

Upon this rock I will build my church...

The Tale of Two Oneness Churches

Church splits can be nasty. Things can get ugly quickly. Most church splits are initially a result of differences regarding doctrinal issues. Issues invariably metastasize into greater issues. Such was the case in our Bible. This particular church split created two factions of oneness people. There were important similarities between them both, but more importantly, there were two main distinctions between the two.

Firstly, they dressed and looked the same. They both believed strongly in holiness principles. They both preached from the Torah, so as a result, they were both considered “Word churches.” They both believed strongly in worship. They both believed in evangelism. They both believed in “Hear O Israel the Lord our God is one.” They both loved Jehovah. One of the oneness church’s however, had two distinct characteristics the other oneness church did not have — spiritual power and spiritual revelation. Herein was the greatest of all the issues.

After all, authentic spiritual power increases through more spiritual revelation. The more Spirit one possesses, the more revelation they can possibly receive. Sadly one church had it, while the other church simply did not. These two main primary distinctions led to more irreconcilable differences and caused the one church without the spiritual gifts of power to despise and hate the other oneness church that did possess the spiritual gifts of power. The disagreement ultimately became a highly volatile and intensely divisive issue between them.

Again, both oneness churches were strong Word-centered churches, but one of the oneness church’s consequently became both Word and Spirit oriented. The Word and Spirit oneness church had spiritual signs, miracles, and supernatural wonders in their midst. The other oneness church did not. The oneness church of spiritual power taught that God gave gifts unto men and that the gifts of the Spirit operated through men.

The other oneness church despised the teaching of the gifts of the Spirit as such, or any outward supernatural demonstrations of the Spirit for that matter. Again, they did not have such unorthodox demonstrations at their church. The oneness church that did not have the supernatural displays of the Spirit soon discovered that everything they originally thought they might’ve had in common with the other oneness church was only outwardly similar. The two churches were actually divided and altogether vastly different.

Subsequently, the chasm of differences was too wide for the two churches ever to bridge; therefore, they did not fellowship with each other at all. Here is just one example. The oneness church, absent of supernatural gifts, saw their evangelism and outreach works as an optional effort for the members to engage in or merely a religious program designed primarily by men. No outward emphasis was placed on outreach or evangelism. The other oneness church of spiritual power and spiritual gifts understood outreach to be an intimately spiritual work of God which was forthrightly taught as a mandated passion wherein all members must boldly and aggressively pursue. Evangelism and outreach consequently became a spiritual work reflecting their sanctification and not simply a religious program.

So the understanding was clear between both of the oneness churches. They realized that while every similarity between the two churches outwardly speaking resembled one another, they were, in reality, miles apart from each other. All because one church was adamant about contending for demonstrations of spiritual gifts, power, and spiritual revelation while the other did not. Each of the oneness churches ultimately spent much effort trying to convert and proselyte members from one another.

The other oneness church without the supernatural gifts in their midst subsequently was eaten up with formalism. They were big on biblical standards but had no outward spiritual gifts or spiritual power in operation. Those spiritual signs and miraculous works were part of their rich historical past, but they had long since abandoned any workings of the supernatural and leaned heavily upon the Word only. One of the oneness church's frowned on Holy Ghost signs and wonders. The other oneness church celebrated them. One of the oneness churches tried to undermine the name of their church founder and fought against the movement he created, while the other oneness church worshiped the founder and cherished their institution. The oneness church without the gifts and supernatural power died trying to kill the other spiritual oneness church movement; all the while, the oneness church with the spiritual gifts and power was dying for their movement.

We discover upon closer investigation that the oneness church, void of the supernatural and miraculous gifts, was essentially a non-relevant people in the Book of Acts. We hardly recognize any meaningful or beneficial spiritual influence they had by the end of the book. The other oneness church with the gifts of the spirit and supernatural miracles was the highlight and centerpiece of spiritual power in Acts.

Who were these two oneness churches? What were their names? The oneness church with the spiritual gifts of power and revelation were called Christians first at Antioch. We know them as the New Covenant Church. That other oneness church? Well...? We know them as... Judaism.

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