**One Lord. One Faith. One Baptism. *(How Did The Church Get So Divided?)***

* The early church had a hope for universal Christian unity
* Acts 2:44-46
* All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they shared with anyone who was in need. With *one accord* they continued to meet daily in the temple courts and to break bread from house to house, sharing their meals with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved
* Eph. 4:3-6
* …with diligence to preserve *the unity* through the bond of peace. There is *one body* and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;  *one Lord, one faith, one baptism;* one God and Father of all
* Eph. 4:12-13
* And it was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for works of ministry and to build up the body of Christ, *until we all reach unity in the faith* and in the knowledge of the Son of God, as we mature to the full measure of the stature of Christ.
* When did the first church divisions occur?
* Acts 15:37-40
* Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark. But Paul thought it best not to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. Their disagreement was so sharp that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left.
* I Cor. 1:11-13
* My brothers, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you...Individuals among you are saying, “I follow Paul,” “I follow Apollos,” “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?
* Today there are over 200 Protestant denominations in the world: there are 40,000 independent churches in the U.S.
* Were these church divisions the Lord’s will? The Lord’s plan?
* The Great Commission:
* Math. 28:19-20
* Go therefore and make disciples of *all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
* Acts 1:8
* But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and *in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*
* We are called to make disciples who then also make disciples: Christian *multiplication*
	+ Is there any benefit to Christian *division*?
* 1) We are commanded to reach people who are different than us
	+ The Great Commission demands that we embrace Jew and Greek; male and female; different races, and different nations
	+ This goes against our preference for the familiar and our distrust of other groups
	+ Sometimes “division” is needed to send us into the unfamiliar
* 2) Splitting and scattering prevents *settling*
* The first “scattering” after Stephen’s martyrdom
* Acts 11: 19-21
* Meanwhile, those scattered by the persecution that began with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the message only to Jews. But some of them, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks as well, proclaiming the good news about the Lord Jesus. The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.
* My experience with “settling” in a local church that we enjoy
	+ Disagreements within a church may result in God-ordained splits
* 3) Division is the inevitable consequence of Holy Spirit-led revival in church history
	+ New wine cannot be put old wineskins.
* Matt. 9:17
* "Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”
* Jesus and the apostles were a new movement of God to the Jewish nation; they were rejected
* 4) There is an order of decline and revival in the Old Testament (Henry Blackaby’s ”Fresh Encounter”)
	+ A cycle of sin and revival
	+ The people follow God
	+ The people forsake God
	+ The people are defeated by their enemies
	+ The people cry out for help
	+ God sends His Holy Spirit in judges or prophets (deliverers) to return the people to Him
* There is a similar cycle of decline and revival in Church history
	+ The Holy Spirit inspires and revives Christians and leaders to follow and obey God
	+ Over time this movement of the Spirit becomes stale and lifeless
	+ God sends His Holy Spirit in power to new gifted individuals
	+ Revival breaks out
	+ Attempts are made to reconcile the new movement and leaders with the old
	+ The older movement rejects the new
	+ The new must form a new organization
	+ This becomes a new denomination
	+ Eventually this group stagnates as well
	+ A new movement arises
	+ The cycle starts again
* The history of the major church “divisions”
* Between Western and Eastern Christianity -- 1054 AD – over who has power, and over the doctrine of the Trinity
* The Reformation 1517 AD – (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli) – rejecting the Pope, Catholic corruption, indulgences, and doctrine – resulting in the placing the Word of God in the hands of the people of God
* The Anabaptists 1525 AD – recovering believer baptism; rejecting church-state culture
* The Methodists 1730 AD – (John and Charles Wesley; George Whitefield) --recovering evangelism to the poor; organizing the laity
* The Baptists 1612 (separatists from Anglican Church; John Bunyan) – stressing personal salvation, religious freedom, and believer baptism
* The Three Great Awakenings
	+ 1st Awakening 1730’s AD – Jonathan Edwards; George Whitefield – emphasizing new birth in Christ and church revival; allowing “enthusiasm”
* 2nd Cane Ridge Kentucky 1801 AD (Barton Stone) rural camp meetings
	+ Charles Finney’s subsequent revivals; a surge in world missions
* 3rd Prayer Revival 1858 AD –Jeremy Lanphier New York, Chicago, elsewhere
	+ DL Moody’s ministry; Salvation Army; Temperance Movement; child labor reform
* The Welch Revival 1904 AD (Evan Roberts); increased church attendance and worship,

