.

Peter's answer was straightforward, first they were to repent. This verb “repent” means to change your outlook; have a change of heart; reverse the direction of your life. This obviously results in a change of conduct, but the emphasis is on the mind and the outlook.

The Jews had rejected Jesus, now they were to trust in Him. Repentance was repeatedly part of the apostles' message in Acts. Continuing on here in Acts 2.

Acts 2:40-42 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved [or “save yourselves” in the King James Version] from this perverse generation.” Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

So it is not enough just to get baptized and move on from there, there is work to be done. We see here it says that they continued steadfastly.

These words hold out great hope for men and women and it is indeed, as it describes

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itself, “a light that shines in a dark place” as Peter says in II Peter 1:19. The world is a cavern and here is the only light. Nowhere else can you find this spiritual light. There are speculations and people strike their little matches in the dark, but they do not last very long, are denounced by the next generation, and they are forgotten.

Ideas come and go and are always changing. Certainly, the most extraordinary and in many ways the most tragic aspect of all is that, although the world boasts about its advances, its ideas do not progress. People had the same stupid ideas in Noah's time, when God brought the Flood, the tower of Babel, and so on. That is the banner of the world. Human nature blinds people to the point of stupidity.

Fashion, for example, is a series of things that are popular at one moment and then discarded and ridiculed as being silly, only to return again in another form.

Modern men and women say, “We have a new morality,” but that is simply a repetition of what Satan has instigated before. He puts an idea back into some cupboard and brings out another one, and everybody forgets the old idea. He lets some time pass, and brings the first one out again saying that it is something brand-new and people fall for it.

A religious example that comes back around about every five years or so is the calendar issue. It has been proven by Mr. Armstrong and others in the church that the sacred calendar we use is the only reliable one. It is amazing what Satan can do to deceive people.

A “new morality” that people claim, is as old as Adam in its sinfulness. It is nothing new or original in any sense whatsoever. All perversions and all foulness are described in the Bible, as well as in the pages of secular history. We have the record in many different sources.

For many centuries the book of Ecclesiastes has told us, “There is no new thing under the sun,” and there certainly is not. All the arguments against Christianity, against the faith and way of life have been promoted many times and consistently proven as being lies and inaccurate. Even the discrepancies in the Bible can all be proved as not discrepancies but rather proof that God inspired Scripture.

Nicodemus had a philosophy that, you add on something to what you already have. Nicodemus was a teacher who thought Jesus had something that he did not have yet and he wanted it, but Christ made a famous statement to Nicodemus in John 3.

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The Greeks were very into the intellectual side of things and wanted to hear any “new” thought. Nicodemus, a master of Israel, who had a certain amount of power and influence saw, in Jesus' workings of miracles, a much deeper spiritual insight than what he had. He had to understand more about what this teacher and possible prophet knew. What if Jesus was right about these things? The answer Nicodemus received shook him to his foundations, as it was meant to do.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

“Born again,” we know this more clearly means to born from above. It is a profound, radical change that makes a man or woman an entirely new creature and as the apostle Paul puts it in II Corinthians 5.

II Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

New things cannot retain its old qualities. New creations, which we all are, cannot retain Babylon in them and still be a new creation. That is what we are working on. Our sanctification is a process, which for most of us will take 50-60 years, if not more, before God is satisfied with our completion.

This is the action of God, the Creator, re-creating His creation. It is God who takes men and women, calls them, convinces them, smashes them, and reassembles them on a new pattern, on the pattern of the image of the Son of God Himself and what better pattern is there than that.

True Christians are those who have the life of God, the mind of God, and the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. That stands out very clearly in this account of these first Christians who were added to the church of God.

This change in someone's whole outlook shows itself in action. If it does not do that then it is of no value.

James 2:17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But true faith, the change leading to faith always shows itself. It shows by being a good

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witness of God's way of life. Another way we notice how faith reveals itself, is that it leads to a great separation. It separates men and women from the world and joins them to the church. This is something that is found everywhere in the New Testament.

Separation is the principle and practice of spiritual and moral distinction of believers from unbelievers and unrepentant believers guilty of flagrant and open sin. Not one of the New Testament letters was written to people of the world, they were all written to individual Christians or to churches, in other words, to people who had been gathered out of the world and put into these communities of faith by God Himself.

They had been added to the church and continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, which is a type of fellowship, and in prayers. A tremendous change was taking place within them and this showed itself outwardly in that they had left one position for another—the position of being in the world and the realm of Satan, to being in the realm of God.

