

# The Unity of the Disciples

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John 17:20-26

July 7, 2024

There is a CERTAINTY about what JESUS is SAYING. There will be a FUTURE BELIEVING CHURCH.

## ***I) Jesus' Work: INTERCESSION***

John 17:20 – [20] *“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,*

What CHRIST prays for here is NOT wishful thinking. This is a CERTAINTY.

- Notice the FUTURE sense... “those who will believe.”
- This is CALLED the CHURCH UNIVERSAL – by that we mean all genuine, born-again BELIEVERS throughout HISTORY.
- We are reminded of what our Lord said, Matthew 16:18 – [18] *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*
  - Peter, as representative of the apostles, is the foundation of the church in as much as they PROCLAIMED the GOSPEL MESSAGE.
  - Their WORK in PROCLAIMING the MESSAGE established them as the FOUNDATION STONES.
  - Christ will cause this WORK of proclamation to prevail, and the FORCES of EVIL will not be able to stop it.
- Christ’s PRAYER has PROVED EFFECTUAL for a UNIVERSAL CHURCH.

### THREE MARKS about the CHURCH UNIVERSAL:

- 1) The Church is Defined by FAITH – *those who will believe*
  - Ephesians 2:8, 9 – [8] *For by grace you have been saved through faith...*
  - John 3:16 – [16] *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him...*
  - John 3:36 – [36] *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on Him.*
- 2) The Church is established through the WORD through their word,
  - John 17:8 – [8] *For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you...*
  - Romans 10:17 – [17] *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*
  - The CHURCH is BUILT on the reading and preaching of the Word of God.
  - John 10:16 – [16] *And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.*
- 3) The Church is Loved by Jesus Christ
  - There is an abiding love that CHRIST has for the FUTURE CHURCH.

- Thus HIS PRAYER for us.
- Christ's love for later disciples is NO less than his love for the PRESENT DISCIPLES.
- Psalm 118:2 – [2] *Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever."* [3] *Let the house of Aaron say, "His steadfast love endures forever."* [4] *Let those who fear the LORD say, "His steadfast love endures forever."*

## II) The Unity of His Church

John 17:21 – [21] *that they may all be one,*

Jesus PRAYS for a UNITY a oneness of the CHURCH.

- Notice he PRAYS that the FUTURE disciples would be ONE (Literally the NUMBER ONE)
- John 10:16 – [16] *So there will be one flock, one shepherd.*
- Galatians 3:28 – [28] *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*
- Ephesians 2:15 – [15] *by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.*

The FACT that JESUS prays for this tells us that this UNITY and ONENESS is something that GOD CREATES.

- We cannot CREATE this UNITY. Only God can!
- Our RESPONSIBILITY is to RECOGNIZE this UNITY and MAINTAIN this UNITY.
- Ephesians 4:3 – [3] *eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...*

Origin of Unity:

*just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us,*

- Implied in verse 21. This UNITY in the CHURCH is created by the Holy Spirit.
- There is a SPIRITUAL INDWELLING. A MUTUAL COMMUNICATION between the Father and Son.
- John 14:9 – [9] *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.*

This relationship is a SIMILAR RELATIONSHIP that we have with GOD the FATHER and GOD the SON. *that they also may be in us,*

- The ONLY thing I think JESUS can possibly be referencing is a UNITY in the HOLY SPIRIT.
- John 14:18 – [18] *"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. [19] Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. [20] In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.*
- Clearly Jesus is referring to the coming of the HOLY SPIRIT at Pentecost.

- PAUL says that there is one HOLY SPIRIT, who works in every CHRISTIAN. 1 Cor 6:11 – [11] *And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*
  - 1 Corinthians 12:13 – [13] *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all made to drink of one Spirit.*

The HOLY SPIRIT by and LARGE works in the SAME WAY in every CHRISTIAN... creating this UNITY of SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE... making us one with GOD and the SON.

This UNITY of the SPIRIT serves as a REMINDER to the WORLD... that Christ came into the WORLD...

*so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*

The WORLD has their WILDLY DIFFERENT and HOPELESS EXPERIENCES.

The SPIRITUAL CONSISTENCY of the CHURCH serves as a WITNESS to the WORLD that CHRIST came.

#### Evidence of Unity:

John 17:22 – [22] *The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one*

- There are several interpretations of the Glory that Christ gives to his disciples...
  - a) a knowledge of Christ's glory – His divine attributes.
  - b) a glorified resurrection body like Christ's resurrection body.
  - c) Christ's ministry through us by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Through the HOLY SPIRIT's presence in our LIVES... we become a LIVING REPRESENTATIVE of CHRIST to the WORLD (See V. 23).
  - Galatians 5:22 – [22] *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. [24] And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*
  - These qualities express the glory of Christ to the World.
  - When you have a CHURCH filled with these types of PEOPLE, you have a WONDERFUL UNITY.
- Sadly, what often happens is that people's flesh rears its head...
  - Galatians 5:19 – [19] *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, [21] envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these...*
  - The WORKS of the FLESH always create DIVISION. Division with God. Division with our Spouse. Division with our FELLOW MAN.

John 17:23 – [23] *I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*

- In the SPIRIT, we are to press into BECOMING more PERFECTLY ONE. Displaying the Spirit's graces.

- Not only is this a witness that Christ was sent.... But that Christians are loved with the same love that the FATHER loves the SON.

#### Destination of Unity:

The Destination of the Disciples' Unity is the Beatific Vision in Heaven

John 17:24 – [24] *Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*

- The END of our UNITY is the SAME – it is to gaze on Christ's GLORY forever.
- We will either see it when Christ returns...
  - 1 John 3:2 – [2] *What we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*
- Or we shall see him when our soul departs to be with the Lord. Philippians 1:23 – [23] *My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.*
- See REVELATION 4:9 – The Worship of the Lamb in Heaven.... Overcome by His Glory...

### **III) Jesus' Work: REVELATION**

John 17:25 – [25] *O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me.*

- God the FATHER is the Righteous Judge of the world.
- The Believers are in the WORLD.... We are witnesses in the WORLD, but the WORLD hates the Christian
- But the CHRISTIAN knows the TRUTH. They know the FATHER and the SON. They know the deity of the SON.

John 17:26 – [26] *I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."*

- Jesus Christ reveals Himself (God's Name) to whom He will.
- He gives the Spirit who brings the "love" of God into our hearts.
- He continues to make it known... The Other SHEEP will come in.

### **APPLICATION:**

- 1) Recognize that Christianity is a Religion of Grace
- 2) Be discerning in Understanding who is a Christian
- 3) Be Eager to Maintain Unity with those who are Genuine Believers in the Truth.