

WHEN ONE MEANS ONE

March 10, 2013

After coming into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus made the world's most profound statement: **“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”** (Mt. 16:18, emphasis mine). Of course, this response came after Peter stated, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:16). When Christ made His claim to be the Son of God, He was claiming equality with the Father, and the Jews would understand this because in their culture the son was on equal footing with the father, unlike in our culture today. When He admitted to the priests who He really was, they accused Him of blasphemy (Lk. 22:67-71). Since Christ is God the Word that became the Son, He has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt. 28:18); once we acknowledge this we can easily accept His commands. Jesus stated that He would build His church, not another's. Christ was speaking in singular terms when He said that, and there is no indication that He ever supported the divisiveness of today's religious world.

In the Ephesian letter, Paul said, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*” (Eph. 4:1-6). Like Christ, Paul speaks in singular terms when describing the characteristics of the one church that Christ built with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

Paul demanded that we were to keep the unity of the Spirit. Christ prayed for unity when He said, **“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent”** (Jn. 17:20-21). Since Christ prayed for unity and Paul demanded it, does that give all people permission to accept all the religious views of the world? Of course not! We can accept only those that are shared by the Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead. We are to be united in God and uphold the views and commandments He has provided for us, not what the world understands to be true.

Paul identified one body which he said was the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). He told the Corinthian brethren that there were many members of the one body, but still just one body (1 Cor. 12:20); and since Christ is the head of the church, it is He who stipulates how we enter His body (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27; Acts 2:47). The one Spirit is the Holy Spirit of God. He is the third person of the Godhead and the revealer of truth to the apostles (Jn. 16:13). When he brought Christ's message, it was a singular message and only that which Christ commanded (Jn. 14:26; 16:13). It is that message that we must adhere to and not any other.

There is only one hope and that hope rests in Christ Jesus! Paul told Titus, “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2); our hope is eternal life and we can only gain it through Christ (Jn. 14:6). If we are not in Christ, then we are without hope in this world (Eph. 2:12) because all spiritual blessings are in Jesus and can be found nowhere else (Eph. 1:3).

There can only be one Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Lord and He brought salvation to a dying world (Acts 4:12). The one faith is the gospel system of faith that was once for all delivered (Jude 3, ASV).

If there is only one, then there cannot be more than one, however, there are thousands of denominations in the world today that teach things other than what Jesus and the apostles taught while they were on earth. We cannot enjoy the unity of the Spirit with those that embrace the doctrines of men (Mt. 15:9).

There is only one baptism that the Bible supports and commands today; it is the same one Paul commanded the Ephesians to observe. The one baptism is the one that Jesus commanded prior to His ascension to the right hand of the Father (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16). Bible students all over the world will discover that that same baptism was taught by all the faithful apostles, preachers, and teachers of the New Testament. As one studies the eight accounts of conversion in the Book of Acts, a very interesting pattern is found. In every case, we read that the believer was baptized in water for the remission of their sins. We do not read about faith, repentance, or confession in every case, though we know that each one was part of the conversion. This does not mean that baptism is more important than the others, instead, it means that it is just as important. This baptism cleanses us from our sins (Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5), places us in Christ (Gal. 3:26-27), and adds us to the Lord's one church (Acts 2:47).

God demands unity, but He demands it according to His set parameters. We cannot be unified with God if we believe and practice things that are not in unity with His doctrine. The only way we can have the unity we desire is to walk in the light (1 Jn. 1:7). We must remember that when God says "one" He means only one whether we like it or not.