Christian impact on community, missions

* Azusa Street 1906 AD (William Seymour – the Pentecostal Movement) – recovering the gifts of the Spirit and “Holiness”
* The Fundamentals 1910 AD—ninety essays defending the Bible from “Higher Criticism”
* Later Rain Movement 1947 AD --(Jack Coe; William Branham; Oral Roberts)– reintroducing healing ministries by gifted leaders
	+ Billy Graham
* Charismatic Renewal late 1960’s (Dennis Bennett; Florida leaders, Calvary Chapel) –

Recovering the role and power of the Holy Spirit in “regular” Christian folk in ministry and deliverance; Contemporary Christian Music

* The Vineyard Movement (late 1970’s)
* Toronto Blessing 1994 AD (John and Carol Arnott)—experiencing the love of the Father and the joy of the Faith
* 5) Most all “Christian” churches and denominations that have resulted from splits, and despite their doctrinal differences, hold views that are preferable to pagan and atheistic worldviews
* The Christian worldview drove the pagan worldview out of Western culture
* Christian values: love, peacemaking, gentleness, faithfulness to vows, stable marriages and families, valuing women, children, the unborn and heterosexual relationships, democracy, civil law, law-keeping, forgiveness, reconciliation, generosity, humility, compassion to the disenfranchised, submitting to others
* Pagan “values”: war, sanctioned rape, strength, adultery permitted by men, slavery, abortion, infanticide, filicide, euthanasia, cult prostitution, child labor and sexual exploitation, rebelliousness and law-breaking, autocracies, cult-of-personality leaders, subjugating others, exploiting the poor and the weak, revenge, power, oppression
* Disagree? Look at the pagan values/vices glorified in movies, TV, media
* Christians in Western culture previously redefined these pagan “values” as *vices*
	+ And have tried to establish Christian *virtues* as societal values to be pursued
* When Christianity has been done poorly in history (the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Religious Wars, slavery)—it has simply rejected its pure Christian values, re-adopted pagan principles and “gotten in bed” with secular powers
* Now…*most all* Christian groups, all denominations, *try* to embrace Christian virtues
* Issues that lead Christians *away* from the pure Faith into pagan thinking include:
	+ Extreme nationalism/patriotism, racial supremacy, cultural compromise, hedonism
	+ Many Christians more reflect their secular culture than the pure cross-cultural, cross-national “Christian culture”
	+ Nazi German Christians
	+ Hutu/Tutsi Christians in the Rwanda massacres
	+ Political American Christians
	+ Culturally hip Christians
* The LGBTQ+ movement is the most challenging issue to Christian unity *ever*. Why?
* Regardless of the complexities…we can celebrate any Christian agreement as it challenges paganism and its agenda
	+ While maintaining our independence from churches and denominations with different doctrine and church practice
* 6) Parachurch development
	+ Billy Graham Evangelical Assoc.
	+ Focus on the Family
	+ Gideons
	+ International House of Prayer
	+ Mercy Ships
	+ Prison Fellowship
	+ Samaritan’s Purse
	+ World Vision
	+ Wycliffe Bible Translators
	+ YWAM
* Attempts have been made at Christian unity (Ecumenism)
	+ 1600’s: Jan Amos Comenius Brethren
	+ 1700’s: Zinzendorf’s Moravians
* 1800’s: British and Foreign Bible Society; YMCA
* 1847: World Evangelical Alliance
* 1927: Lausanne Switzerland World Conference on Faith and Order
* 1948: World Council of Churches
* 1962: Second Vatican Council
* These attempts have been met with very little success
	+ Some progress has been observed with global humanitarian initiatives; with missions; with intercession: not so much inter-church unity, salvations, church growth
* When will we see “church” unity?
* 1) When the antichrist comes; along with the great “falling away” –the apostasy of much of the “church” (Christendom) choosing to worship him
* Rev. 13:4-8
* …and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” .... It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. *All who dwell on the earth* will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life
* 2) When the new heaven and earth comes

