

THE CHURCH

SATAN PERVERTS EVERYTHING!

And he is particularly effective at perverting our lexicon, the meaning of our words.

He took a grand word that meant “lighthearted and carefree,” and not only perverted it to mean “a homosexual man,” but actually destroyed the original meaning. Before Satan contaminated the word, new mothers would name their baby girls, “Gay.” NO MORE!!

And since he particularly hates God and God’s people, he takes his greatest delight in perverting religious words, and none more so that the word “Church,” as it connotes the Bride of Christ.

Today, a building with a cross or steeple, a large meeting space outfitted with pews in front of a platform with a lectern and some religious appointments is called a “church.” Our distant grandparents had a much better grasp on what such a building should be called. They would refer to the place the people of God met as the Meeting House or the Gathering Place.

And Satan got ample help from the government and especially the IRS. Our Founding Fathers never considered taxing someone for working hard and providing for their family. But Satan managed to stir up a NON-Civil war pitting brother against brother causing the American government to impose its first personal income tax on August 5, 1861, as part of the Revenue Act of 1861. Nine months later, the IRS was established on July 1, 1862.

Realizing the great public benefit “churches” provided by building schools, hospitals, orphanages, “sanitariums,” and “old folks homes,” in the Revenue Act of 1917, Congress began allowing tax deductions for “charitable contributions.” Satan is sly and very patient. He now had the needle in the arm of good “church-goin’” people to feel good about giving to the organization called the “church.”

But Jesus never taught us to look to the government to bless us for tithing! However, Satan’s ploy did give the government an **illegitimate** right to define what a church was and what a church could do and not do. Right off the bat, “churches” had to file an application with the Secretary of State to BECOME a “church,” and then apply to the friendly IRS to become a “501(c)(3) tax-exempt” organization.

Thus the “Institutional Church” was born. This church had “members” and certain criteria for “membership” which generally involved some statement of faith, a ritual of inclusion like some form of baptism and a vote of the current membership to admit the new “convert” or some other welcoming formality to seal their official membership.

DIVINE FAVOR MINISTRIES

Notwithstanding the efforts dedicated pastors put forth to teach their flocks the truths of God's Word and disciple their congregants, the inevitable result is that "mixed" flocks were produced. Jesus referred to them as "wheat and tares."

In Matthew 13:24-30, Jesus taught his 12 disciples a parable about the "Kingdom of Heaven." He likened it to a farmer who sowed good wheat seed in his field, but while he and his farmhands slept, his enemy (the Devil) came and sowed 'tares' among his wheat and went his way. When the seeds began to sprout, it was evident what had happened, and the farmhands asked the master farmer if they should begin pulling up the 'tares.' But he forbade them, explaining that if they were to do so at such a young stage, they would uproot the wheat as well. His final instruction was to allow the good seed and bad seed to grow together until the time of harvest. He said, "Then will I say to the reapers, gather ye together the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but then gather the wheat into my barn."

So, what Satan has managed to accomplish is to temporarily cloud the distinction between God's redeemed people and Satan's condemned people by making them all feel comfortable as "church members."

The tragic consequence is that "churches" are full of deceived lost people; people who THINK they are saved but are still lost and hell-bound. Books are written with titles like, "Pagans in the Pews" that attest to that reality. Jesus Himself taught the multitudes in the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 7:22-23, "Many will say to Me in that day. 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name have cast out demons? And in Thy name done many wonderful works?' And then I will profess unto them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.'"

So, what is THE Church? The TRUE Church?

It is NOT a single, perfected religious system. Satan has demonic spirits of religion that keep people locked into such religious systems with no evidence of the life of Jesus in them.

The early (authentic) church were groups of believers who were meeting at the risk of their very lives in one another's homes to worship – to declare the "worthiness" – of Jesus as God and His sacrifice for their sins and the abolishment of blood sacrifices due to His vicarious crucifixion and His glorious RESURRECTION! Sharing their testimonies of having witnessed His crucifixion and having seen Him ALIVE afterward.

The ONE TRUE CHURCH are the PEOPLE (not the building or the religious order or denomination) redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ of all the ages irrespective of any building! All those who acknowledged their "lostness", repented of their sin, called on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, have been "Born Again", adopted into the family of God and whose names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life are **THE CHURCH!**

ARE YOU CHURCH?