

RELIGION IS THE PROBLEM

“IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO WORK YOUR WAY INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. YOU MUST BE BORN INTO IT. RELIGION IS NOT THE ANSWER. RELIGION IS THE PROBLEM.”

“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” Micah 6: 6-8

Pastor Del Wray

Billions of people are religious and if the Bible is right, and you know me I believe it is billions of people are in Hell right now because of religion, and Hell’s borders are being enlarged every day to hold the billions on their way. GOD HATES RELIGION! Yes, God hates religion! I will give you Bible “verses” to back up my declaration in this treaty. Hold on to your seats tight! Someone may be thinking “I thought God invented religion?” Sorry, but God created Man and Man invented religion. I think it was Stalin, one of the communist leaders who said, “Religion is the opiate of the people” that’s not too far off; religion is the failure of humanity.

Humankind is by our very nature, designed so by our Creator, drawn to relationships. Relationships that ranges from family to friendships, to marital as well as common-law. These relationships that we don’t even think about give us insight into what God intended for us. From the time we are born, we learn that the family relationship provides security and safety and unconditional love. That is why we call God the “Father”. A healthy family creates a relationship of trust, security and encouragement. As we grow older we learn the value of a loyal friend that we can trust with our cares and stand beside us when we need help. Jesus is referred to as the “friend that sticks closer than a brother”. As we mature and attract a mate, we learn how marvelous the intimate relationship between a man and woman becomes, and how to depend upon and serve each other to the point of becoming “one flesh”, as the Bible states it, not only physically but emotionally and spiritually. That relationship of marriage is the pinnacle of relationships heavenly. This is why Jesus is called the “Bridegroom” and the “Church”. Don’t get me wrong, just keep reading! The Church, which is the entire local congregation or all believers collectively, is called the “Bride of Christ”.

Now, we all know that not all of our relationships always work out this nicely. I would venture to say that those relationships are not working out are not because God had anything to do with them, but more than likely because we kept Him out and did what we wanted to do. In other words, the reason the relationship failed is one or both parties put self-interest ahead of the other. Self! God had nothing to do with the failure of those relationships. Can a broken relationship be restored? Sure! It happens all the time, but not until those interested persons are willing to put someone else ahead of themselves. This humility of spirit, seeking and offering forgiveness and restoration is absolutely necessary for a reconciled relationship.

God created Man for the express purpose of mutual relationship with him but gave Man the power of choice and free will. Man chose to break that relationship and has been trying to find his own way by inventing religions and cults of all kinds in an effort to replace that void left by the lack of relationship with his Creator.

But the relationship with God cannot be found through religion. In fact, religion is the biggest roadblock to seeking a relationship with God. Religion is simply Man trying to reach out to God by doing something that he thinks will please God. "If I can do enough, say enough, pray enough, give enough, sacrifice enough perhaps God will show me favor". Every religion is based upon this "works theology". Ceremony, liturgy, creeds, sacraments nor money have ever brought one soul into a reconciled relationship to God. Abstaining from drugs, alcohol, tobacco, illicit sex and the places that provide them is a healthy thing to do but cannot of itself restore a broken relationship with God. Giving up a favorite food or drink, reciting, program prayers or self-mutilation does nothing to convince or satisfy God. Thus having said the above I'm anti-religion.

I am a non-religious preacher as all Bible believers should be! The greatest enemy we believers face today is religion. Religion is diametrically opposed to what the Scriptures teach and is the arch-enemy of God. Jesus is God's way to Heaven and religion and good works are man's way, so he thinks. All religions say the way to be right with God is by earning your way. It is based on works, not God's Grace. Christianity is different from every religion in this characteristic: all other religions, including Mormonism, Moslem or Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Scientology all state that you must earn the right to be reconciled with God. It is what you do in this life, good deeds or bad deeds that determine your eternal destiny. Christianity is completely different from that, it is not a religion. It has been described this way: "The difference between Christianity and every other faith in the world is that all other religions are about a man trying to reach up to God. Christianity is God reaching down to man."

This distinction is very important, and it is the very core to what we believers believe, so let me try and make clear what I mean. Theology is the study of religion and if I may let me define religion this way: "Religion is a system of beliefs or a code of moral conduct that judges, qualifies or disqualifies a person based on their adherence and obedience to certain codes, rules, laws, traditions, or the performance of such said mandatory acts."

