

## The Great Divide

*“You are of your father, the Devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar and the father of lies. Because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God. The Jews said to Him, ‘Now we know that You have a demon.’ Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.” (John 8: 44-47, 52, 59)*

Have you ever wondered why the Scribes and Pharisees wanted to murder Jesus? Have you ever been taught why many of Christ’s early disciples were murdered? We call them martyrs, from the Greek word, MARTUS. It means a judicial witness, a deponent, or testifier of a doctrine.

For Christ’s declaration of His deity, the Scribes and Pharisees were filled with unbelief and rage. He was one with the Father. They did not know the Father. Christ declared a great divide between Himself and the religious leaders of His day. He was the Son of God. They were sons of DIABOLOS, the Devil. For this they would plot to murder Him.

Christ’s early disciples proclaimed the great divide between men. They claimed to know Christ and boldly declared that those who did not accept Him as God’s Son were Satan’s descendants. This witness provoked anger that culminated in the murder or martyrdom of Christ’s faithful followers.

The Apostle Paul declared this truth to the Ephesian assembly of believers by saying, *“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging in the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”*<sup>1</sup> For this kind of preaching, Paul was eventually beheaded in Rome at the command of Nero.

The Apostle John declared this same truth, saying, *“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”*<sup>2</sup> It was John’s faithful preaching of the great divide between the children of God and the children of the Devil that led to his banishment to the isle of Patmos.

One wonders how many “mega” churches in America today would be “mega,” if the Gospel preached by Jesus Christ and His early disciples thundered from the pulpits of our ever-devolving, so-called “evangelical” churches.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 2:1-3

<sup>2</sup> I John 5:19

Men are no different today than in the First Century. Every person who darkens the door of a church is either a child of God or a child of the Devil. What's different today is the preaching. The faithful preaching of the early church produced this result:

Matthew was slain with a sword about the year 60 AD.

Mark, evangelist to Egypt, was seized and dragged by his feet through the streets of Alexandria.

Luke the evangelist, suffered persecution in Rome. We're not sure how he died.

John, the brother of James, was condemned by Domitian to be boiled in oil and banished to Isle of Patmos. He later died of old age in Ephesus.

Paul was stoned, imprisoned, whipped, and then beheaded.

James, the brother of John, was beheaded with a sword by order of Herod Agrippa.

James, "the Less," writer of the General Epistle was seized, beaten & stoned to death in Jerusalem.

Peter was imprisoned, scourged, then crucified upside-down in Rome by order of Nero.

Andrew, the brother of Peter, was crucified and hung on a cross for 3 days.

Jude was crucified in Persia in about 72 AD.

Thomas, who preached in Parthia and India, was thrust through with a spear.

Stephen was dragged through the streets of Jerusalem, and then stoned to death.

Philip, the Evangelist was imprisoned, scourged, and then crucified.

Matthias, who replaced Judas Iscariot, was stoned, and then beheaded in Jerusalem.

Bartholomew, who preached in many countries, was beaten to death with clubs.

Simon, called Zealot, who preached in Mauritania and other parts of Africa, was crucified.

Barnabas, a native of Cyprus, was severely persecuted and died about 73 AD.

It was said of them, *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."... "They looked for a city, which has foundations, whose builder and Maker is God."*<sup>3</sup>

Today it's quite different. One of the characteristics of today's "emergent" church leaders is their desire to preach a "user-friendly" message that avoids the great divide between the children of God and the children of Satan. Too many of our pastors and teachers proclaim a weak, insipid, vacuous gospel that offends no one and leads everyone to believe we are all a bunch of pretty nice people, just

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 11: 13, 10

needing a little encouragement to follow the moral example of Jesus. People are flocking to the transformed stadiums to hear so-called ministers tickle their ears by avoiding the exclusive message of the Cross and humanity's great, spiritual divide. Do we wonder why there are no American, Christian martyrs? Do we wonder why we have such little spiritual influence in our humanistic, godless culture?

There are many who think that preaching the great divide is harsh and insensitive. Some distort the Scriptures, leaving the impression that somehow every person will eventually be saved. This is evil self-deception and ignores the fact that Jesus said, *"Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it."*<sup>4</sup> Jesus then uttered this warning, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."*<sup>5</sup>

Stones will not be thrown at today's preachers of the social gospel who fail to proclaim the great divide. Their emergence on the American religious scene is a prelude to the judgment of God upon us. *"For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the Gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."*<sup>6</sup>

### **To Ponder:**

1. Do you attend a church where the great divide is never mentioned?
2. Is the preaching by your church leaders void the harsh teachings of Christ?
3. Are you consciously aware of friends and loved ones who traveled the broad way and may be in hell, separated from Christ for eternity?
4. Do you recognize this great divide between you and your friends and associates?
5. Have you a desire to share with them the only Gospel that can save them?

### **To Pray:**

*Lord, forgive my callousness toward those I know to be lost. Quicken my conscience to the great divide separating sinners from Your saving Grace. Give me a burden to share your Gospel with others, no matter what they might think of me, no matter what opposition or ridicule I might receive. Enable me by Your grace to be a faithful ambassador of Your kingdom, I pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 7:13-14

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 7:15

<sup>6</sup> I Peter 4:17-19