

A Call for Unity

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther set the Protestant Reformation on fire when he nailed the 95 Thesis on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, Germany. From this single point nearly all Protestant churches splintered off, but now the ecumenical movement has begun asking, do we still need the reformation? Are Protestants and Catholics really that different? Can't we lay aside our doctrinal differences and just focus on Jesus? Shouldn't all churches come together for the sake of unity? Isn't unity more important than truth?

Today there is a growing appeal to unite in spite of our doctrinal differences, but is this idea biblical? Certainly the Bible calls Christians to unity. Paul says to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3), but while God calls His followers to unity in the faith, let's look at some of the qualifiers to unity. In Romans 16:17, Paul warns against "those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned." Notice that Paul does not condone unity in spite of difference. He defines church unity as doctrinal unity. Paul does not say to lay aside doctrinal differences. On the contrary. He bases unity on the foundation of doctrinal truth.

Doctrinal Disputes

While some Christians claim that we should not dispute over doctrinal differences, the idea that doctrines are not important and that we should not fight to defend against false doctrines has no support from the Bible. Jesus warned, "beware of...the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matt. 16:12), while Paul added that "doctrines of demons" would come into the church (1 Tim. 4:1), cautioning, "do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines" (Heb. 13:9).

The teaching that doctrines don't matter and that we should just ignore our doctrinal difference and come together in the name of Jesus is actually one of the "doctrines of demons" that has come into the church. It is simply not true that doctrines don't matter, but no one seems to care anymore because, as Paul warned, "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:3).

Contending for the Faith

If doctrines aren't important, why does Paul say, all Scripture "is profitable for doctrine" (2 Tim. 3:16), and why does Jude exhort us to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3)? Jude is not telling us to lay aside doctrinal differences, but to contend for the doctrines that this church was founded on. This is exactly what Martin Luther did when he nailed the 95 Thesis to the door of the Catholic church, igniting the Protestant reformation. The very word Protestant derives from the word protest. The Protestant churches protested Catholicism because it was teaching "doctrines of demons." Among these were the doctrines of papal infallibility, the immaculate conception, priestly confession, purgatory, clergy celibacy, saint worship and prayers to saints, to name a few. These and other false doctrines had crept into the church and Martin Luther was calling the church to return to the Bible. Instead, the church attempted to kill him and other Christians who withstood them.

Do We Still Need the Reformation?

Today, it is sad to see so many Christians getting ready to undo all that Protestantism worked so hard to accomplish by throwing aside the doctrines of the faith that the early Christians suffered and even died to defend. Should we really discard the reform efforts of

Martin Luther and others who contended earnestly for the faith? Were our Protestant leaders wrong about Catholicism or has the Catholic church changed over the years? Is papal infallibility biblical? Does the Bible teach purgatory? Is it okay to worship saints and pray to Mary? Does the Bible say that priests can forgive sins or can only God forgive? Do these things really matter? To the apostles and founding fathers they did.

Paul told us not to be "carried about with every wind of doctrine," but to cling to "sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict" (Eph. 4:14; Titus 1:9). While the apostles constantly fought against the false doctrines which contradict the faith, Paul said that the church would eventually end up "falling away" from the truth, culminating in the warning, "Babylon the great is fallen" (2 Thes. 2:3; Rev. 18:2).

The Great Ecumenical Umbrella

Historically, Babylon originated in an attempt to unite the world at the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). Similarly in the last days, spiritual Babylon will attempt to do the same thing.

In the Bible, Babylon is not only represented as a "woman" or "mother," but also as a "city" with "seven hills" (Rev. 17:3, 5, 9, 18 NIV). Since a woman is a symbol of the church (Eph. 5:23; 2 Cor. 11:2), Babylon must represent a mother church which sits on the city of seven hills. Ironically, Catholicism refers to herself as the "mother church" and the seat of Catholicism, the Vatican, is located in Rome, "the city of seven hills." These and other clues have helped Martin Luther and other Protestant leaders identify the Catholic church as Babylon, "a view that was to become dogma for all Protestant churches" (Newsweek Magazine, Oct. 31, 1999).

Strangely, most Protestant churches today have cast away this fundamental truth that the Catholic church is Babylon and many are now seeking to unite with Babylon, "the mother of harlots" (Rev. 17:5). According to the prophecy, Babylon will call all people "to be of one mind" (Rev. 17:17), uniting under the great ecumenical umbrella. The current movement taking place right now, calling all churches to unite in spite of our doctrinal differences, is laying the foundation for the final surge of Babylon to gain universal influence.

End Times Religious Revival

Today, as churches seek to cast away doctrinal differences and accept the ecumenical appeal to unite, they are preparing for the final conflict coming on the world when all the churches will be led "to worship the first beast" (Rev. 13:12).

Bible prophecy repeatedly tells us that the final conflict on earth will revolve around the issue of "worship" (Rev. 13:8, 12, 15; 14:11). That means, this final conflict will be religious in nature. In a desperate attempt to heal the nations, the Catholic church leads the ecumenical movement, calling the world to unity, urging the various denominations to lay aside their doctrinal foundations and accept the growing appeal to come together and "be of one mind" (Rev. 17:17). As a result, all those Christians who unite under the banner of "the mother of harlots" are identified as daughters and become part of Babylon, guilty by association.

As Christians now seek to lay aside doctrines for the sake of unity, God is making His final appeal to His faithful followers, "Come out of her [Babylon], my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

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