Religion almost unanimously is enforced by those in power in an attempt to maintain, increase, or abuse their power over others. Religion is the creation of man, it has never been an intention or plan of God. The Jonestown Massacre, Jim Jones in his cult down in Guyana is a prime example. A modern day example, taken from the movie "Footloose", starring Kevin Bacon, is a preacher who believes that dancing leads to promiscuity and destructive behavior; the Bible does not speak against dancing per say. He uses abuses his influence and his position of authority to convince his congregation that dancing is evil and forbids it. He sets up rules that are not in the Bible and adds additional beliefs that Jesus never endorsed. He is trying to control the people, using their trust of his authority to force them to believe his version of the truth. He adds rules that don't exist in the Bible. In this example, he even has good motives, but he is still being religious and this "religion" is not from God. This is so very common. People have used Jesus to justify just about anything adding so many requirements to being a Christian. Here are just a few of the countless examples:

Not drinking alcohol, not listening to certain types of music, and insisting that the church meet on certain days. Only certain forms of music can be used in church. You can't be saved unless you are circumcised. Reciting ritualistic prayers, saying you aren't saved unless you get baptized. You can't eat certain foods, requiring you to perform rituals. Teaching being saved is conditional upon attending church or church membership. Teaching and saying that you have to earn your salvation by doing good deeds. I could go on and on. When Jesus was on the earth, religion was very rampant, as it is today. There was a group of corrupt religious leaders called the Pharisees and Scribes who had taken the Word of God, passed down from Moses and the prophets, the Torah, and written their own so called commentary on it, interpreting what the scriptures said, called the Talmud. Then they wrote another translation on that commentary called the "Mishnah." The Mishnah was a list of hundreds of rules to meet in order to ensure that you were obeying the word of God. These were created by man and had little basis in Scripture. Sound familiar?

For example, one of the Ten Commandments, from the Torah was, "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy." The Pharisees, Scribes had made literally hundreds of rules in the Mishnah that detailed what you had to do in order to keep that commandment. There was a rule that you couldn't walk through a field on the Sabbath because your sandal might clip a grain of wheat, and if it did you would be harvesting grain. If you were harvesting, you had worked on the Sabbath and sinned. Another example is that you could not spit on the ground on the Sabbath because your spit would create mud and this was making mortar. If you created mortar you were working on the Sabbath and therefore sinning.

Jesus was angry and hated such teaching! He hated the way the Pharisees used the people's love for God or fear of God to control them, limit their freedom, and empty them of the relationship with God that was intended. When you practice religion, your relationship with God is degraded to a mathematical formula. Do this, then do this, don't do that, and right away you are right in the eyes of God. This is totally missing the point! God wants so much more. He wants to have a real relationship with you. He wants to show his love to you and He wants you to love Him. That was the point of the original commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy". The Sabbath day was supposed to be a day for us to take a little break from working, refocus on what's important, spend time with our family, and spend time with God. You can't build a deep relationship without spending quality time together. If you read the 10 Commandments you will notice that they are all about relationships. They are either about improving our relationship with God or with other people. As Jesus Himself said:

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," Matt. 22:37-40.

And Paul said: For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet." These, and other such commandments, are summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law, Rom 13:9-10. So the law can be summed up in love; love for God and love for others. The law is about relationships; vertical and

horizontal. It is about our vertical relationship with our Creator and our horizontal relationships with the rest of mankind. It was never intended to be a list of rules that can be relegated to a checklist or mathematical equation. We are talking about love.

So the Pharisees took the commandment to remember the Sabbath and added religion to it by making that ridiculous rule about spitting on the ground. Jesus showed his complete disregard for their rules when he repeatedly healed people on the Sabbath. The Pharisees considered this “work.” On one particular occasion, He healed a blind man on the Sabbath by spitting on the ground, making some clay, and rubbing it on the man’s eyes. Jesus was God. He didn’t have to spit on the ground to heal the man. He was making a point to the Pharisees and everyone watching him that religion was wrong.

Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some clay with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. “Go,” he told him, “Wash in the Pool of Siloam.” So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. Then they took the man who had been blind to the Pharisees because it was on the Sabbath that Jesus had made the clay and healed him. Some of the Pharisees said by phrasing “This man Jesus is not from God, for he is working on the Sabbath,” John 9:6-7, 13-14, 16. Religion is a man trying to reach up to God. The message of Christianity is God reaching down to man. Religion is about what man has to “do” to be right with God. Christianity is what God has already “done” to provide us the opportunity to be right with Him. Religion says you must “earn” your salvation by doing good deeds or certain acts and not doing evil. Christianity says all we need to do is “believe” that Christ has already paid the price for the evil we have done. Christianity says we are all evil, filled with sin and there is nothing we can do to earn the right to be saved. Christianity says that God, in the form of Jesus Christ stepped down from Heaven into our place and paid the awful price that had to be paid for us. He gave us the free gift of salvation if we choose to believe in Jesus.

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:” 1 Pet. 3:18

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:” John 1:12

Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.” Rom 3:19-25

We are free by God's great gift. All we have to do is claim it. Just like a Christmas present, it is a free gift that cost the giver dearly, but it doesn't become ours until we believe that the giver does care for us and that what is inside the box is something good. We then have to receive the free gift. It doesn't become ours until we trust the giver and choose to receive the gift. You see, as the verse from Romans above states, we can't be saved by abiding by the law, the 10 Commandments. This is a list of rules. We can't be saved by the effort of man. The Bible clearly tells us.

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it." Eph 2:8-9

So often you hear from people that they think they will go to heaven because they have been a good person. Being good has nothing to do with whether you are saved or not. That's religion, you can't earn it. Thank God, because none of us could ever be good enough. For every one of us has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. God is perfect, and in order to be one with God and commune with the Almighty, we would have to be perfect too. Only one person could ever do this, Jesus Christ. That's why it took Jesus to stand in the gap and pay the price for all of us. Our sins are erased because of Christ. Bible scholars use a big term for this called Substitutionary Atonement.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us," 1 John 1:8-10.

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law, had said, Thou shalt not covet," Rom 7:7.

In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, you must not covet. Without the law as a standard, we would not even realize that we needed a redeemer and Savior from our sin. The law is just and correct. There is nothing wrong with the law. This is the way we are called to act. However, as humans, we do not have the ability to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, and minds and love our neighbor as much as ourselves all the time, every day. Because sin was introduced into the world by man, we are inclined to sin and no one can live this way. So, we are in need of redemption from this predicament. Christ provided this. He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Matt. 5:17-18

Don't misunderstand why He has come. He did not come to abolish the Law of Moses or the Writings of the prophets. No, He came to accomplish their purpose, to fulfill all the Law where it is impossible for us to even keep one of the Laws, James 2:10.

Through Christ, we are made perfect in God's eyes. We are forgiven from all sin and I mean all; past and future. When we receive Him, He gives us his Holy Spirit that has the power to change us and make us more like Him. This is a process, but as this happens we begin to realize that we are living in the love originally required by the law. The original intention, the heart of the law, is established in our lives. Our relationships with God and others are founded in love. It is the Holy Spirit that accomplishes this within us, not our own human effort. The Bible describes this process as Holy Spirit producing fruit:

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the Law of Moses. But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to His cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives," Gal 5:16-18, 22-25.

This is the difference between religion and true Christianity. There is no checklist or list of rules that you must follow. It is all about your relationships, vertical and horizontal. There are no rhetoric or rituals that have to be practiced. Believe that Jesus Christ came to earth and died for your sins, accept his free gift, let God help you to love Him and love others. That's it! It is so simple it sounds stupid, and it would be if there was no real power here. I'm here to testify that when you do this, the relationship with God is "real" and the power to change your life is there!

Religion is empty, but in Christ there is power.

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." 1 Cor. 1:18

So when you look around at the church and what has happened in history you see a lot of bad things, and some good as well. The key thing that you must understand is that historically "the church" is predominately a religious organization with man-made rules and controls. This is evil and God is not in it. Good has been done by the few that truly understand what it means to be a Christian. These look like Christ. The Bible says, *"You shall know them by their fruits."* It also says:

"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."
1 John 2:5-6

Here are a couple of verses that shows why most people who claim to be Christians really aren't:

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matt 7:13-14

WARNING: So don't discredit God by looking at what religious people have been doing!