* Rev. 22:3-5
* The throne of God and of the Lamb will be within the city, and His servants will worship Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night in the city, and they will have no need for the light of a lamp or of the sun. For the Lord God will shine on them, and they will reign forever and ever.
* What can we do at present?
	+ Should we judge and condemn every church or so-called church that does not believe exactly as us?
	+ (There are serious problems with being judgmental and non-forgiving)
* Matt. 7:1-2
* Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment, you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you
* 1) Regarding a “church,” ask the following questions: is the Holy Spirit present? Is the Word accepted and honored? Is historical Christian orthodox doctrine observed?
* The Apostles’ and the Nicene Creeds
	+ The belief in a Creator God, His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (all three being God and co-equal); Jesus’ crucifixion, death and bodily Resurrection; the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life for those who have faith in the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit; and the "catholic" Church
* If "Yes"….this is probably another “remnant,” “life-giving,” or “believing” local expression of the Church
* If "No"…consider such a ”church” to simply be a cultural institution that may have some socially important function,
	+ But is not really a church (like Goodwill Industries; Kiwanis Clubs, United Way, Red Cross, UNICEF, Wounded Warriors, the Humane Society)
* 2) Recognize different church emphases: (likely God’s plan)
	+ Streams of Christianity
		- Contemplative (Monastic, prayerful life)
		- Holiness (Virtuous living)
		- Charismatic (Spirit-empowered life)
		- Social Justice (Compassionate life)
		- Evangelical (Word-led life and Evangelism)
		- Incarnational (Liturgical, sacramental life)
* 3) Celebrate and support successful *parachurch* ministries
* 4) Value Christian world view agreement vs. pagan and atheistic thinking
* 5) Resolve personally (and at your church) to embrace the Holy Spirit, the Word, and historical doctrinal orthodoxy with no cultural compromise
	+ And therefore, have little actual interaction with non-believing "churches"
* II Tim. 3:5
* For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, without love of good, traitorous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, *having a form of godliness but denying its power. Turn away from such as these!*
* 6) Hold no judgments against other “remnant churches:” or even against “socially beneficial “church” organization
* 7) Minimize our animosity toward even cultural opponents of the faith, atheists, and pagans
	+ The YouTube and Blog wars—some Christians act civilly; some not so much so
* Matt. 5:44-45
* "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be *sons of your Father* in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."
* Rom. 12:18-21
* If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with *all men*. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Therefore, “if your *enemy* is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”’ Do not be overcome by evil; but overcome evil with good.
* Jude 22-23
* And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.
* The ideal church: an independent, Word and Holy Spirit-honoring, doctrinally orthodox church with local leadership
	+ With loose, relationship-based associations with other similarly-believing churches
		- To share resources and be accountable
* Consider Jesus in “The Chosen”—how He deals with His enemies
	+ He lets them speak
	+ He grieves, and nearly weeps, for their lack of faith and hardness of hearts
	+ Yet He never backs down from the Truth
* As maturing disciples of Jesus, we take the “high ground,” not judging others, but we do not compromise:
	+ Our worship of and faith in God the Father, our Creator
	+ Our gratitude and willing obedience to Jesus, our Savior
	+ Our in real-time embracing of the Holy Spirit’s guidance and power
	+ Our devotion and respect for the inspired Word of God, and for the historical church statements of faith