

THE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT

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FEBRUARY 25, 2018

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The text for our teaching today is found in John 9:1-41. This is the first teaching article I've written on the religious spirit though I have mentioned it in some of my books after first writing about it in *Mysterious Secrets (MSDK)* way back in 1991. At that time I had never heard anything preached or taught about religious spirits and, frankly, there's still not much today ever said about them but they are one of the most pervasive and dangerous spirits for Christians to beware of. The Lord revealed this to me during my first trip to Nigeria in 1988.

I preached one message titled "Confronting Religious Spirits" at a church in Arizona in August of 1991 that we still have; it dealt with a religious spirit that the Apostle Paul contacted during his missionary work in the book of Acts. But we confront them all the time in present day ministry as well and unless you have a good gift of Discerning of Spirits (1 Cor. 12) you generally won't recognize them, especially when they speak to you through your pastor or another Christian. So this teaching article will help you recognize their presence better.

Even though most religious spirits are “low level devils” they can cause problems for a church or ministry if they are not exposed or dealt with. When I told the Lord that I “wanted the toughest assignment that He had; the one that nobody else wanted” He moved us to Libby, Montana. We went on radio there and then He led us to start a church which began in our home. When we were first there I told Evie what I had picked up in my spirit, “This place is like the book of Judges: ‘Everybody did what was right in his own eyes.’” It was so full of rebellion in all the churches and we encountered it at CCI as well.

We ministered at the FGBMI meeting there and encountered a number of men, including the president of the chapter, who had a religious spirit. While I was ministering, one man ran outside and began to scream! But nobody there seemed to realize that he was manifesting. Spirits will *always* manifest around the anointing because they become scared—their comfort zone is being threatened by the only One who can remove them—the Holy Spirit. But like so many people we’ve encountered in churches here and abroad, they are not helped because “Christians” and “pastors” don’t recognize the presence of an evil spirit and cast it out as we are commanded to do by the Lord Jesus. So like the young man we ministered to in Penticton, B.C., back in 2000 who had cut himself all over for 7 years; they get saved and sit in a church for years being tormented by demons.

So if you have not read MSDK I would encourage you to get a copy from our online bookstore because it will help you and expand your spiritual acumen. But to understand the religious spirit you must understand a principle I’ve taught about in books and preaching for over 30 years—the spirit world dominates the physical. This is easy to understand when you consider that faith and prayer—both spiritual substances—are able to *change* things in the physical world. You may have heard the expression, “Nature abhors a vacuum” and if you apply that spiritually you will understand that every human being, because of the sin of Adam and spiritual death, has a God-shaped void in their spirit and souls that the Holy Spirit wants to fill. But until He does, they are subject to the void being filled by evil spirits, especially a religious spirit because every human being has the need for spiritual belief in something and usually it’s God. They *believe* in God but they are still estranged from Him without a relationship because of sin.

In the book of John yesterday the Holy Spirit was showing me some interesting facts about the religious spirit. Now I would encourage you to spend a lot of time in the gospel of John. John was the last gospel written and it contains

over 90% new material not covered in the other gospels. When the Apostle John wrote this book around 75 or 80 A.D. the other gospels had been circulating in the churches for years (Mark about 25-30 years). And I believe the Apostle John had no doubt read the other 3 gospels and so with the help of the Spirit he set down an account of things that they did not cover. But also as you read it you will notice that it is “more spiritual”; by that I mean it is written not like the others as an historical document but more as a spiritual manual for Christian disciples.

In our text for this teaching we learn some wonderful spiritual facts about both the Lord and religious spirits so I will deal with all of these because it is “fascinating” as Dr. Spock would say.

9:1—Jesus, as was His custom, was *on the move*. We should take note of that; the Holy Spirit is a mighty, gushing, flowing River and not a stagnant pool in one location. The churches of today have largely stopped evangelism and the model of the true Church given to us in the book of Acts. That is one reason they are so susceptible to religious spirits. So Jesus passes by a man who has been blind since the day he was born. In those days, if you were blind there was only one class of people lower than you—the lepers. Basically, you had to beg for a living by the road side as we see with blind Bartimaeus.

9:2—The disciples take this opportunity to question Jesus about this man but their question comes from the wide-spread Jewish belief that physical maladies were caused by sin. And because this man was born blind I’m sure that is one reason why their question was: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” After all, this is a puzzling situation because how could the man himself be responsible? Could he somehow “sin” before he was born?

