

THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION

“For no-one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 3:11)

Paul had heard from the household of Chloe that the congregation in Corinth was quarreling (1 Cor. 1:11). It was true! These brethren were following human leaders like Paul, and Apollos and for that reason they were considered “worldly” and “mere infants in Christ” (1 Cor. 3:1). Paul reminded them that there was one, and only one foundation for Christian unity, Jesus Christ!

At the risk of being misunderstood, it is important to note that the foundation for Christian unity is Jesus Christ, and not the Bible. The idea that churches are going to be united on the Bible is an illusion of gigantic proportions. The World Christian Encyclopedia by Barrett, Kurian, Johnson (Oxford Univ Press, 2nd edition, 2001) indicates that there are over 33,000 Christian Denominations in 238 countries. Many, if not most, of these denominations, claim to “go by the Bible”. The Bible is inspired, and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteous, but it is not the foundation. Jesus Christ is the foundation!

It is the plan of God, as you know, to bring our fragmented universe together under one head, even Christ (Eph. 1:10). God is accomplishing this by means of a new covenant so radical and revolutionary that the totality of this concept never entered into the heart of man (1 Cor. 2:9). When we are born again of His incorruptible seed, God writes His laws upon our minds and hearts. The transformation of the “old man” into a “new man” is so complete that those who experience it are called “new creations” (1 Cor. 5:17). The first Adam provides us with a physical “image” or DNA code that determines our human nature, and the Last Adam (Jesus), provides us with a spiritual “image”, or DNA code that determines our new identity in Christ (1 Cor. 15:44 - 49).

We see the genius of God at work on Pentecost. People from every nation under heaven came to Jerusalem (Acts 2:5). Not only were they divided by the ethnic barriers of their national backgrounds, they were also divided by the theological barriers of the Jewish sects to which they belonged. Even though not one word of the New Testament Scriptures was written at this time, they experienced a oneness in Christ that caused them to have everything in common (Acts 2:44).

Certainly these new Christians were at various levels of maturity. They were united, however, by having a common Father. Fraternity is based upon paternity. This is precisely the reason that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren. We all have a common Father (Heb. 2:11).

Yes! These new Christians continued steadfastly in the Apostle’s teaching (Acts 2:42). This however, does not mean that all these believers were at the same level of understanding and growth. Math teachers know that not everyone is ready for calculus, and Bible teachers know that not everyone is ready for an in depth study of Melchizedek (Heb. 6:7 - 11).

The Roman Catholic Church has sought to achieve unity by means of an infallible interpreter. The infallibility of the Pope was declared by the First Vatican Council of 1870. It came at a time when skeptics and free thinkers were challenging the authority of the church. Protestants have sought to achieve unity by means of an infallible interpretation. These Protestant Creeds, like the Roman Catholic Pope, drew lines that free thinkers and skeptics were not permitted to cross. Neither concept places the true foundation for unity in Jesus Christ where it ought to be.

Paternity cases are not solved by submitting questionnaires. If the person in question has the correct DNA, they are members of the family. Somehow, in some miraculous way, everyone who is born of God, loves everybody else who is also born of God (1 Jn. 5:1).

If you truly believe that the members of your congregation are united on the Bible, I challenge you to ask how many of them have read all the Bible. Many, you will discover, have not. So they are not actually united on the Bible, but they are united on what someone has taught them about the Bible. This is precisely the problem Paul faced at Corinth. Some followed Paul, Apollos, or Cephas. True unity, however, comes upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. True faith is “personal” nor “propositional”. We are united by “Whom” we have believed, not “what” (2 Tim. 1:12). “For no-one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

