

06. The Book of 2Samuel—2:1-32 (Pt.4)

“Civil War—the Dividing of the Church”

(7/31/16)

We have been studying the subject of civil war—which Israel experienced after the death of King Saul. (Comment)

We have camped on the idea of civil war because it is exactly the tactic Satan uses against those he desires to bring down—he seeks to divide them against each other so that he can conquer and destroy them.

As Jesus Himself warned in Matt.12:25: *“Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A town or family splintered by civil war will fall apart.”*

There are three great institutions that God has created and around which He has built all of human society—government; family; and the church—and Satan needs to infiltrate all three if he’s going to divide them and destroy our society.

We’ve already looked at how the Devil, working through various groups, has infiltrated our country and government—deeply dividing it so that he can destroy our nation—a nation under God founded on Christianity and the Bible.

We also saw how that, in an effort to hasten the process of bringing down America, he (the Devil) again using various people and groups, has been working for the past eighty some years to divide and destroy the traditional family unit by attacking the traditional values our country and family were founded upon—values rooted in the Christian faith.

That brings us this morning to the final part of our series on Civil War.

We have already looked at: *Civil War—the Dividing of America*; and *Civil War—the Dividing of the Family*; and that now brings us to the third and final part: *Civil War—the Dividing of the Church*.

If government is the *body* of our nation in the sense it provides structure—joining and connecting everything within together in a single cohesive unit (like a human body).

If the government is the body of a nation, and the family is the *heart* of a nation—then the Church is the *soul* of our nation.

A corpse has a body and a heart—but no soul which is why it is dead.

Only the Church of Jesus Christ has the breath (the Spirit) of God within it—and as such only the Church has the life of God flowing through it.

The word ‘spirit’ in the Greek is ‘pneuma’ which means both ‘spirit’ and ‘breath’—breath equals life.

If there is no breath in a physical body—that body is dead.

Even so the Church (the Body of Christ) is not a ‘dead organization’—it’s a living organism by virtue of the Spirit of God within us.

To be ‘born-again’ or ‘born of the Spirit’ means to have the Spirit of God living inside of you.

When a person receives Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior the Spirit of God comes inside and they become a new creation—a child of God (born of the Spirit) with the very breath and life of God within them.

That life is then infused more and more within a nation as more and more people receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and become part of His Church (His Body)—the more that happens the more a nation grows stronger and its light becomes brighter—which is why Satan wants to ‘kill’ the Church.

As long as a town, a city, or a nation has a vibrant Christian Church within it—the Devil will never, ever be able to control it—so the only option he has is to try to destroy the Church of Jesus Christ.

However, the Devil eventually found out that he couldn’t defeat the Church through a direct frontal assault—because as Jesus promised, “*Against My Church the gates of Hell will not prevail.*”

Now this didn’t stop the Devil from *trying* to defeat the Church through outward persecution during the first three centuries of the Church’s existence—let me explain.

The Church was born in 32A.D. and initially the gospel went forth with such power and so many people started getting saved around the Roman Empire that Satan panicked and tried to destroy the Church and Christianity with a direct frontal assault.

He moved in the hearts of 10 Roman Emperors who unleashed 10 waves of persecution against the Church starting with Nero (64 A.D.) and ending with Diocletian (311 A.D.)

But to Satan’s dismay the more he persecuted the Church the stronger it got and the more it grew—so he decided to try a different tactic.

Instead of a direct frontal assault he decided—“*If I can't beat them, I'll join them.*”

If Satan couldn't destroy the Church from without—he would ‘marry’ it and corrupt it from within—and this is how he did it.

By the beginning of the 4th century the Roman Empire was in decline.

After the reign of Diocletian (303-311 A.D.), there was a power struggle between Constantine and Maxentius for who would be the next Emperor of Rome.

Constantine's father had prospered when he prayed to the God of the Christian's—so Constantine thought he'd give it a try.

The next day he supposedly saw a vision of a flaming cross in the sky with words in Latin which said, “*In this sign you will be the victor.*”

He went on to defeat Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge and immediately declared his conversion to Christianity—even though he continued to worship the sun god and gave no evidence of being born again.

He assumed headship of the Church taking the title “Pontifex Maximus” (the *Supreme Priest*).

It was the Roman emperors who were first called the “Vicars of Christ”—a title inherited by the popes when the Roman Empire disintegrated.

Constantine's title of *Pontifex Maximus* was also taken by the popes—thus the head of the Roman Catholic Church is called “Pontifex Maximus” or the “Roman Pontiff” to this day.

Constantine rescinded all the laws that allowed for the persecution of Christians passed by his predecessor Diocletian and replaced them with the “Edict of Milan” also called the “Edict of Toleration”, which forbade the persecution of Christians.

The result was that Christianity became the official religion of Rome and Christians were given high level jobs in the Roman government.

