

Why 2017 Could Be the Year Jesus' Prayer in John 17 Is Fulfilled

On Feb. 27 in A.D. 380, Roman Emperor Theodosius made Christianity into the official state religion. It was one of the most catastrophic events in church history.

Up until the time Constantine legalized the Church in A.D. 313, the great strength of the church was the fact that the kingdom of God resided within the believers. Under Constantine, the church became "respectable" and began to attract the ambitious and worldly who would make a show of outward piety without an inward transformation. After A.D. 380, the church was swamped with unconverted pagans, and the outward rituals replaced the inner power for most church members.

The first to clothe themselves in the new mantle of the state religion were the emperors themselves. The bishop of Rome was eventually forced to trade church recognition for military protection in Western Europe, beginning with Frankish King Clovis, in order to remain independent of the Eastern Roman Emperor. When the European church split between Protestants and Catholics, the local kings and rulers forced their own views to be followed in their realms, and millions of Christians were martyred. The marriage between church and state meant that religious questions would be solved with the sword instead of the Spirit.

The religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries left much devastation and little change, and the idea of religious toleration, espoused by Paul in the 14th chapter of Romans, began to take hold. The idea that Christians with different doctrines could be united in their diversity appeared in the

18th century with the First and Second Great Awakenings and the interdenominational missionary societies. The United States, itself a patchwork of states with Catholic, Anglican, Quaker, Methodist and Congregational backgrounds, became a symbol of unity in diversity and its religious freedom is still a light to the world. The sword, which brought division, had begun to give way to the spirit which brings unity.

The Pentecostal and Charismatic movements which swept the world in the 20th century brought a Holy Spirit awakening in much of the church. However, the Spirit movements also cried out that "The broken body of Christ" would be healed. Now, in our time, a historic video sent by Pope Francis to Evangelist Kenneth Copeland has opened the door for spiritual unity in the body of Christ in answer to the prayer of Jesus in John 17.

We believe that 2017 is a strategic year for church and nation. It is the 500th anniversary of the reformation, and God is calling His church to reconcile in answer to the prayer of Jesus. We invite you to pray with us for unity at the and websites.

Let us pray for reconciliation of the church and focus on expanding the whole Kingdom of God. Pray that the world will know us not by our swords, but by our love and unity in the Spirit. {eo}

Ron Allen is a Christian businessman, CPA and author who serves in local, national and international ministries spreading a message of reconciliation to God, to men and between believers. He is founder of the International Star Bible Society, telling how the heavens declare the glory of God, and the Emancipation Network, which helps people escape from financial bondage, and co-founder with his wife Pat of Corporate Prayer Resources, dedicated to helping intercessors.