This is one of the most vital things that needs to be emphasized at this present time. The church is dysfunctional and useless without this spiritual separation from the world. In the New Testament we see a division, a man or woman is taken from the world and put into the realm of the church. There has to be a change and there has to be conflict.

An admix of church and state, world and Christianity, is fatal to true Christianity. It is syncretism, it misleads, it is wrong, and it hinders the whole work of the church. So, the more worldly a church is, the more they are going to be in a state of confusion.

Jesus is described as separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens. He did not think, live, or even judge like them, but He was nevertheless separated from the world. He did not practice physical separation from the world, He received sinners who came to Him for teaching and salvation, and He ate with them, but He was spiritually separate from the world.

Now at times, in Scripture, physical or social separation is required. Believers are told to flee from immorality and from idolatry. Notice what God says about anyone in Israel or the church who commits the sin of idolatry here in Ezekiel 14.

Ezekiel 14:7-8 For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, [the church as well] who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then comes to a prophet [or minister] to inquire of him concerning Me, I the Lord will answer him by Myself. [God Himself will answer him,

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personally! What a scary thought.] I will set My face against that man [the sinner] and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

That is the theme throughout Ezekiel and it is repeated over and over. God will make sure that every one eventually knows exactly who He is, His sovereignty, His power, and what He expects. That is why everyone in the whole world will receive their opportunity to understand God's truth. We know that the beast and false prophet will understand who God is and what His truth is and will reject it.

Now notice the phrase “sets up his idols in his heart.” You cannot set up a man-made carved idol in your heart, so this is obviously speaking in a spiritual sense. God is making it very clear that the spirit of the law was important in the Old Testament as well as the letter of the law. Idolatry is not only setting up some physical image to bow down to and worship as a god, it is an internalization of something that becomes more important to you than God is.

It is not enough to keep just the letter of the law. God makes it abundantly clear here that anything we setup in the thoughts of our minds that supersedes God in importance is idolatry. Relationships with unbelievers often involve compromising which leads to sin. This is why separation is necessary.

This does not mean that believers cannot have any contact with immoral persons and idolaters. We are to treat our fellow man and neighbors kindly and affectionately. Rather, believers are to remain apart in: marriage, close business relationships, and immoral or degenerate social activities. The clearest application of this principle is the marriage relationship. Believers are to marry only “in the Lord” as Paul made clear in I Corinthians 7.

I Corinthians 7:39 A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

In one sense, secession is like a marriage separation and divorce, except secession from the world into the church is a positive thing, because to divorce the world is a good thing. God hates divorce, meaning He hates divorce between husband and wife, and He hates divorce from the church.

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Christians also are to maintain spiritual, moral, and social separation from a professing Christian who refuses to repent and who will not leave behind a lifestyle of flagrant sin. In I Corinthians 5 Paul writes:

I Corinthians 5:11 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.

This command is one thing in the Bible that the most of the churches of God seem to be lax in. Paul adds another caution in II Thessalonians 3.

II Thessalonians 3:14-15 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, [that is crucial in this] but admonish him as a brother.

So it does not say that we are not to have contact with them, it says that we are not to socialize, party, or have intimate relationships with them.

Paul was concerned that the Thessalonians might overdo the discipline, so he quickly urged them to treat the offender as a brother and not as an enemy. An occasion for discipline should not become an occasion for disobedience by those exercising the discipline. It does not give any of us the right to be harsh, to criticize someone harshly, or to offend them needlessly at all. We must put ourselves in Christ's shoes and ask how He would treat this person. That is not always an easy thing to do because of our human nature.

They were not to think of the offender as personally antagonistic toward them, nor were they to feel hostile toward them. His objective relationship to them, as a brother in Christ, should govern their feelings and actions, rather than subjective feelings that might be provoked by his apathy. Meaning that if a person like that seems apathetic, we should not get angry at them, we should actually feel sorry for them and try to help them through it. However we cannot let them influence us in any way, because someone who is bound so much by the world can draw a person in the church away if they are not careful.

They were to warn him, not denounce him. Whereas, they were to have no social

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contact with him but they were not to break off all contact. They were patiently to admonish him to forsake the error of his ways and that must be done in a loving way.

Now let us be clear about the meaning of the word “world.” As used in Scripture, world always means the mind and the outlook of humanity without God. Generally, it does not mean physical universe or earth, nor does it mean animal creation, on the spiritual level in Scripture. World means human beings trying to organize themselves and their lives without God, and when people become Christians, they are taken from the world, though they still live in it, and are joined to this other body of people whom they resemble, in the most essential respects, and they become part of the Family of God.