Now, I realize that thus far I have been speaking in terms of Christianity. But the cults such as Islam easily fall precisely under the premise of **“God hates Religion”**; after all, I observe no one more committed to their religion than an Islamic Fundamentalist. Although the Muslim serves a different god, Allah is not the God of the Bible; he too is seeking to appease his god by doing. That is “works based theology” no matter how you slice it.

So you may be wondering where in the Bible it says that “God hates religion.” Starting in the Old Testament I will show you several references and then finish off with what Jesus Christ Himself said concerning religion.

Isaiah 1:13-14 states, “Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies...it is iniquity...Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.”

David prays to God in Psalm 40:6,

“Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire;...Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.”

Amos 5:21 says,

“I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell, the odors of their sacrifices, in your solemn assemblies.”

Micah 6:6-8 includes;

“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”

And there it is:

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”James 4:10.

You see, the Israelites, Jews of the Old Testament had forgotten the relationship with God and became dependent upon the religious system of works and sacrifice and offerings expecting spiritual redemption or to appease God. But in these passages we see God Himself saying, “I

don't care how you shake and dance, I'm not interested in your religious activities, I want your heart." In fact, that is exactly what He expresses here in Isaiah 29,

"Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me..." Isaiah 29:13,

Jesus quoted this passage in Matt. 15 adding

"...in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," Matt. 15:8-9.

It is a bondage that Jesus confronted with a tongue-lashing directed at the religious leaders of the day; the Pharisee's of Judaism. They sought to entrap and discredit Him and asked Jesus, let me paraphrase: "Why are your disciples disregarding our traditions?" Jesus answered, "Why do you transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" *"You hypocrites"* Matt 15:1-9 Jesus really lets them have it in Matthew 23. Talking first to the people He said; again let me paraphrase, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in high seats and bind heavy burdens upon you that they themselves won't even lift a finger to bear! They make themselves look pious before men so everyone will recognize their positions." Then turning on the religious leaders He calls them "hypocrites, fools and blind, tombs full of dead men's bones. Every time you open your mouth death comes out!" He called them "snakes" headed for the damnation of hell! These were the religious leaders!

Jesus said, "Come unto me... and I will give you rest..." Matt. 11:28. Religion can't save you; only relationship and that comes through humility and repentance. Christ says in John 10:9 "I am the door: by me if any man enters in he shall be saved..." Guilt is the natural state of Mankind. We are all guilty before God. This leads to fear of all kinds. Fear of being found out, fear of failure, fear of change, fear of the opinion of others. But doing something good, works will not change the fact you are guilty. The only cure is a relationship with God through Jesus Christ who took upon Himself my guilt and fear. I am no longer guilty and can act fearlessly and rest secure that I have a relationship with God, which then enables me to "work", that being striving to do things that honor my relationship with Him.

The works are not to gain God's blessing in my life, but to reveal God's blessing in my life. "We don't do to be, we do because we are." The relationship with God through Jesus Christ is perfect and fuller than any earthly relationships we can forge because God is perfect. Other people are not. And even though we can have a wonderful relationship with one another, these pale in comparison to a relationship with Him.

As with everything in Creation, the physical, material is a manifestation of the spiritual. The human relationship of family teaches us of the security we have in Him as the perfect Father. The friendship we experience of our most loyal friend on earth is still imperfect compared to the Friend we have in Jesus. The picture of marriage shows us the intimacy and devotion that He has for us when believers are referred to as the Bride of Christ. If you read the Song of Solomon with the King as Christ and the bride as the "Church" you will see how this works. Better yet, if you have a great marriage, you have experienced the wonderful earthly manifestation of this relationship. But as humans, we are flawed creatures, and still struggle within these relationships

on the human level. The relationship with God puts Him as the guardian of the relationship and Jesus promised, "I will never leave you or forsake you." And if your relationship with God is good, you will realize that your relationships with other people are much better. That is, indeed, the abundant life that Jesus promises.

It is impossible to work your way into a relationship with God. You must be born into it. The second birth, the spiritual birth is a real relationship with God. Religion is not the answer. Religion is the problem.

Now seeing the difference between religious people and a truly saved person, between religion and Christianity, let's look again at true Christianity!