Constantine ‘Christianized’ paganism along with its practices and holidays—the pagan festival of Saturnalia (Winter Solstice festival—Dec.21-26), celebrated with mistletoe, Yule logs and decorated evergreen trees, became a celebration of Christ’s birth known as Christmas.

The festival of Ashtarte (a fertility goddess), celebrated with rabbits and colored eggs, became the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ called ‘Easter’.

Pagan temples were turned into Christian churches; pagan priests became Christian priests—in effect he married the Church with the State—Satan figured if I can’t beat them I’ll join them.

Donald Gray Barnhouse, says concerning this,

“Imagine the whispering that went on around Rome—the Emperor had become a Christian. Out of the catacombs they came. Instead of being persecuted, they found themselves popular. Like a youngster among heavy drinkers, the church’s head was turned by the wine of the world. The priests of the pagan temples had been paid from the purse of the Empire, but now Caesar was a Christian and the priests of Mars and Venus hastened to their baptisms. For the first time in the history of the Church, salaries were paid to Christian workers. Tradition has it that Constantine’s mother was the first to give the money for the erection of a church building. Before, kitchens and catacombs, humble dwellings or humbler dungeons had echoed with the quiet hymns of the believers whose songs of praise were frequently changed to the shout of the martyr as the believers were dragged forth to the arena. All this was over now. The rags of persecution gave way to softer garments, and the Church began to enjoy the feel of silk upon its flesh. Thus... the Church was married to the world.”

Yes, and since Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman Empire many pagans underwent the rite of water baptism and joined the Church—and for the first time in the Church’s history it was filled with pagans who called themselves ‘Christians’ (Roman Catholics).

Jesus had warned His disciples that Satan would eventually use this tactic in the *Parable of the Wheat and Tares*. (Explain)

As Satan corrupted a large segment of the Church by marrying Christianity with paganism the result being the Roman Catholic Church—this eventually led to a civil war within the Church called the “Protestant Reformation”.

In the days of Martin Luther, who himself was an Augustinian Catholic monk, the RCC had become a ‘*circus of corruption*’ using every scam it could think of to fill the coffers of the church from the money sacks of the gullible.

Author Dave Hunt explains—

“There were tiny vials of “true milk from the Virgin Mary’s breasts,” pickled fingers and toes of this or that “saint,” and enough pieces of wood in Europe venerated as parts of the “true cross” to build a cathedral. Even toenails of “saints” were worshiped by the deluded devout. Peter’s toes were uncommonly prolific. There were enough “certified trimmings” in Europe’s cathedrals to fill a gunnysack. The biggest scam was selling “indulgences” to release deceased relatives from purgatory—and who would refuse to buy Aunt Maria’s release from the flames! From such blood money, St. Peter’s Basilica was repaired and expanded to its present form.”

These indulgences also could be purchased as ‘forgiveness in advance’. (Explain)

Martin Luther, a sincere man of God, could stand it no more!

He penned his “*Disputation of the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*”, also known as *the 95 Theses*—and on October 31, 1517 nailed them to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg and the Protestant Reformation was launched.

Unfortunately, over time, many Protestant churches were infiltrated by the Devil and corrupted also—as Jesus taught in the *Parable of the Mustard Seed*.

Matthew 13:31-32 (NKJV)

³¹ Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, ³² which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

This satanic infiltration would lead to the abnormal growth of the church—turning it into something God never intended it to be—a monstrosity where it would become a refuge for all kinds of “birds” (false believers and satanic leaders) who would masquerade as true representatives of Jesus Christ.

It would also become a place where doctrines of demons would find a home—and many other evil and unbiblical practices.

Jesus’ use of the word “nested” in this parable suggests that the birds not only took refuge in the church but reproduced themselves.

Today the umbrella of Christendom covers such Christ-denying Christian cults like: Unitarianism, Christian Science, Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Unification Church (Moonie’s).

And we can also include in that groups like the “World Council of Churches.”

The WCC has 349 member *churches*—together, these churches represent some 560 million professing “Christians” worldwide.

This is a group that has embraced many false doctrines and social evils and has even funded terrorist groups.

So we can see how Satan and his followers, pictured as the birds in this parable, have lodged in the ‘branches’ of the Church (both Catholic and Protestant) which itself has grown into a wealthy worldwide organization/abomination—married to the world instead of remaining separate and faithful to its Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

As we have already seen in this series, sometimes civil war is necessary—as with the Civil War fought in America between the North and the South for the abolition of slavery—and the same is true with the Church.

There are righteous civil wars in the visible church (Christendom) that must be fought and won—as faithful saints, like Martin Luther and the other reformers, did when they fought to win the Protestant Reformation.

The main fight we must fight today and win is not only the continued fight with the RCC which is trying to bring back into the church the “separated brethren” (protestants) through a great ecumenical push over the last 15 to 20 years.

The RCC for many years has fancied itself as the ‘mother church’ of a world church that will gather many different faiths under the shadow of its wings—a world church spoken about in Revelation 17.