Now look at this as it comes out plainly in the teaching Jesus Christ Himself. If you read Matthew 10 you will see how Jesus was always surprising His contemporaries, just as He has surprised people ever since. The common mainstream Christian idea about Jesus Christ is that He is someone who came into the world to give peace, that He is the Prince of peace, but Jesus says:

Matthew 10:34 “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

That directly contradicts what mainstream Christianity, Protestantism or Catholicism, teach about Jesus Christ. What did He mean? When Jesus said that, He did not mean He had come into the world to make nations fight one another. He was dissenting very strongly from the idea that He was just “a weak Galilean” or “a limp-wristed teacher.” He was not some peace activist or a moral philosopher who had come simply to bring people together, break down barriers, and urge peace. He rejected that because He knew that the doctrine that he brought was going to stir the world up and toss it upside-down.

The *idea* that the gospel of Christ is just a message to be nice, kind, and friendly to one another is a travesty of the gospel. It is too profound, too radical, too strong, too fundamental, too dynamic for that. Every time you read Scripture it gives you more insight and wisdom, depending on how you look at your life at that time. You can open any page and find something that can be applicable in your life at that time.

It is amazing and awesome to see how active Scripture is. There is nothing sedentary about it, but we do receive deep, spiritual peace from obeying God's Word even though it causes disruption in our physical lives.

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There is no sloppy sentimentality about the gospel message. It is a message with a sword and we see this in operation right at the beginning, on the Day of Pentecost. In Acts 26:16, on the road to Damascus one day, Christ commissioned a man called Saul of Tarsus and this is what He told him:

Acts 26:16-18 But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you [What for? Why?], to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

That is the commission that Paul was given. He would separate the Gentiles, call them out of darkness and into the realm of light, this great separation from the world into the realm of the Kingdom of God. Paul was to help the Gentile converts secede from the world at a spiritual level. We find this repeated everywhere.

II Corinthians 6:17-18 Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

He had just written:

II Corinthians 6:14-15 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

These verses describe unholy alliances, not the relationships a Christian should enter into. You cannot mix light and darkness; you cannot mix Christ and Belial, and the difference between the Christian and the world is the difference between light and darkness. These things are eternal opposites and they are as different as night and day or as God and Satan. It is the great contrast.

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Again, take the specific statement that Paul makes at the beginning of his epistle to the Galatians.

Galatians 1:3-4 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ [there is that spiritual peace we receive], who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.

That is why Christ died on the stake, so He might deliver us or separate us from the present evil world. Still, some people refuse to secede from the world mentally, spiritually, and ideologically. And again, the apostle Paul writes, this time to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 4:17-20 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ.

We are committed and we are in this to the end, and if we reject it with the knowledge and understanding that we have, the judgment on us will be so much greater than of the world. The world is ignorant, but God will judge people according to what they know. They—the world—will still get a pretty harsh judgment, but for the church, we receive discipline from God and it will be far grater because of what we know. It is a terrifying thought. David, when he committed that great sin, pleaded for God's mercy, and we should as well.

We must not go on living as we used to live, like the rest of the world to whom we used to belong to. We have changed, we have “learned Christ,” things were different now. Paul puts it still more specifically in the next chapter.

Ephesians 5:6-12 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is

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acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

We have work to do, as John [Ritenbaugh] has been teaching us on his sermons on the book of Ecclesiastes. We always have work to do *every day*. When you are with someone in the church and they do something that is obviously a sin, do you gently remind them in the kindest way possible? Or do you get offended and do nothing about it and just let them go on not realizing what they are doing?

I am not saying that we should correct each other all the time, but rather that we should be concerned about one another's future, in the church and in God's Kingdom. Paul exhorts the Christians at Philippi:

Philippians 2:15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

So ask yourselves, while you have been here at the Feast, have you, in every way, been a light to the world or has your attitude kind of gone awry on you? We all have human nature, so no doubt we have failed at one point or another.

The difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is that the Christian is like a star in the blackness of the heavens on a dark night. That is the contrast there should be between us and the world and you see why it requires complete spiritual separation—that we must seceded from the world. Christians shine as luminaries in the heavens, in the midst of all that darkness, and that is Paul's description of a Christian.