God, He hates religion. You see religion is contrary to God and His relationship with the family. God's entire economy is centered upon the family. The family is the foundational relationship with God and the heart of God's program. God's Plan and Purpose through all the Seven Dispensations is to have a family. It has always been God's intention to call out a family, a family for Him. Each and every member is to be just like His Son Jesus Christ. Christians are called Christians because they are indwelt by Jesus Christ. They are not Christians because they are images of God and they are. They are not Christians by reflecting Christ and they should. **THEY ARE CHRISTIANS BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST IS LIVING IN THEM**, not types and images. That's why the Bible uses the term "the Body of Christ" and sometimes in Scripture, they are referred to by their future title the "Bride of Christ." What is a Christian? Or better what is a Bible believer that has been "born again" maybe a better way to ask it what is a person who has been saved? Of course, I'm using First Century language here foreign to most living in the Twenty-First Century. Born again, Saved and Christians! Many today are claiming to be Christians, Roman Catholics will tell you they are Christians when in light of the Word of God they are not and are lost as a box of rocks. Your Denominalists will tell you they are Christians but when examined under the all-seeing eye of God by the Holy Spirit they too miss the mark of being Christians. Church of Christ people will tell you they are, but they will be found to be as the expression goes "waterdogs," when the "One who searches hearts" returns. Your cults do the same as does Wesleyans, Mennonites, Pentecostals and your holiness sects. Many Baptist people will be found not to be Bible Christians either. I know, I may be stepping on Jewish ground here but what's good for the Jews is good for the Church when it comes to God's warning and the value of the soul. Listen to Jesus' warning here in Matthew 7:

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many

wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity,” Matt. 7:13-23.

You know as well as I do that just because a person claims to be a Christian doesn't necessarily mean he is, especially in the day we are now living. Well, what makes a person a real honest to goodness Bible believing Christian? How does one know he is a Christian? To answer these questions, we must go to the only infallible source the Holy Bible and let God tell us! Frankly, He is the only one that can see into a man's heart and truly knows the man for what he is and who he is. For me personally, I know I'm saved because His Spirit testifies to my spirit, Romans 8:

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:” Rom. 8:16

The Word of God settles the matter of what and who the man is.

Christianity why? What is God's purpose in calling out this family? Well, to define the name God the English word “God” means the “Self-Existing One” the “Self-Existing One that reveals” teaches us that God has always been in existence “Self-Existing” alone we might conclude. And being the loving God He is He has always sought companions to share His love with. A poor explanation this may be, but mind you short and clear coming from this meager excuse of a preacher. According to the Apostle Paul, His purpose is to reunite all things in Christ, to gather them together again, to bring back, and to head up once more all things in Christ. Paul suggests that things have already been in a perfect condition once, but that they are no longer in that condition. But they will be again. It will be restored to its perfect pristine condition as formerly created.

Originally all things were in a perfect state of harmony under our Lord Jesus Christ, as we are told in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, verses 15-20:

“Who, referring to the Lord, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.”
Col.1:15-20

There we have an account of creation's original condition. In the tenth verse of the second chapter of Colossians we read: “...And ye are complete in him, in Christ, which is the head of all principality and power.” Such terms as ‘principality’ and ‘power’ and ‘dominions’ and ‘thrones’ always refer to the angelic beings, the angelic powers, the great powers in the heavens. So what we are told is that the Lord Jesus Christ was the head of all these powers as He was also the head of the Universe. Everything that was made and created was made and created in Him and by Him and through and for Him; not only the world and animals but angels and thrones and principalities and powers. Furthermore, there was perfect harmony in all these realms. The Lord Jesus Christ was overall, over the angels and all powers and authorities and dominions; then over

the world, the animals and the fruit of the earth. The man was made the lord of creation over all animals and inanimate nature. All was absolutely perfect and in a state of entire harmony and unity. Everything worked harmoniously downwards from the great Head, and everything worked upwards, back again towards the Supreme Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, alas, the unity and harmony did not continue; and the present situation of the world is due to that fact. The harmony has been destroyed. First of all, there was a revolt, a rebellion, in heaven itself. The devil rebelled and fell, and a large number of the holy angels followed him and fell with him. Immediately there was discord, even in heaven. There is a most significant statement in the Book of Revelation, Chapter 12, which throws great light upon the subject we are considering. In verse 7 of that chapter we read: 'And there was war in heaven'. Discord in heaven! The war in heaven! 'Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels'. But the discord was not confined to heaven. The fallen angel, namely, the devil, Satan, came and tempted man and man fell. The result was discord amongst men, dispute, quarreling, misunderstanding, warfare, bloodshed, murder, jealousy, envy, and all that follows in their train. Just look around you!

