

MSB207

MORE SEED and BREAD

BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM
THE WORD OF TRUIH MINISTRY

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CHRISTIAN INDIVIDUALISM AND THE SUPREME PRINCIPLE

by Mike Walko

Given the present state of the world, many people are wondering just where we are headed and what will be the outcome of the present course of history. As a Bible-believing Christian, I declare that God's Word has the only answers to these questions.

The Scripture teaches that one day wars will cease and that we will live in a brotherhood on this earth (Isa. 2:4), that all sickness, mental as well as physical, will be cured (Isa. 33:24), that the dead will be raised (Job 14: 14, Isa. 26: 19), and that all nations will come under the direct government of Jesus Christ and will learn to worship Him properly, that is, in spirit and in truth (Ps. 2:7,46:10,67:4). These things will happen when God breaks His current silence to set up His Kingdom upon the earth. This event will occur in conjunction with the restoration of the nation of Israel to her promised land with its undisputed capital in Jerusalem (Ps. 102: 15-16, Jer. 31:31, Isa. 2: 3). This Kingdom is the one the Lord told his disciples to pray for (Matt. 6: 9-13). But what about us who live in the present age, which the Scriptures call "the dispensation of the grace of God"? (Eph. 3: 2). How are we to conduct our lives until the time of God's manifest Kingdom? How do we go about serving the Lord in a proper and meaningful way?

Many well-meaning Christians insist that a believer must be a member of a good "born again" church. But what does "born again" mean? First of all,

the term "born again", which is found in the King James version of John 3: 3, and 3: 7, is translated from the Greek *gennao anothēn*. The word *gennao* provides the Greek root for our English word "generate." It could mean a physical generation, as in "Abraham begat Isaac" (Matt. 1: 2), but in this case what is being generated was a truth about the Kingdom of God (John 3: 12). The word *anothen* does not mean "again," but rather "above," as it is correctly translated in John 3: 31, 19: 11, James 1: 17, 3: 17, and elsewhere. The Greek word for "again" is *palin* (see, e.g., Gal. 4: 9), which is not found in the John 3 passage we are considering. The phrase "born again" therefore literally means "generated from above." In John 3: 3 the Lord was teaching that unless a man is "generated from above," unless God enlightens a person about some truth concerning the Kingdom, he will not understand anything about it. Being "generated from above" has nothing to do with any esoteric experience that some today claim to have.

As for "church," here is a word that means different things to different people. To some it simply means a building, to others it means a denomination or a sect, and to still others it stands for all believers in a collective sense regardless of their denominations.

The root of the English word "church" is the Greek word *kyriakon* or "circle." It comes to us through the German *kirche*, and the Scottish *kirk*. The surprising thing about *kyriakon* is that it appears nowhere in the Greek New Testament! But the translators of the New Testament were all loyal churchmen, so they simply had to get the word "church" into the Bible. Thus they took the Greek word *ekklesia* and translated it "church" in order to fit their ideas. (This is similar to what they did in Acts 12:4 where they took the Greek word *pascha*, which means "passover" and translated it "Easter." But *ekklesia* does not mean "church" anymore than *pascha* means "Easter.") What *ekklesia* does refer to are the "out-positioned ones" (*ek-+kaleo*: out + "to position with authority"). These "out-positioned ones" were men who during the Acts period had special positions out of God, such as apostles and prophets. They were mediators between God and men. But since in this dispensation there is only "**one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus**" (1 Tim. 2:5), no one else today has a special position out of God and therefore no one can rightfully claim any such position.

The Lord made it clear that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18: 36). No political movement today is out of God. Every conceivable type of human government has been tried and proven a failure, from the atheistic

tyranny of Communism to various forms of theocratic fanaticism. So if we reject politics and organized religion, what is left to us? As a Christian Individualist, I believe we can get all the spiritual truth and guidance we need from the Bible -alone, provided it is rightly divided (2 Tim. 2: 15).