9:3—Jesus’ answer is startling, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned. This came about so that God’s works might be displayed in him.” Now, the fact is that sin does cause sickness, disease, blindness, deafness, etc. Don’t misunderstand what Jesus is saying. Many preachers take this text for proof that sin doesn’t cause these things. No, what Jesus was saying is that this particular man was born for this one moment just like Pharaoh was born and you are born for whatever purpose God has for you. This blind man’s ministry was waiting on the Lord Jesus to walk by in this *xiros (Gk.)* moment of time. This blind man was born to minister to and be a witness at the judgment against the Pharisees and other religious leaders of Jesus’ time on the earth.

And you will see that unfold in this chapter. Jesus said, “This came about so that the works of God could be revealed in him.” And why is that important? To glorify the Father and the Son as well as to be a *sign* to the people and religious leaders.

9:4-7—Jesus ministers to the man in an unusual way by anointing his eyes with mud. Why did He do this? Well, the text does not say but I can tell you. He did it because that’s what the Holy Spirit told Him to do. Remember, Jesus said that He never did anything on His own—He was perfectly yielded to the Holy Spirit and only did what the Father told Him to do by the Spirit. So Jesus ministers to the man in a similar way that we see from Elisha in 2 Kings 5 with Naaman. He tells him to “go wash in the pool of Siloam.” The man does and he returns healed. Now the fireworks begin! Whenever you stir up a religious spirit there’s always fireworks!

Before we continue it’s important for you to understand if you don’t know that this is the first time anywhere in the Scriptures where a blind man was healed and of course we know that Jesus opened the eyes of many blind people and there is a spiritual reason for this—so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled concerning the Messiah! Don’t kid yourself; this was proof par excellence that Jesus was the Messiah! There was no recorded biblical or extra biblical writings where any blind person had ever been healed.

Now I want to digress for a moment and write about a spiritual principle that I learned from the Scriptures that contradicted what I’d been taught by Brother Hagin and others—that Jesus didn’t perform miracles to prove He was the Messiah. In fact, this particular chapter in John is another proof text for the fact that this was one of the motives by the Father.

So there is a principle of God that runs throughout the entire Bible and we’ve seen this verified in our own ministry as well as other true ministries. God anoints a man or a woman and then sends them on a mission or ministry. In many cases, especially with the Prophets of which Jesus was One, and the Apostles they are also anointed to perform signs, wonders and miracles. God does this for one reason and one reason only—to *authenticate* the man or woman He is sending. Although Abraham was called a prophet, we first see this principle in the life of Moses. God is simply saying as Jesus told the Pharisees later here in the Book of John that even if they didn’t believe Him they should believe the signs. And as you continue reading in this chapter you will see that the blind man himself makes this same argument to them as to

why they should become disciples of Jesus—he was evangelistically witnessing to them!

So God sends His man or woman and anoints them with spiritual gifts to perform signs, wonders, healing, miracles for this purpose to authenticate them as an actual messenger of the Lord so that the people will listen to his words! But what is so interesting about this principle, because it always reveals the religious spirit, is that while people always enjoy the signs, wonders and miracles they almost always invariably reject the Word of the Lord that the messenger brings!

We've seen this in our own ministry, especially at a church in Oklahoma when everybody in wheelchairs got up and walked away after a young man who was born with cerebral palsy and had never walked got up and walked around the whole church. Yet the leadership of that church rejected the message that we brought to them personally.

And of course we are in good company because that is the norm for Jesus' ministry—they loved the miracles but found fault with His teaching because it contradicted their ideas of the Sabbath and other things such as adultery.

But make no mistake. This blind man was born for this ministry moment to the religious leaders of that day. And no doubt they also knew, because many of them were there, when Jesus began His ministry and the following took place:

“He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. As usual, He entered the Synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Him, and unrolling the scroll, He found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom to the captives and ***recovery of sight to the blind*** (italics added for emphasis), to set free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.’

“He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on Him. He began by saying to them, **“Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled.”** (Luke 4:16-21)

So the fact that when Jesus began His ministry He quoted this Scripture and applied it to Himself was well-known by the Pharisees who had rejected Him all

along. But now, suddenly, they could no longer deny that this scripture was being fulfilled because nobody had ever opened a blind man's eyes before and that is one thing Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would do. So we learn that this is *precisely* why this man was born blind—as a testimony to the people and the religious leaders that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. But as we see, the religious spirit, who works with the spirit named Arcarine to cause spiritual blindness, blinded their minds to the truth.

