

UNITY IN CHRIST & IN THE CHURCH

What does it mean to have unity in Christ? What does this look like?

The definition of unity is *being together or at one with someone or something*. It is the opposite of being divided. So how should this be applied to Christian believers, churches, and ministries?

How can we have oneness among believers if we are not in agreement in what we believe about the faith we have?

Who determines Christian foundational beliefs? I would think that the Bible determines this. God and Jesus determine what we should believe! **Do we think that in Jesus' sermon on the mount, that he would say that some of those teachings are not foundational or are optional for unity?**

UNITY STARTS WITH BELIEFS, and what we believe must be founded in Scripture. We cannot be unified with Christ, and in turn with other people following Christ, if we do not know and understand what Jesus believed and taught.

Biblical unity should not be just for the sake of "unity." Jesus nor the Apostles taught that believers should strive for unity at all costs by compromising or ignoring what Jesus taught.

Some say, "nobody believes 100% the same, so does that mean we just all sit by ourselves?"

Of course not! But yes, there are some major baseline beliefs that must be present, and from there we do not ignore other teachings that we may not see eye to eye on. We continue to study and talk about them in hope that we see and understand God's teaching on it. We do not just sweep them under the rug or close our eyes.

When people say, "I don't care; this is what I think..." that becomes a problem for unity, and quite frankly, for the person saying this to God. *Would one say this to Jesus?* It does not matter what we think. What matters is what Jesus thinks! And if we think Jesus doesn't have an opinion on a topic that we can't agree on, that shuts down any hope of unity or understanding of truth, and we risk being separated from Christ and his teachings.

We must first be unified with Jesus before we can find unity with others.

Unity among believers begins by believers being unified with Christ and his teachings!

In Acts 8.12 we see the foundation of the faith and what one must understand and believe if one desires to be a follower of Jesus. (A follower of Jesus must follow Jesus, not just the name, but the man and his teachings.) **If we are a disciple of Christ we believe and teach what he did.**

Acts 8.12 says that "when they believed in Jesus," which means not just that he existed, or even that he died for mankind, but they believed in what Jesus taught. This means that we must KNOW what he taught in order to believe it.

"And, when they believed in Jesus' message and teaching about the coming Kingdom, they were baptized" (in water). Baptism is similar to circumcision. It is the New Covenant seal of the one

committing themselves to following Jesus and his teachings, it is initiation into the brotherhood, and it is a matter of obedience.

These two simple points of Acts 8:12 are much deeper than just *saying* that we believe in Jesus and the Kingdom.

People must hear God's truths on these foundational beliefs before they can make an educated decision if they want to believe what Jesus taught and then to follow the biblical Jesus. **If one is going to "crucify himself" he certainly must know what he is doing it for.**

So, what does Christian unity look like in regards to the foundational beliefs one must believe before being baptized and becoming united with Christ and others. (*You certainly don't enlist in the military without knowing what you are signing up for!*)

What does "believing in Jesus" and the Kingdom entail?

If we believe in Jesus, we start by believing in who he was, the human son of God, the anointed one. We must understand that he was the uniquely created son of God who was created in his mother Mary and is a descendant of David. **If we do not understand the definition of a human or what the word "beginning" means, we have already missed who Jesus is.**

The definition of "beginning" is: *the point in time at which something starts*. Matthew 1:1 tells us of Jesus' *genesis*, his point of beginning.

When did Jesus begin? He began in the womb of his mother, Mary! None of the others listed in Jesus' genealogy began or existed before they were begotten in their mothers' wombs, and neither did he.

The beginning of something, or more importantly, someone, cannot be before their beginning.

Jesus was a human. So, we must ask ourselves, when does a human begin; and is there any possibility that human can be anything or anyone else before they become a human?

It is clear that a human being CANNOT pre-exist his existence and his beginning in his mother's womb! It is ludicrous to think otherwise.

The world cannot define what a woman is...and trinitarians and some biblical unitarians sadly cannot define what a human is! This is an essential understanding that Jesus' followers must have.

If we cannot define what a human is, are we any smarter than those who cannot define what a woman is?

One biblical unitarian leader who understands who the human Jesus is according to Scripture, recently told me that, "If people believe that Jesus isn't God, there is still a whole realm of possibilities, and if people understand that God is one, and Jesus is subordinate to God the Father, then that's fine with him and his biblical unitarian networking group." All he could say is that their preexistent belief was "peculiar." I think, biblically speaking, it is not simply peculiar, but false and they are professing another Jesus, one other than who is written about in the Bible.

Even if there is a whole realm of possibilities if one believes that Jesus is not God, there is NOT a whole realm of possibilities as to what the Bible teaches about humans and that Jesus is one of them in every way as his brothers are.