Let me quickly read a series of scriptures that show this. Paul says in Colossians 1:

Colossians 1:12-13 Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

Who has done this? The Father has. He has delivered us from and conveyed us into. He has done it all, but yet we still have our part to do to separate from the world. There

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has been a great transference, a movement of population, in one sense, from one realm into another. Listen to the apostle Paul writing to the Thessalonians, and directly to us as well.

I Thessalonians 5:4-6 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep [that is, sleep spiritually], as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

The apostle Peter preached exactly the same message in I Peter 2.

I Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people [What more of a wonderful description of us could there be?], that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

John, toward the end of his first letter in I John 5, says:

I John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

Wait a minute, it says here that God does not do everything, does He? He does all of the important and critical things, but He gives us the power to use our faith so that we can do our part. How do we overcome the world? By faith.

I John 5:18-19 We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

It is a choice, a decisive choice: either God or Satan. Who do you choose? So there is the statement that is so plain and clear in the whole of New Testament teaching, once men and woman are called by God, through His Word preached, they are entirely changed, and the change reveals itself in their separation from the godless world.

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Separation requires faith.

Now we must go a step further. Becoming a Christian is the most profound change that can ever take place in a human being's life. Thinking again about what Christ said to the disciples in Matthew 10.

Matthew 10:34-38 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

That means also that we have to love ourselves less than we do our loved ones, our children, spouses, and we have to love God more than all, that means that our obedience and loyalty goes to Him first, then to our families secondly. The spiritual family that we have, those of us that are here together, are more important than our physical families that are not in the church. Do not get me wrong here, our physical families are important, but our spiritual family is more important.

Are we willing to give our lives not only for God, our spouses, our children, and to our extended families that are not in the church? That is what Christ would do and that is the goal that we shoot for and we cannot do it without the power of God and the dynamic Word that He has given us.

Whatever it may cost and whatever separation it may involve is what God requires, as Christ emphasizes here. People think of Him as one who just says sweet, sentimental nothings. How utterly ridiculous! He is comforting at the right time, He consoles us, but He treats us in a special way.

Here is a gospel that produces heroes, a gospel that produces martyrs. Here is the strongest thing in the world. So do you see how this works?

Matthew 10:21-22 "Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

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All those passages establish that, when people become Christians, something so profound takes place within them that not only are they separated from the world in general, they are separated even from their nearest and dearest.

Please do not misunderstand this. It does not mean that a man has to leave his wife, or the wife the husband, or the father the child, but it does mean that whereas the members of a family had been living the same sort of life more or less in harmony, the moment one member becomes a Christian, there is an inevitable separation. Something has disrupted the nearest and the dearest relationships. Becoming a Christian cuts and divides even the most tender earthly associations. "Think not that I have come to send peace. . . but a sword."

Christ's words show how thorough and profound this change is. There is nothing one can say beyond that. That is what Christ Himself says, and His words have been fulfilled throughout the centuries. But why should there be such a change? That is the great question, and the answers are right before us in the pages of Scripture.

The teaching is that before our conversion we all, by nature, belonged to the world. We are slaves to the world and Satan owned us. The world is one in its alienation from God.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Sin reveals itself in every continent and in every culture. In every division of the human race we find the same things being done and the same problems arising and it has been going on for six thousand years.

By nature however men and women are not aware of this need to change. That is why there are these separations and divisions. We think we are superior or we feel we are inferior and there are clashes and we carry those feelings, by our human nature, over into the church when we are converted.

When people become Christians, God, using the Word, opens their minds and awakens them to a realization of this tremendous truth. That is what Peter said at the end of his sermon in Acts 2.

Acts 2:40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved ["Save yourselves," as it says in the King James version] from this perverse generation."

How, then, do you save yourselves? Well, once men and women are called and begin to understand this message, their minds and understanding are awakened to the tremendous truth of the solidarity of the entire human race in sin. At first they do not know what Peter is talking about when he says, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation."

They say "I'm in the world and how can I save myself from it? Is Peter asking me to become a monk or a hermit? Is he asking me to totally segregate myself from society?" No, he is simply asking you to separate yourself from all that is true about the world in the biblical sense.

"Save yourselves" here means, preserve yourselves from the influence, opinions, and fate of this generation. It implies that we are to use diligence and effort to deliver ourselves. God deals with people as free agents. You have a God-given right to choose what you are going to do, whether to remain part of the world, one foot in the world and one foot in the church, or whether you are willing to make that total secession from the world.

God wants problem-solvers in His Kingdom, not people that kick back and say I have faith that God will take care of it. God does not want us to panic when we have a problem. He wants us to come to Him, but He does want us to think about what we should do, He wants us to use our minds and He wants to help us to use them.