But we must remember that even the creation itself suffered as the result of sin. Paul says in the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans that "the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope" verse 20. When man fell the earth was cursed, and the story of creation ever since has been "Nature corrupted from center to circumference, briars and thorns, troubles, diseases, and pestilences. The harmony has gone; the original perfection has vanished and disappeared." That is the position of the world as a result of the fall of the angels, and the fall of man has stemmed from it. Well then since all of this has happened and God is now calling out a family of Christians. What is a Christian?

Most Christians probably would say someone that follows Christ. Or maybe they would say they are those who believe a certain way and live a certain way. The only way to answer who Christians are is to go to the source of their origin and to do that we must go to the Word of God and its Author. We know believers were first called Christians at Antioch, Syria. The name distinguished them from all other religious sects back then. And we know to be identified as a Christian back then amounted to persecution. This in and of its self-separated them from all the religious crowds of that day. Christians, Bible believers have always been under persecution since the beginning of time and will be until Christ returns. Let's now look at man and the first Christians:

The man is a trichotomy, body, soul and spirit. He has a physical body, an eternal living soul, and in his fallen unregenerate state he has a "God-less" lost spirit. Without God! The man became empty, void with a vacuum left in his life. When Adam fell he lost the presence of God in his life, God removed Himself and man died to all that was godly. The man was still alive, but not spiritually. He no longer had the ability to do what he was created for "to perform in a loving relationship" with his Creator and all of the creation. Lost! He was created in God's image so that the invisible God would receive glory when man allowed Christ to be revealed through him. Adam was created in "innocence" not like some spiritless zombie or robot, a free moral agent with the ability to choose. God wanted Adam to live holy and blameless but he chose to sin and when Adam fell, God departed from Him, and he no longer bore God's image. Though now he

retains the marred image of God, man is a far cry from the innocent Adam he once was. Once he was a “revealer of God” but now he became a revelation of all that is evil. In Adam, we all died. We all have been born wrong without the presence God in our lives. We all have sinned, and come short of God’s glory. Instead, the man now gets the glory and he ceases to be the revelation of God as intended. The man has become the medium for all that is depraved. He has lost the opportunity to allow God, Jesus Christ to be seen through him. It has always been God’s will to have a family, a family just like His Son. A family that would be the revelation, the “revealer of God” to this lost hell-bound world. God is a Spirit, unseen by man’s blinded sin-cursed eyes except He be seen through you and me.

GOD IS THE SELF-EXISTING ONE THAT REVEALS so too is the Christian who is the revelation of God to men. Nothing more and nothing less! Our function in life is to reveal God to men. Revelators of God! And God has given us all the resources necessary to do just that, He has given us His “Holy” Spirit and His “Word” the Holy Bible. We are not to think of ourselves as soul winners! Not at all! He is the soul winner the saving business is God’s. We deliver His WORD. We have been given the wonderful privilege to “Bear the testimony of Jesus Christ and the Word of God,” to bear the Words of eternal life. I know we pastors want to think more of ourselves than we should and the preacher’s part in God’s economy is important but never more than being a messenger of the Word of God. Showing God to a lost world and that is what Jesus wants to do through each of us.

First and foremost, God wants to return man to a state of normality. He is abnormal in his present unregenerate state. The man was created to radiate God’s Son! Jesus said, “If I am lifted up I will draw all men unto me.”

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” John 12:32

A Christian is someone who has become normal. Someone who radiates God, he draws men to Jesus Christ. He has been made whole, complete by the indwelling Christ. The Christian has a body that God is seen in he has a soul washed by regeneration and a spirit that has been renewed by the Holy Ghost. The Christian’s body is a Temple that is housing the presence of God. That’s what a Christian is.

“IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO WORK YOUR WAY INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. YOU MUST BE BORN INTO IT. RELIGION IS NOT THE ANSWER. RELIGION IS THE PROBLEM.”