This leader said that “If you can comfortably say that your pre-existent Jesus is completely human then he is fine with that, even if you didn’t (or cannot) define “human” correctly.”

Again, this sounds as bad as one not being able to define what is a woman! So, with this reasoning, this brother would also have to say that a male who understands himself to be female, could compete and box with women who are biologically female, since that is how he defines a woman!

Just believing that humans do not have souls, “have souls in the sense that Plato taught and much of Christendom teach,” does not mean one’s definition of “human” lines up with the biblical human Jesus.

Human beings that God created not only do not have an immortal soul, but they do not preexist their beginning in their mother’s womb.

How can one believe in the human Messiah Jesus if he CAN NOT DEFINE WHAT A HUMAN BEING IS?

As Acts 8:12 says, we must start with understanding who Jesus is, which means understanding who he is not, and we must understand and believe in the Kingdom that he preached.

These two beginning points lead us to understanding everything else. When we understand who Jesus is, we can better understand what a human is. A human has his beginning at conception in his mother’s womb. A human is mortal and dies, all of him. When we understand this, we understand who we are, who Jesus is, and who God is (because Jesus died and God cannot die). Jesus said the most important commandment was to know that YHWH is one. He wanted people to know that the Father was one and the only true God.

When we understand and believe who Jesus is, we know, understand, and believe what he taught, and only then can we follow him and his teachings. And only then can we truly call ourselves a follower of Jesus (or a Christian as many label themselves.)

When we understand the Kingdom message Jesus preached, we understand that there is no life after death, except when we are resurrected. When one dies, he is dead and no longer is alive. No part of a human being lives on after he dies.

When we understand Jesus Kingdom message, we understand that the Kingdom he preached is not present now but is a real political world government that will be instituted when he returns and when he is inaugurated as King in Jerusalem. Jesus did not teach that “spiritual presence” equated to the Kingdom being present before it was present.

There is no preexistence of God’s Kingdom, just like there is no preexistence of Jesus!

The book of Revelation is Jesus’ last words to the church and they were very clear that God’s Kingdom would begin when Jesus comes and that the first 1000 years would be just that, the first 1000 years of the Kingdom of God. It is not another Kingdom separate from God’s Kingdom. God’s King will be ruling on the earth thus His Kingdom will be the ruling authority on the whole earth and all the nations will submit to him.

1 Corinthians 15 says that God gives Jesus authority and the job to put all other ruling authorities under his feet, and when he has done this, Jesus will then give it back to the Father so that God may be all in all, as we see in Revelation 21. This does not happen prior to Jesus’ return. The first 1000 years of his rule is the beginning of God’s Kingdom. The White Throne Judgement and the destruction of Satan

happen AFTER these first thousand years and that will be when everything is finally under Jesus' feet. Death will be the last thing he subdues before turning everything back over to the Father.

I have heard it said multiple times, and it is very ignorant to say that Jesus didn't say, "seek the millennium first, he said to seek the Kingdom first!" If we understand the Kingdom in Scripture, we know that the millennium is the Kingdom, it is just the first 1000 years of it!

If we are to believe in Jesus, who he is and his teachings, and in the Kingdom of God, what can we leave out or compromise? What would Jesus leave out as "essential?" What would Jesus be willing to compromise?

If we would preach, teach, and disciple people the whole of Scripture without leaving out what we think are non-essentials in hope that people will be more receptive and the church will grow in numbers, those choosing to follow Christ would be solid, unified believers, and there would be much better unity in the church.

Again, biblical unity should not be just for the sake of "unity." Jesus nor the Apostles, taught that believers should strive for unity at all costs by compromising what Jesus taught.

The doctrines (teachings) of the Bible, and especially Jesus, are not balls in a juggling act that believers and churches can decide to juggle. If Jesus said, "it is written," then it, all of it, was written for a reason, and none of it is disposable. It is all essential for a unified body.

Today this unified body is scattered around the world. Locally there is no one true "church," organization, or denomination. We must endeavor to be unified with Christ and not put so much energy into trying to unify people who are not united with Jesus and his teachings, even if they agree that God is one. The demons even believe this and shudder, but they are not followers of Christ. Just believing does not mean following. You must choose to be obedient and to follow.

Jesus never taught that we should put a weak form of unity over biblical truth. In fact, it says that when he spoke many found it hard to accept what he said and continue following him. Instead, they turned back and did not follow him. This happened back then and it is happening today.

If people turned their backs on Jesus and his teachings, it will certainly happen to us if we faithfully proclaim who Jesus is, teach everything he taught, and share the good news about the coming Kingdom of God.

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