

Jesus, The Way Out Of Religious Confusion

TEXT: John 14:6; 17:20-21

INTRODUCTION:

- A. MANY ARE TURNED OFF BY PREVALENT RELIGIOUS DIVISION.
- B. SUCH DIVISION IS CONDEMNED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.
 - 1. Jesus prayer.
 - 2. Paul(**1 Cor. 1:10-13**).
- C. WHERE DOES SUCH A CONFUSION OF BELIEFS COME FROM?
 - 1. Not from God(**1 Cor. 14:33**).
 - 2. A carnal mind(**1 Cor. 3:3-4; Gal. 5:19-21**)
- D. IS IT POSSIBLE FOR PEOPLE TO RISE ABOVE ALL THIS CONFUSION AND BE SIMPLY CHRISTIANS?
- E. YES! AND JESUS IS THE WAY OUT OF RELIGIOUS CONFUSION!

I. THE EXAMPLE JESUS HAS SET FOR US.

- A. UNDER THE LAW, ISRAEL HAD DIVIDED INTO SEVERAL DISTINCT RELIGIOUS PARTIES FOR WHICH GOD MADE NO PROVISION.
 - 1. Pharisees (very conservative).
 - 2. Sadducees (very liberal).
 - 3. Essenes (radical isolationists).
 - 4. Herodians, Zealots (political religionists).
 - 5. Assumed all serious about religion would identify with one of these groups.
- B. TO WHICH OF THESE GROUPS DID JESUS BELONG? **NONE!!**
 - 1. He maintained a "non-sectarian" relationship with God to the very end.
 - 2. Living under the Law of Moses, He was simply an "Israelite".
 - 3. He encouraged all to live by the Law while it was in effect(**Matt. 5:17-20**).
 - 4. In other words, He encouraged all to simply be "Israelites."
- C. WHAT WOULD JESUS BE TODAY?
 - 1. Would He be a Baptist, or Catholic, or Presbyterian, or Methodist, etc.?
 - 2. Would He not simply be a "Christian" today?
 - 3. That was certainly what His disciples came to be called(**Acts 11:26**).
- D. THE EXAMPLE IS CLEAR. DISCIPLES WERE CALLED CHRISTIANS, AND THAT IS WHAT THEY ARE CALLED NOW(**1 Pet. 4:16**).

II. THE LORD'S CHURCH.

- A. JESUS PROMISED TO BUILD **HIS** CHURCH(**Matt. 16:18**).
- B. THE WORD "CHURCH," *ekklesia*, "a **CALLED-OUT** group, an assembly."
 - 1. The church is a group who have been called(**1 Pet. 2:9**).
 - 2. How does this "calling" take place? By the gospel(**2 Thes. 2:14**).
 - 3. On Pentecost we see by preaching the gospel Peter "called out" those who were willing to express their faith in Jesus(**Acts 2:38-41**).
 - 4. Those who responded were added...To what?(**vs. 47, KJV**).
- C. PENTECOST WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE LORD'S CHURCH.
 - 1. Through the preaching of the gospel, local churches were established. (**Acts 14:21-23; 1 Cor. 2:2; 3:11**)
 - 2. A local church was formed when those who obeyed the gospel joined together in their work and worship.
 - 3. These local churches were independent of any association or federation of churches, directed through His inspired apostles, as they taught.
 - 4. The apostles taught directly, by emissaries or by letters written by them (**1 Cor. 4:17; 14:37; 1 Tim 3:14-15; 2 Thes. 2:14-15; 3:14**).
 - 5. When people responded to the gospel and made the apostles' doctrine their rule for life(**Acts 2:42**), they were Christians only.
 - 6. But is it possible for us to do this today? YES!

III. AVOIDING DIVISION BY FOLLOWING JESUS.

- A. WE CAN BEGIN BY OBEYING THE SAME INSTRUCTIONS PETER GAVE ON PENTECOST(**Acts 2:38**).
- B. ONE OF THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE IS THIS(**Acts 2:47**).
- C. SINCE EARLY CHRISTIANS JOINED NO OTHER ORGANIZATION, NEITHER SHOULD WE.
- D. AS MEMBERS OF THE LORD'S CHURCH WE SHOULD STUDY WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS ABOUT HOW TO:
 - 1. Worship the Lord acceptably
 - 2. Local congregations scripturally organized.
 - 3. Work together as Christians, spreading the gospel through word and example.
- E. THE NEW TESTAMENT SERVES AS A PATTERN FOR THE CHURCH (**Heb. 8:5; 2 Tim 1:13**).
- F. DIVISION OCCURS WHEN WE FORSAKE THE PATTERN(**1 Cor. 4:6**).
- G. IF EVERYONE FOLLOWS THE SAME PATTERN WHAT WILL RESULT? IF WE FOLLOW THE SAME PATTERN THE EARLY CHURCHES DID, WHAT

WILL BE THE RESULT?

H. TO REJECT THE PATTERN IS TO REJECT GOD(**Luke 10:16**).

CONCLUSION:

A. BY FOLLOWING JESUS' TEACHINGS WE CAN ESCAPE RELIGIOUS CONFUSION.

B. WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE SIMPLY A CHRISTIAN?

1. When you are baptized the Lord will add you(**Acts 2:38, 41, 47**).
2. You have the responsibility to follow the apostles' doctrine(**Acts 2:42**).