

The Lord's Followers Are to Be One

(John 17:20-21)

Introduction:

1. In John 17 the prayer is recorded that Jesus prayed before He was arrested.
2. Jesus made several personal requests, He made several requests for His apostles, and He made several requests for all of His followers.
3. Our lesson is based on the request Jesus made in vs.20-21 -- He prayed that all of His followers would be one.
4. To be one means that people are together and in a state of harmony.
5. Let us first consider . . .

Discussion:

- I. PASSAGES THAT TEACH THE LORD'S FOLLOWERS TO BE ONE
 - A. An appropriate place to begin is the Lord's prayer (John 17).
 1. (vs.11) Jesus prayed that His apostles would be one.
 - a. Earlier, the apostles had been divided over who would be the greatest in the Lord's kingdom.
 - b. However, after this occasion the apostles became one, and we do not read about this discussion taking place any more.
 2. (vs.20-21) Jesus also prayed that all of His followers would be one.
 - a. (vs.21b) Unity of the Lord's followers says something to the world.
 - b. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true -- division leads to a lack of belief.
 3. As Jesus prayed just before He went to the cross, He requested that His followers be one.
 - B. The Jerusalem congregation enjoyed a wonderful spirit of unity (Acts 2:46; 4:32).
 - C. As other congregations were established, they were instructed to be united (Romans 15:5-6; Philippians 1:27).
 - D. After examining the Lord's prayer in John 17, the example set by the Jerusalem church, and instructions sent to various congregations we conclude that the Lord wants His followers to be one.
- II. THERE ARE DIFFERENT AREAS IN WHICH WE ARE TO BE ONE
 - A. We are to be one in doctrine.
 1. (John 8:31-32) We must abide in the Lord's Word to be His true disciples.
 2. (Ephesians 4:4-6) To be one in doctrine we must follow the truth concerning the 7 "ones" listed in these verses.
 3. To be one we must also "*rightly divide*" the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15).
 - B. We are to be one in personal matters.

1. See 1 Corinthians 1:10
2. To accomplish this we must follow the instructions given in Ephesians 4:1-3; Romans 12:16; 14:19.

III. OBSTACLES THAT PREVENT THE LORD'S PEOPLE FROM BEING ONE MUST BE OVERCOME

A. "Murmuring" is an obstacle.

1. Murmuring could have prevented the members of the Jerusalem church from being one (Acts 6:1-4).
2. The way to overcome murmuring is "don't do it" (1 Corinthians 10:10; Philippians 2:14).

B. "Exalting people over Christ" is an obstacle.

1. This was done in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 1:11-12).
2. This practice resulted in division and strife (1 Corinthians 3:3-4).
3. We learn from 1 Corinthians 4:6 how to overcome this practice.

C. "Loving to have preeminence" is an obstacle.

1. This obstacle is addressed in 3 John 9-10.
2. To overcome this obstacle we must:
 - a. remember that Christ has all preeminence (Colossians 1:18)
 - b. follow the instructions given in Philippians 2:3-4.

Conclusion:

1. We have seen that "the Lord's followers are to be one."
2. According to Psalm 133, the Lord is pleased when His people are one.