We are victims of the propaganda of the media: TV, radio, and the Internet. It is this world-mind, global mentality that makes us what we are—opposed to God. We cannot stand to be a part of it and that helps us to be even more loyal to God.

There is some interesting teaching about this in the New Testament. As men and women are dealt with by God, through His Holy Spirit, they begin to see it more and more clearly. Listen to the apostle Paul putting it so plainly to the Ephesians here.

Ephesians 2:1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

That is a finite condition and a direct opposite. Dead is dead, and that is a terrible state to be in. We are alive, and what a blessing that is that we have had our minds opened and have now been made alive.

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We appeared alive when people looked at us and of course we were, but we were “dead” in trespasses and sins. As you know, people can be alive physically but dead spiritually. As we have seen, that is the trouble with all human beings that have not been called into God's church. They are dead spiritually.

We were all spiritually dead before we received the Holy Spirit. Until then, we were not aware of the spiritual realm, other than in a superstitious way, at most. We did not think in a spiritual manner. Then Paul goes on to say:

Ephesians 2:2-3 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

If it was not for God we would be in the same state of mind. We have nothing to be proud about in that sense. It is God who has pulled us out of that, it is God who is saving us. However we do have our part to accomplish as well, as I have said before.

We are told that we receive rewards, but what are those rewards based on? They are based on our works. They are gifts—everything is a gift—but how much have you developed in God's church to be able to be a priest or a leader? We are to be kings and priests. We are to be developing those traits now and we do that by applying God's words in our own lives, by living His way of life entirely.

We know that Satan controls the world and controls the mind of the world and because of Satan—the god of this world, the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air—the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience is as it is because it does not know that. The tremendous unseen spiritual power is paralyzing and blinding the minds of men and women. When you mention Satan, the majority of the world laughs you off.

The apostle Paul says in In II Corinthians 4:

II Corinthians 4:3-4 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

But now, under the influence of God's Spirit and this teaching, people begin to understand. They suddenly see the awful prejudice, the spiritual tyranny, and it is all due to the fact that man, in his folly, rebelled against God. Before Adam and Eve sinned the world was in harmony with God, man enjoyed fellowship with God, and God blessed him.

The perverse change came about like this: Satan asked, "What did God say? God said it to keep you down and to rob you of your privileges as a man. Assert yourself and you will become as God." That is the outlook of the world, and its author is Satan. Worldliness started in the original rebellion and sin of Adam and Eve and once they did that, it continued right on through the generations because their human nature is in all of us.

"Save yourselves from this perverse generation," the apostle Peter says in Acts 2:40. The word "perverse" in the New King James and the word "untoward" in the King James is the biblical description of a person in sin. It means crooked; intractable; and not manageable. It means that men and women have a twist in them; that they are perverted before they are called.

According to the Bible, this is what people see as they begin to become converted and come under conviction. It is not only the world, but it is they themselves that are twisted and perverted before God calls them out of that state.

If you want a description of the crookedness of men and women as they are by nature, and the world as it is apart from God, you will find it all in the opening chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, in the terrifying words that are found there.

Romans 1:28-32 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting [here is the summary of it all]; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

That is what the world seeks to become like. That is a description of any big city without

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God and that is the life of the rich as well as the poor. Here is a humanity without God, slaves of sin and evil, foul, debased, disgusting, vile, twisted, and perverted; “A perverse generation”! I am emphasizing that to show you the difference between the world and us and why it is so important to be spiritually, mentally, and ideologically separate from the world.

So when men and women are called by God and have their minds opened to the truth, they find a vileness, an ugliness, and a foulness in themselves and they want to be rid of them as much as they would a parasite that attacks the body.

That is what happened to the people at Jerusalem and made them cry out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” We were never meant to be like that and the world was never meant to be as it is today. This is not the world as God made it, it is the result of man’s rebellion and foulness and evil.

This is what we are called to do; to fully believe it, to accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and at all costs follow Him, which means to repent of sin, overcome Satan, and the world. That means leaving the world and shunning its society and politics and political correctness. This may mean misunderstandings in the family, but our lives are at stake and we were once in sin with them, but God has chosen to reveal to us that our lives matter.

God is active in every moment our lives everyday. He does not reject us, unless we reject Him, and the way that we reject Him is to fall back into sin. Sin separates us from God every time. What will it profit a person, if he gains the whole world, and loses his own potential for eternal life?

