

WHEN WILL THE TRUTH BE KNOWN?

Richard Oostra

Many people have never realized that Jesus was against a man-made, organized religion. When He was on earth He spoke up against it and tried to expose it (Matthew 23). After 300 years of New Testament Christianity, the church has become organized again, and in so doing, we have fallen into the old form of religion against which Jesus warned us.

Regarding the Church

- Jesus Himself said that He wanted to build His church (Matthew 16:18), and He still is, but many do not see it because their religion has blinded them (II Corinthians 4:4, 5).
- Jesus Himself never instructed His followers to meet around a creed or to form churches of their own, but to gather around Him (John 12:32), a function we are told not to neglect (Hebrews 10:24).
- Jesus Himself, through His atonement, became the Founder and Head and became the unseen Guest, by being in the midst of them that would meet in His Name (Matthew 18:20).
- Jesus warned us that those who would not gather upon the basis as laid out by Him would soon experience divisions and splits, which would cause them to scatter (Matthew 12:30).

Regarding Church Formation

- Jesus promised that when we gather around Him and when He is lifted up, He will draw people unto Himself (John 12:32). As we gather, the centrality and headship of Jesus is so vital because He will not dwell in temples made by men (Acts 17:24).
- Jesus instructed His followers never to develop a system of hierarchy (Matthew 23:9-11), such as clergy and laity, because before Him, we are all the same. He ended the Old Testament temple and priesthood system, and as believers, we are now a kingdom of priests having come out of spiritual darkness into His wonderful light (I Peter 2:9).
- Jesus warned us that false teachers would soon appear and form an imitation church that may give Him lip service, but would not be truly focussed on Him, but on building their own form of religion. He furthermore stated that by their fruit we will know them (Matthew 7:15, 16). In fact, when we see no more conversions take place, no more people being enthusiastic for the Lord, and religion becomes a drag, then we should know that we are worshipping in the wrong place.
- Jesus warned us against hiring people for ministry. His church should not operate upon a business basis. Christ's message was not to be peddled for profit (II Corinthians 2:17). Making an outsider the head of our church is an insult to God, Who gave ministries within each church and will not share His glory with men being in control (Romans 12:6-8).
- Jesus promised His Spirit to those who have received Him, and He even more so promised divine spiritual enablement to those whom He calls to ministry in His church, (Ephesians 4:1; Romans 12; I Corinthians 12), in order to build up believers to continue to be His witnesses on earth.
- Jesus wanted His church to be a missionary church and to spread His message into the entire world. How is it that after 2,000 years, we have developed many denominations, built elaborate buildings, gathered riches on earth, but still have not reached the whole

world? Could it be that we are those who “have merely a form of godliness” (II Timothy 3:1-5) and are not gathering by His design?

Regarding Following

- Jesus had a high standard for those who want to be His disciples. In contrast to a form of “easy believism” so many preach today, Jesus proclaimed total commitment and self-denial (Luke 14:26, 27, 33).
- Jesus warned us that it was not the hearers but the doers that would be justified before God (Luke 6:46).
- Jesus promised that those who had received His offer of salvation would be filled with His Spirit which would enable them to live and do ministry for Him. (Matt. 3:11) Believers who refused to accept His authority and rulership would be considered practising treason. (Luke 19:27)

Regarding Money

- Jesus spoke about money more than any other subject. He wanted His followers to help the needy in His name and on His behalf reach out especially to those who had a need of knowing Him. Churches that are spending most of their offerings on themselves are abusing dedicated money (I Timothy 3:17).
- Jesus warned us not to fall in love with riches for no one can serve two masters. Storing up riches on earth, like so many churches are doing, was not what Jesus recommended. He taught that God loved a cheerful and voluntary giver (II Corinthians 9:7). By giving joyfully to worthy causes, we are investing in eternity (Matthew 6:19, 20).
- Jesus exemplified a simple lifestyle (Matthew 8:20), and so did His disciples. We never hear of them getting paid for what they were doing, but they received support when needed as they travelled. Today churches like to reinforce the Old Testament tithing system, but the apostle Paul emphasized giving upon a free will basis (II Corinthians 9:7) and not by legislation.
- Jesus emphasized that we should take care of the poor and needy, and of the New Testament church we read that there was no needy person among them (Acts 4:34), but who are poorer than those who have never heard the Gospel? That is why Jesus’ last command to us was to go into the entire world with His message (Matthew 28:19).
- Jesus for this reason warns us against obtaining riches because the rich have a greater accountability towards God. By storing up riches or withholding our resources for ourselves, we are basically withholding the Gospel from those who so desperately need to hear.

In Closing

Today we see many churches closing their doors because they can no longer afford paying wages or maintaining their buildings. These are the things churches should not be spending their money on. If we had only adhered to Jesus’ teachings and the apostle’s examples, we would not be building entertainment centers and would have people serving freely in ministry.

Note: Richard Oostra is the author of the book *Church on the Rock(s)*, available at www.RichardOostra.com