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March 2016
"WHAT IS "CHRISTIANITY"?"

Dear Friends,

As I have observed what has taken place over the past several years within the Body of Christ, I have become both deeply saddened and concerned. The compromise in lifestyle, a refusal to accept scripture and a severe lack of holy living have completely distorted what it really means to be a Christian. The absolute rebellion to godly, scripture-based authority is nothing less than appalling. Attending a church service, singing worship songs and listening to a feel-good sermon has become the narcotic that sears and numbs the conscience of our new nature to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Granted, not all Christians have yielded to the voices of false prophets; but more and more seem to be deceived.

During prayer one day the Holy Spirit led me on a study of what Christianity really is and what it means to be a Christian. I am sharing that with you in this letter.

CHRISTIANITY

The word "Christianity" has as its root the word "Christ." The word "Christ" comes from the Greek word "Christos" which means "to anoint; anointed; anointed one." In the Old Testament the word "Messiah" is used to mean the same thing.

CHRISTIAN

The word "Christian" comes from the Greek word "Christianos." The word "Christianos" is a term used in reference to those individuals who are followers of Christ.

Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. (Acts 11:25-26)

If you follow someone, that individual sets the course for your destination. To follow Christ means to follow the example He set in scripture. This eliminates all possibility of Christians creating their own definition of what it means to be the Lord's disciple. Jesus sets the course, not our own personal desires.

CHRISTIANITY'S ETHNICITY

Some have said, "Christianity is a white person's religion." This is impossible in every way imaginable because Christianity began in Israel, the Middle East and on the African Continent.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and

it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

(Acts :1-11)

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12) [Irrefutable proof that Christianity is not reserved for people of a specific skin color.]

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Isaiah the prophet.

Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

(Acts 8:26-39)

[NOTE: Ethiopia is a nation on the African continent. Church historians have documented that this eunuch returned there and, due to his position of authority under Queen Candace, was able to freely preach the gospel and a revival broke out in that nation.]

CHRISTIANITY AND BEHAVIOR

Christianity is not a result of behavior, but Christianity should produce Christ-like behavior.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

CHRISTIANITY AND THE NATURAL WORLD

Christianity can impact the natural world we know, but it is not dependent on the natural world.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. (John 17:16)

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. (John 18:36)

CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY

It is impossible to convert to Christianity as the world defines converting. The world defines converting as turning away from one form of religious practices to embrace another. It is impossible to convert to the practice of Christianity because Christianity is not a practiced set of religious behaviors. Christianity is a life born within an individual. True conversion to Christianity can only take place when a person is born again.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (John 3:3-7)

CHRISTIANITY AND OUR SPIRIT

Christianity emphasizes that anyone who is a Christian has a totally new spirit, or inner man. This alone is one of the major truths that separates Christianity from all religions in the world.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. (Galatians 6:15)

CHRISTIANITY VERSUS RELIGIONS

Christianity is not and has never been a religion. It is possible to join Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Catholicism, etc. But it is impossible to join Christianity. Christianity is a word that describes a

relationship and not a religion. The relationship it describes is familial; it is a family where God is the Father. A person cannot join Christianity, he must be born into the family. Christianity has as its foundation the completed work of Jesus Christ. It exists within the Kingdom of God and His dear Son.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Romans 8:15-16)

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.(Galatians 3:26-29)

CHRISTIANITY'S STANDARD

Christianity, as previously stated, is a word used in reference to followers of Christ. This means that Christianity as a lifestyle can only be described, defined and revealed in the Bible. God has made no provision for any individual, church or religious organization to devise or develop any standard for Christianity other than what has already been recorded in the Bible. Anyone who calls him or herself a Christian is declaring that he or she has admitted to having been a lost, sin-natured individual who has put faith in Jesus Christ alone for redemption and salvation, has committed to living according to the pattern established by Jesus and has chosen to accept what the Bible says as the final word on any subject.

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. (John 12:48)

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21)

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? (Luke 6:46)

CONCLUSION

There is so much more that could be shared on this subject. God has warned us in scripture that the closer we get to the return of Jesus, false doctrine will increase and many will be severely deceived. I urge you to deeply meditate on 1 John 2:18-29 in light of what Jesus explained in John 14:26, 16:13 and what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:1-15 and in 1 Timothy 2:15. The Christianity demonstrated and taught by lukewarm Believers and preachers is a deadly trap. Friends, family and those in our pulpits are not to be the final example or have the final word on

what it means to be born again and live as Christ. (In my sermon titled, "What Is Christianity?" I go into more detail on the points addressed in this letter. You can order a CD of that sermon on the form below.)

Man has consistently demonstrated a propensity for misinterpreting scripture and creating religious systems which deviate from the narrow path of truth. In doing so, he establishes himself as the final authority on what it means to live as a Christian. But there are only two resources which will always be right and never lead us astray: the Bible and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Make reliance on these a priority and you will guard yourself against deception.

In His Grace,

Jim

P.S. - To receive a CD of the sermon on which this month's letter is based, use the order form below.

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Our **2016 Spring Prayer and Power Conference** is almost here! The dates are Sunday, April 24 through Friday, April 29. Our host hotel is: Country Inn and Suites (Fairborn South)

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