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You Choose: A Dead Church ... *OR* ... The Living God?

"I've given my heart to Jesus so many times, I feel like an organ donor!"

That's because Jesus never asked for your heart in the first place. There's not a single scripture in the Bible that asks for people to give their hearts to Jesus, or to simply "accept" Him as their Lord and Savior. Rather, God requires us all to repent (turn from 'self' and toward God) and then be born again (reborn) via water baptism (full immersion) and by the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Until you've undergone this conversion process (made possible by the sacrifice of God's only Son, Jesus Christ), you will never feel completely changed and fully connected with the living God.

"I've tried so many different churches, but none of them seemed right. I just want to find a place that feels like a true refuge for my family and me."

It's not surprising that your church hopping hasn't worked out so far. What you're searching and yearning for doesn't exist in a building, a charismatic preacher, a talented church band, a great youth program, or in the social life of a religious institution. Unless these things are founded upon the fullness of the truth of God's Word, they will only - perhaps - fill a void for a while. Eventually you will recognize their emptiness and even experience much hypocrisy that goes on behind the scenes.

Permanent refuge can *only* be found in the Body of Christ (God's family) into which you are born when you are baptized (by full immersion in water) and anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit. When you're born again of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5) you have continual access to the power of the living God within you - 24 hours every day - so you can experience constant peace, comfort, strength, joy, contentment, and everything else the love of God has to offer, despite what may be going on in the world around you.

"I tried 'the God thing' to overcome my problems, but it was no use. I kept on slipping up!"

You kept failing because you were trying to overcome things without dealing with their root cause. You were constantly pulling down webs, but they kept coming back because you were never told to kill the spider. Many people try different forms of spirituality - even so called "decide" to be a Christian, but doing this doesn't get rid of what causes mankind to mess up: sin. Only through Jesus Christ can we overcome the influence of the flesh that causes us to sin - and others to sin against us. And, coming to God through Jesus requires more than just "deciding" to be a Christian. The word "Christian" comes from the word "Christos" which means anointed one. So, someone is not deemed to be a Christian in God's eyes until Jesus has anointed that person with the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us that Jesus will baptize us with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16). THIS is what Jesus meant when He said, "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

Sit in the driver's seat all you like, but without any gas in the car you're going nowhere!

You may have been going to church - or followed some kind of "personal spirituality" - for many years yet never experienced the true power of the living God, including tangible changes in your life like the ones you read about in the Bible. Religious institutions and man-made spirituality are like cars without fuel: there's no power present to take people where they would love to go.

"How can anyone believe there's a God when so many terrible things are done in the name of religion?"

God doesn't want robots to love Him, so He gave every person a free will to choose either God's way, or another way. The religious beliefs that the doers of evil choose to follow DO NOT represent the will of God. Don't assume the mind and heart of our Creator is synonymous with religion; it's NOT!

"I just don't feel like I need God in my life. Everything is going along fine."

Even if you feel this way, it doesn't change the fact that GOD wants YOU. God created you and He wants to have a personal father-child relationship with you. Mankind was separated from God the moment sin entered into man's heart thousands of years ago, and God is calling people to be reconciled with Him through Jesus Christ, His only Son.

Give people a lock without the key and the lock is useless!

Today, there are a multitude of churches freely and eagerly handing out different gospel messages. Their messages are like locks and people are happy to receive them, but after a while churchgoers realize something is missing: there's no key. The missing key is the power of the Holy Spirit anointing, and without it a person cannot possibly open the mysteries of the Word of God.

Many people either stop going to church because they can't make the lock work for them on its own, or they just "shrug it off" and keep going anyway. Others "church hop" for years, hoping to one day find the missing piece. Often, church becomes just another social club, or a good place to bring the kids for the youth program. Is that what you really want?

"I'm not a sinner! I really feel like I'm a good person."

Maybe you *are* a lovely person that says and does good things constantly. However, it doesn't matter how nice a person you are, your fleshly self is still in a state of sin. When someone is said to be a sinner, it's referring to sin as a state of being as well as acts that oppose the love of God. Sin entered into the heart of mankind thousands of years ago the moment people chose to open their minds to evil, or wrongdoing. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and chose to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Their eyes were opened to things contrary to the pure goodness of God, and the generations thereafter inherited Adam and Eve's sinful state of being. It's a fact none of us can escape on our own. It's only through Jesus Christ's precious redeeming blood that we can be saved from the consequence of our sinful state when we repent and get born again (John 3:5). The consequence of sin is death, but Jesus gives us life. Though a born again believer might die in the flesh some day, s/he will be raised to life (eternal life in the Kingdom of God) just as Jesus was.

Does blind faith seem impossible, or even ridiculous to you?

