

The Unity of the Body



The Word of God shows us that the members of the Body of Christ should be united with each other, because "there is only one Body and one Spirit."

(Eph. 4:4) In his priestly prayer the Lord Jesus interceded with the Father for his disciples to be one just as He and the Father were one. (John 17:11). In John 10:16, the Lord Jesus shows how a time would come when there would be just one flock with one pastor.

At some point, however, the evangelical and Pentecostal churches adopted an "optimistic" theology –now discredited by reality – asserting that the unity of the Church was not visible, but was still a reality in God's eyes, and that this would be sufficient to meet the Lord's desire for unity. But the Word of God teaches us that the unity of the Spirit is something that depends on the efforts of believers: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:3)

In 1948, Christian leaders decided to create the World Council of Churches as an organization designed to promote a unification between various Christian denominations. You can see, however, that this Council, although still holding in theory to a biblical objective, had a message tainted by two misunderstandings:

1. It did not understand that true unity is only possible between those who believe and practice the Word of the Lord, and cannot include those who deny it. For example, they embraced churches that practice idolatry, condemned throughout the Scriptures, or that placed traditions on the same level as the Word of God.

2. The Council did not understand the type of unity the Lord Jesus desires is exclusively spiritual, as He explicitly stated in his prayer to the Father. He was not speaking of an ecclesiastical unity that would be merely institutional or official.

Nevertheless, in the last few years the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon true believers, especially in the Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, who understood the value of the Holy Scriptures. So they became sensitized to the unity that the Holy Spirit promotes and produces in our time, the days leading up to the return of the Lord Jesus in glory to Rapture his church. For this reason, around the world one can find churches and pastors who have been touched by the Lord about the necessity of seeking unity in the Holy Spirit. How exactly we can achieve this precious unity is not yet known. But the Lord knows. We must, therefore, be open to what the Lord reveals about this subject.

One thing we do understand already is that we should be disposed to achieve this unity and we should seek to be closer to all the Churches and Christian leaders who believe that the Bible is the only rule of faith and practice, and who are sensitive to what the Holy Spirit is saying about the importance of unity. This is important so that we can get to know these other brothers and sisters, their faith, their experiences and their needs. We can then begin to pray for one another.

As a result of praying for each other, we will take on genuine love for the brothers and sisters and

begin to overlook our little stylistic differences (customary ways of doing things, styles of worship, etc.) But for this to occur, we cannot make our communion dependent on there being no minor differences between us. The fellowship will primarily be the result of the churches learning to hear the voice of the Lord Jesus (John 10:16) and submitting themselves in practice (not just in theory) to the Lord's governance. It is for the Lord, when He wants, to begin to clarify His will about how to resolve any of these minor differences. We have to trust in His miraculous operation in such a delicate field as the Unity of the Church. Other than that, however, we have already begun to feel this unity.

At this initial stage it is easiest to have fellowship between groups of Pentecostals and Charismatics (non-extremist ones), for these groups believe that the Lord God continues to speak to His Church today, and moreover, they are sensitive to the counsel of the Lord and the direction of the Lord Jesus as Head of the Church.