This message tells us that we must be separated and the sword must come and divide us. It also tells us that we must ask Christ to use the sword to set us free. He came into the world in order to do just that. In John 8, He said

John 8:36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

Here is a message of truth, coming in the power of the Spirit, which separates us from the kingdom of Satan’s world and translates us into the Kingdom of God.

The Millennium is a divine monarchy ruled over by God and His Family, with Jesus Christ being the King of the Kingdom. He will become king over all the earth and will reign in righteousness. He will be established on the throne of David to rule an eternal

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kingdom.

Isaiah 33:22 For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us.

That is a guarantee and all we have to do is work with Him. The Lord is exalted in the Kingdom and He is so central that, "the sun shall be no more your light by day, but the Lord will be your everlasting light." There will not be spiritual darkness where separation becomes necessary, that is in the Millennium and in the Kingdom.

Worship naturally figures prominently in such a divine monarchy as we will be seeing in the Millennium and God's Kingdom. Isaiah 2 helps us picture a realm in which all the nations flock to the mountain of the Lord, saying:

Isaiah 2:2-3 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

That is what the world will eventually be seeing in the Millennium. The first-fruits of God's Kingdom will be called the priests of the Lord and people will speak of them as the ministers of our God.

The time is coming when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea and even more. Ezekiel actually devotes the last 8 chapters of his prophecy to a portrayal of temple worship in the coming age. It will be a unified worship, without schisms and separations.

The aura and quality that envelops life in the millennial kingdom is a thoroughly moral and blessed one. People will want to be righteous, and they will want to be loyal and will be deeply dedicated to God's truth because of the example they see in the nation of Israel, as Israel lives their lives as an example to the rest of the world.

One thing common to secession and separation is dissatisfaction. God himself will fill Zion with justice and righteousness, and He will cause righteousness and praise to

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spring forth before all the nations. Living righteously is the key to being satisfied from the inside out. There will be no dissatisfaction among those who live righteously.

The Old Testament prophets who recorded the millennial visions paint a picture of a utopia, a good place. Regardless of how literally or figuratively one interprets the details, the imagery that fires the millennial imagination is a vision of the fulfillment of human longing at every possible level, and it is a picture of moral and spiritual perfection, not a picture of separation and secession.

In contrast to the unsatisfied dis-unified nations of the world today, which are always in a fluctuating state of separation, the Kingdom of God in the Millennium will be the satisfied Kingdom. Biblical visions of the Millennium go beyond description of the external situation and give us a picture of the inner state of the people as well. The result is an inspiring vision, a picture of how the inhabitants of the land experience blessings.

In a sense, above all, they are satisfied. God promises that in the coming age that His people will be satisfied with His goodness. Joel records his vision of the land being refreshed in Joel 2.

Joel 2:18-19 Then the Lord will be zealous for His land, and pity His people. The Lord will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations.

Joel 2:26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; and My people shall never be put to shame.

I know that there is a certain amount of shame that comes, at least on the physical level, from being such a despised people that we are becoming in this nation and in the world, but God promises that shame will never be there again, after we are raised as Spirit beings. Through the Millennium there will not be a shame of God's way of life, there will be resistance to it at first, but as time goes on everyone will have to conform.

Proverbs 14:14 The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied from above.

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That is where our satisfaction comes, from above, and it is a guarantee. Not only will God send abundant produce, but His people will be completely satisfied. This positive outlook will result in inner peace and joy.

Isaiah tells us that God promises to satisfy your desire with good things; with whatever your heart rightly desires. The Feast of Tabernacles is a time to secede, to separate from the ways and thoughts and mindset of the world and to be satisfied and thankful for what God has provided.

It is no wonder that the Old Testament millennial visions are filled with the vocabulary of joy and satisfaction, often expressed in Isaiah as a promise from God: "Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall thrill and rejoice." The people will say, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall exult in my God."

Isaiah records God as saying, "Be glad and rejoice forever in that which I created; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." Even "the desert shall rejoice and blossom." Of course, deserts do not really rejoice, but the sensation that we will have at seeing the desert flourish is part of the joy that we will have in the Millennium.

Satisfaction does not come from acquiring material things, it comes from having the inner right desires and positive emotions as we put things in their right perspective and to do that we have to look at things from Christ's point of view and perspective. We should have a "what would Christ do" type of attitude, especially knowing that He reflects God the Father. If we reflect Jesus Christ, we will also reflect God the Father.

So, as Peter says, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation!"