A religious spirit has its own “doctrine” and religious way of life depending on the particular religion it is representing. This includes the false church; however, genuine churches, too, are full of people with a religious spirit. It is a fact relayed to me by several former members of Satan's kingdom that Satan refers to these folks as “church goers” in their meetings and they exist in all churches but especially in the Roman Catholic church because that church does not derive its authority from the Word but rather from men, in particular the Pope. This church teaches that just going to a Catholic church will get you into Heaven.

So we see that the religious spirit is a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit and it seeks to take His place in the “make believers” as William Branham referred to them. All these spirits work under the Principality, Apollyon, and the two Powers—Baal and Ashtaroth—who are all dedicated to false religion and taking people to hell. And they also work with other evil spirits that we see manifested through the Pharisees in the Scriptures such as anger, hate, murder, pride, hypocrisy and unbelief. They work with these spirits and often bring them into the person in order to further corrupt the person and strengthen Satan's hold on that person. People with a religious spirit are difficult to get saved. That is because they are *unteachable*—you can never argue logically with them even from the Scriptures.

And a religion we don't hear much about today in Christian circles but has grown stronger and stronger, especially in the Western world, is secular humanism. This seems to have become the religion of about half of America today. It has its own religious spirit. And if you understand that this is also a religious spirit then you understand why so many politicians here in America, especially in the Democratic party, act just like the Pharisees of Jesus' time. Remember, even if you can't discern these spirits you can tell by their manifestation of anger, hate, etc. In addition, you know the person manifesting is demonic because they want to force you to do what they want. We used to have free and open debate in politics in America but not today. It doesn't

matter even if the Supreme Court has ruled on an issue like gun control; they don't care. They are going to have their way! God never acts this way. He gives humans a free choice. There are consequences to our choices to be sure but He always allows us to choose. It's always Satan who tries to ruthlessly drive people to get what he wants because he has no regard for any human being. It's a documented fact that aside from the Muslim terrorists mass shootings here in America, all the others were members of the Democratic Party.

Religious spirits of religions like Buddhism and Hinduism tend to be much more pacifist than we see with Islam or Secular Humanism. They tend to be more godly like Mormonism (LDS) which does have some born-again people in the church but has the same problem as Catholicism—its authority comes from man and not the Scriptures. And if you study the theology of LDS it's pure nonsense and does not follow the New Testament,

Remember this important fact about the early Church that I have preached over and over and also written many times by which you can judge whether a church or religion is genuine or false and it's found in Acts 2:42—"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."

As I wrote in MSDK many years ago, *all* false religious systems practice 3 out of 4 of these. Likewise, *all*—including the false church neglect the same 1 of the 4—the doctrine of the apostles. They teach some other doctrine which is normally the doctrine of men and the doctrines of demons. Remember this fact and study the doctrine of the apostles for yourself so that you won't be deceived.

When the Lord moved us to Montana from Texas back in 1997 He began several years of tremendous revelation where we might have 10-20 visions a day or the Lord would speak to Evie or I through revelation about the false church. He showed me how the Book of Acts is the only real picture that we have of the birth and function of the Church. In addition, I began to see one very important fact that I'd never heard anybody preach on before—after the Book of Acts, most of the epistles were not written to set Christian doctrine, although they do that as well, but they were written to confront and expose *false* doctrine which was contrary to the Doctrine of the Apostles preached by Peter, John, Paul, etc.

Satan moved quickly to destroy the Church and he did it just like he still does today by false doctrine—the doctrine which is *antichrist*. And, of course, we will soon see an actual “man” completely possessed by this spirit of Antichrist which is a religious spirit. And as we get closer and closer to his manifestation on the world stage we will see more and more people, even in our churches, who need a religious spirit cast out of them. Remember, the Apostle Paul prophesied about the day in which we now live:

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will
Depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and
Doctrines of demons.”

† 1 Timothy 4:1

So burn this into your mind and spirit today—Jesus is the Word and He does the Word. If your pastor or minister is not preaching the Word and the doctrine of the apostles then you should get out of that church so that you do not share in the sins of that church and be judged with that church (cf. Rev. 18:4).

Maranatha!