That's quite okay because God doesn't expect you to have blind faith in Him. God has always proven His presence to people since the beginning of time. In this New Testament age, God gives people a tangible sign when they're filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. That sign is the ability to speak in a brand new language called speaking in tongues. It's a spiritual language and it's one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is like a package; inside are all the gifts, but

speaking in tongues is the first gift to be made manifest. Another way to explain is that the Holy Spirit is a “He” - *not* an “it.” He is a complete entity, so when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, the entire “personality” of the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within you. You then have access to *all* of the gifts the Holy Spirit offers.

I'd like to have a bumper sticker that says the following: “Please don't judge Jesus by many of the religious people you've met so far!”

We think that's a great idea! Unfortunately, there are many people who claim to be Christian yet are not “walking the walk” and “talking the talk.” Most of these people are not filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, so they are trying to walk and talk in the ways of the Lord by their own strength. Even when people have been anointed with the Holy Spirit, they still have a choice whether or not to listen to and obey God's direction. God never takes away man's free will to make his own choices on a moment-by-moment basis.

“I think the Bible is just another book of fairy tales. It seems so unreal!”

Many people read the Bible and conclude that it's a bunch of fairy stories because they don't see anything like it happening today. However, just because they haven't yet witnessed the miracles and power they read about in the Bible doesn't mean it doesn't exist. The Word of God *is* real, and the people in our fellowship are living proof of this.

The following will help you to see that the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost) is imperative for salvation (entrance into the Kingdom of God) and that the infilling of the Holy Spirit is consistently accompanied by the initial outward sign of speaking in tongues (a spiritual prayer language that only God can understand).

John 3:3-7 tells us that we must be born of water and the Holy Spirit to enter the Kingdom of God.

Luke 11:5-13 tells us that with persistent asking, seeking, and knocking for the Holy Spirit, God *will* give it to us.

Mark 16:15-20 lists the signs that *shall* (meaning *will*) follow those who believe. “They shall speak with new tongues” is one of the signs.

John 4:21-24 states that true worshippers will worship God in the Spirit. **1 Corinthians 14:14** explains *HOW* to worship God in the Spirit: “For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.”

1 Corinthians 14:2 explains that “...he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him*; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.”

1 Corinthians 14:14 states, “For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.”

In **1 Corinthians 14:18-19**, Paul is thankful that he speaks in tongues more than others, but he recognizes that when meeting together in a group, tongues is not as valuable as compared to praying in tongues during his personal, private prayer time.

1 Corinthians 14:23 mentions “all speaking in tongues at once.” This implies everyone in the fellowship meeting *had the ability* to speak in tongues. The Holy Spirit encompasses nine miraculous gifts (**1 Corinthians 12:7-11**), but brethren are expected to keep the gifts in perspective whenever they come together to worship.

The Book of Acts is a crucial and inspiring history of the Holy Spirit in action. This Book informs the reader of the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It also explains how anyone can receive it and how to know when you have it.

In **Acts 1:5-8**, the disciples are told by Jesus to wait in Jerusalem, that they would receive the Holy Spirit, and that the experience would be powerful. Jesus spoke of His necessity to depart from this earth in order for the Holy Spirit anointing to be made available (**John 7:37-39, John 16:7, John 14:26**).

In **Acts 2:4**, the disciples were *all* filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them words to speak.

Acts 2:33 explains that the Holy Spirit can be seen (i.e. mouth speaking) and heard (i.e. it's an audible noise).

Acts 5:32 mentions that the Holy Spirit is given to those that obey God (this includes Jesus' instructions for salvation).

Acts 7:51 states that people will resist the Holy Spirit despite its necessity for salvation.

Acts 8:14-16 is proof that people can be baptized in the name of Jesus without having yet received the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:17-18 mentions that Simon *saw* that through the laying on of hands the Holy Spirit was given.

Acts 10:44-46 is the first account of Gentile people (those outside of God's chosen nation) receiving the Holy Spirit. The very moment they were filled with the Spirit was *known* because the disciples heard the Gentiles speak in tongues.

Acts 11:15-17 emphasizes the fact that even the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit in the same manner as the disciples at the beginning (the beginning is described in **Acts 2:4**).

Acts 11:26 records the first time the disciples were called Christians (meaning “anointed ones”).

Acts 15:8-9 states that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles after they receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 18:25-28 mentions Apollos (an eloquent man who was very knowledgeable of Scripture) being further instructed in the way of the Lord. Even though he had been fervently following after God, he was not yet filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, so Aquila and Priscilla “expounded to him the way of God more perfectly.”

Acts 19:1-6, records the account of twelve believers who had not yet received the Holy Spirit. When the Apostle Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke in tongues.

There is nothing in the Bible that says you need to give your heart to Christ, or “accept” Him into your heart. However, the Bible does say to... “Repent,” (turn from *your* ways) “and be baptized,” (by full immersion i.e. completely under water) “every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

***Don't just “Go to Church.”
Experience the Power of the Living God every day!***

For questions or information regarding Bible Study times, please contact:

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