

Lesson 1

TWO KINGDOMS IN CONFLICT

RELATED SCRIPTURES

Genesis 3	Daniel 10:11-14	Romans 6:5-23
Leviticus 11:44, 45	Zechariah 3:1, 2	1 Peter 1:12-16
Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6	Matthew 4:1-11	Revelation 12:7-17
Isaiah 14	John 8:39-47	
Ezekiel 28	John 14:30	

LESSON AIM

To realize we cannot be neutral, but must choose sides, in the conflict between Christ and the kingdom of Satan.

In a painting of an early American pioneer home, the artist pictured a family calmly kneeling in prayer, unaware of Indian warriors outside. The family is obviously trusting Divine Providence to keep them from danger, though peacefully unaware of how near danger actually is.

The painting contains a beautiful symbolism, perhaps even beyond what the artist intended. For the Christian is surrounded

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by the powers of evil, often without even knowing it. Of course these powers are not human enemies but the spiritual powers of darkness. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against . . . powers, . . . against spiritual wickedness in high places [in the heavenly realms]” (Ephesians 6:12).

There are two kingdoms in this world: the kingdom of “the prince of the power of the air,” and the everlasting kingdom of the Son of God. These two kingdoms are in continual warfare. The stakes are the souls of men. However, the outcomes of spiritual battles are not decided by the strength of the opposing forces, but by us in whom and around whom the battles are fought.

God’s people must take sides with the truth and with their leader, Jesus Christ. We must take a clear-cut stand. There is no middle ground, and no room for wavering or doubting (James 1:6-8). We are either on the side of sin and Satan, living for self, or we are on the side of Christ, living in selfless obedience to Him. Either we are sliding toward an eternal Hell with Satan, or marching toward eternal glory with Christ.

Our stand for Christ accents the need for separation and nonconformity. We cannot do battle on the Lord’s side unless and until we separate ourselves from Satan’s side.

The words *separation* and *nonconformity* are often used almost interchangeably in the writings of those who practice these Biblical teachings. The two are as inseparable as the proverbial horse and carriage—you cannot have one without the other. Nevertheless there is a distinction between the two terms.

Separation has to do with a clear-cut division between sin and the follower of Christ. In separation, we establish a barrier or put distance between evil and ourselves. Being separated *unto* Christ means becoming separated *from* sin. Any attempt to live close to

the Lord while participating in some of the world's pleasures and sins is futile. We cannot serve two masters.

Nonconformity is a Scriptural word derived from Romans 12:2—"Be not conformed to this world." This phrase means "Be not fashioned according to this world or the ungodly influences around us" or "Be not poured into the same mold." The Greek word here translated *conformed* refers to outward appearance or expressions, not only an inner conformity. Peter used the same word when he wrote: "As obedient children, not **fashioning** yourselves **according** to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:14, 15).

Separation involves our attitudes and our spiritual desire to put distance between sin and us. Nonconformity refers more to the outward expressions of inward separation. Scriptural nonconformity is a result of separation from sin. It is true, a person can manifest marks of outward nonconformity without really being separate in mind and heart—just as a person can claim to be a Christian and yet not obey Christ. For the Christian who has a heart conviction and desire to be holy and separated wholly unto Christ, nonconformity will be a joy.

THE CONFLICT

Genesis 3:15. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

The concept of separation appears very early in God's Word. In Genesis 1:4, a physical separation occurred when God divided the

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light from the darkness. That separation hints of a far greater separation in the spiritual realm. The forces of spiritual light and darkness are at war. The forces of truth are opposed to the forces of error. The kingdom of Christ is diametrically opposed to the kingdom of Satan.

The first opportunity for a human to choose to be separate from evil came to Adam and Eve. They were already totally separated from sin, but God allowed them to choose whether to maintain this perfect separation. They chose to sin. We call this choice and its immediate result, which so altered the course of history, the Fall of Man.

This brings us to the wonderful promise of Genesis 3:15. Here is the continuing struggle between the descendants of woman (Eve) and Satan. Lest this struggle dishearten us, God includes a promise of the coming Messiah. This great Deliverer would make it possible to live a life separated unto God. Eventually He would destroy the works of the devil. According to 1 Corinthians 15:22, in the first man, Adam, all die; but in the second Man, Christ, “shall all be made alive.”

In Genesis 3:15 the word *enmity* (literally a “blood feud”) speaks of the conflict between good and evil, Christ and Satan. No human can declare himself neutral in this conflict. “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other” (Luke 16:13). Jesus also said, “He that is not with me is against me” (Luke 11:23).

Therefore this matter of separation is not optional for the Christian; it is essential for eternal life! Our attitudes and actions in separation and nonconformity will reveal whose side we are on.

THE CHOICE

Ephesians 2:1. And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5. Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6. And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

The conflict between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness is raging all around us. Have we made the all-important choice to walk in the light? Ephesians 2 calls the results of that choice being **quicken**ed (made alive) after having been dead. Verse 2 explains the paradox of the walking dead. Men and women who choose not to separate themselves from Satan's kingdom may be active and ever so religious, but they are walking dead people!

The walking dead trudge in the course of this world. Many of the Scriptures in this study on separation and nonconformity employ the word *world*. Thus a logical and exceedingly important question is: What is this world we are to shun so wholly? The word *world* in the New Testament is often used to describe the earth on which we live. Another frequent meaning is the evil found on this earth. Not loving the world or the things in it (1 John 2:15, 16)