The most important commandment ever given in Scripture, the one that should be the axiom of our faith, is what we may call the "Supreme Principle." A person's principles are his moral standards, his rules for living. The Supreme Principle is found in Matt. 22:37-39 where the Lord taught his followers that we should love God with all our being and our neighbor as ourselves. The Lord personified this principle through His complete submission to the Father's will and by absorbing into His own body the sickness and infirmities of those he healed (Matt. 8: 17). This was done long before the world knew who he was, before He was offered up at Calvary to God for mankind's sins, and before He ascended to glory.

We can apply this principle of love of God and of neighbor without belonging to church or following a party line. Membership in an organization is not needed to love God's Word above all else and to be "doers of the Word" in our relationship with others. Only by studying God's Word, which is Truth (John 17: 17), will we discover what Christian love involves. For we show love when we share what we have with someone else who needs it, and our neighbors' greatest need, as is ours, is to know God's Truth. Every material thing a man needs must be ranked below this primary need.

When the Lord stated that He was the Truth (John 14:6), He was not saying that He was the content of a true proposition, as we use the word "truth," but rather that he was the embodiment of the Supreme Principal and will one day govern the world by it, and that we should endeavor to follow Him in this truth. May the Lord increase our awareness of this truth and our desire to follow Him in it.

CHRISTIAN INDIVIDUALISM VERSUS SECTARIANISM

Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

These words were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples (John 8:32). But we must ask ourselves, "From what does the truth make us free?"

The answer is found two verses later: we are all in bondage to sin. And the Lord, who is the Truth (John 14:6), is all we need to make us free. Since all man-made organizations are themselves tainted by sin, no one of them, be it political or religious, can save us.

The Apostle Paul taught that, as believers, we are complete in the Lord and that He is all we need for salvation (Col. 2: 10). There are some, however, who feel that in order to serve the Lord properly, we must be part of a collective called a "church". Some go as far as to say that there is no salvation for anyone outside of this group.

John Calvin said that whoever has God for his Father has the church for his Mother. But such a statement is not only not to be found in the Word of God, it contradicts what is found there, namely, that the Lord Jesus is the one mediator between God and man.

Some point out that the Lord Himself spoke of His church and even said in response to Peter's faith, "Upon this rock will I build my church" (Matt. 16:18). This is true, but as we have seen before the word "church" found in Matthew 16:18 is the Greek word *ekklesia* and means "out-positioned ones," which is what the Apostles were, since they had a position out of God, something no one today has.

Regarding this, the Swiss theologian Emil Brunner says in his book **The Misunderstanding of the Church**: "The fact that the churches that we see today and the *ekklesia* of the New Testament are not one and the same is something that few consider." Sectarianism often teaches mindless conformity to traditions and thus hinders creative thinking on the part of the believer in regard to Biblical truth.

The way of life which the writer practices and advocates is Christian Individualism. A Christian Individualist does not shun fellowship with others in the Christian community. In fact, he seeks to establish such fellowship, though never at the expense of Biblical truth. Christian Individualism stresses personal faith and the value of each individual. It is an active way of life for a Bible believer.

Throughout the New Testament we are exhorted to live a godly life in the Lord, but we can do this as individuals. Christian Individualists are not bound by church dogma but are free to explore and express different ideas with the Bible alone as their authority.

The Lord Jesus is called the **Son of God (Matt. 27:54)**, but in an Old Testament prophecy He is called the **everlasting Father (Isa. 9:6)** and in **John 14: 17-18, the Spirit of truth or Holy Spirit**. These are not different beings, but rather different manifestations of the same being.

In Matthew 28: 19-20, the Lord instructed His Apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This is sometimes used to prove the doctrine of the Trinity. However, the Greek word *kai* translated here "and" can also be translated even as it is in 1 Thess. 3: 13 (*KJV*). In Greek grammar this principle is known as the *kai* explicative: by the conjunction *kai* the writer may annex to a word another word which explicates or describes it.

The Christian Individualist understands that there is a variety of talents and skills distributed among people. The believer becomes a living monument to God's grace when, through the Lord's inner working of His design for him, he uses his God generated endowments for God's greater glory. When God governs the earth in that future period called the Kingdom of God, these fruits of God's grace will be manifest to all.

As a believing artist and poet has put it, "Lord, may everything we do begin with your inspiration, continue with your help, and reach perfection under your guidance." May this be a prayer for all believers.

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