But the other main fight we must fight today and win is the fight against ‘liberalism’ within the Church.

One author defines what liberal ‘Christian’ theology is all about.

“In liberal Christian teaching, which is not Christian at all, man’s reason is stressed and is treated as the final authority. Liberal theologians seek to reconcile Christianity with secular science and modern thinking. In doing so, they treat science as all-knowing and the Bible as fable-laden and false. Genesis’ early chapters are reduced to poetry or fantasy, having a message, but not to be taken literally (in spite of Jesus’ having spoken of those early chapters in literal terms). Mankind is not seen as totally depraved, and thus liberal theologians have an optimistic view of the future of mankind.”

The social gospel is also emphasized, while the inability of fallen man to fulfill it is denied. Whether a person is saved from his sin and its penalty in hell is no longer the issue; the main thing is how man treats his fellow man. “Love” of our fellow man becomes the defining issue.”

As a result of this “reasoning” the following doctrines are taught by liberal theologians:

- 1) The Bible is not “God-breathed” and has errors.*
- 2) The virgin birth of Christ is a mythological false teaching.*
- 3) Jesus did not rise again from the grave in bodily form.*
- 4) Jesus was a good moral teacher, but not necessarily divine.*
- 5) All of the miracles in the gospels didn’t happen but were put there by their writers (not Matthew, Mark, Luke or John—but others who wrote the gospels much later claiming to be Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) to give greater weight to the teachings in the gospels.*
- 6) Hell is not real. Man is not lost in sin and is not doomed to some future judgment without a relationship with Christ through faith. Man can help himself; no sacrificial death by Christ is necessary since a loving God would not send people to such a place as hell any way.*
- 7) The most important thing for man to do is to “love” his neighbor—not save the lost (since they are not ‘lost’ and going to hell). Loving our neighbor involves accepting them for who they are and how they’re living—because to make any moral judgments concerning their lives in any way is to be unloving and judgmental—and therefore unlike God.*

As we just said—sometimes civil war is necessary and righteous.

Division is not always a bad thing—if it divides saving truth from damning heresy (Heb.4:12).

The problem today is that Christians are dividing over any and every non-essential doctrine—and it's tearing the true Church apart.

Things like the timing of the Rapture (Pre-Tribulation; Mid-Tribulation; Post Tribulation Rapture; or Pre-Wrath)—or dividing over whether or not the Rapture is even biblical.

I see many Christians dividing over the doctrine of Calvinism; Replacement Theology; Eternal Security; or whether or not the gifts of the Holy Spirit are still around today.

These are non-essential doctrines that should never divide the Body of Christ against itself.

There are times when we're going to disagree with another Christian about doctrinal non-essentials—when we do our motto must be: *"In essentials unity—in non-essentials liberty—in all things charity."*

And yet, unfortunately, the Church today is made up of so many like an old Quaker I heard about.

The old, contentious Quaker went from one meeting to another, never finding the "true" church.

Someone once said to him, *"Well, what church are you in now?"* He said, *"I am in the true church at last." "How many belong to it?" "Just my wife and myself—but I'm not sure about her sometimes."*

One Christian writer commenting on the division that has come into the Church during the current election cycle—

"Yes, Satan knows that a house divided cannot stand. And he has used this election cycle—among other things—as a tool to bring such division to the body of Christ that believers are vehemently attacking one another. Churches are divided. Christian brothers have become bitter enemies. This is all the bait of Satan—and he's reveling in his success while believers continue to use the deadly poison in their tongues to stir up strife."

Strife and love cannot co-exist. Strife is an abomination to God (Prov. 6:16). Strife affects the anointing and the flow of the Holy Spirit (Psalms 133:1-3). Strife grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). Strife destroys relationships (Prov. 17:9). Strife is rooted in anger (Prov. 29:22), hatred (Prov. 10:12), pride (Prov. 13:10) and a quarrelsome self-seeking spirit (Gal. 5:14-18; Luke 22:24-27).”

The Spirit of God is the basis for our unity as Christians—a self-seeking, haughty spirit will destroy that unity.

Yes, there are quarrels and disagreements within the true Church of Jesus Christ—as there is in any flesh and blood family.

But physical flesh and blood family unity is transcended in the Body of Christ by the unity of the Holy Spirit which is greater and stronger than even the blood-unity between two literal brothers or sisters.

This is a unity the Devil hates and must come against if he is going to defeat and destroy the Church of Jesus Christ—which he can never do unless we let him through petty bickering and stubborn pride!

It was for this very reason that Paul the apostle so passionately admonished us in Ephesians 4:3 to “*endeavor (‘work hard’) to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*”

I’d like to end with the apostle Paul’s closing exhortation to the church of Corinth—a church that was experiencing much discord and division—much ‘civil war’ among its members:

2 Corinthians 13:11-13 (HCSB)

¹¹ Finally, brothers, rejoice. Become mature, be encouraged, be of the same mind, be at peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. ¹³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. Amen.