

Christians Are to Be One (John 17:20-21)

Introduction:

1. These verses are from the prayer that Jesus prayed before He was arrested.
2. As He prayed Jesus made requests for Himself, He made requests for His apostles, and He made requests for all of His followers.
3. Our lesson is based on the request Jesus made in vs.20-21.
4. This brings us to the theme of our lesson -- "Christians are to be one."
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 the Gospel spread from Jerusalem and 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 Christians are to be one.
- II. THERE ARE DIFFERENT AREAS IN WHICH WE ARE TO BE ONE
 - A. We are to be one in doctrine (Philippians 1:27).
 1. One of the outstanding traits of the Jerusalem church was that its members "*continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine*" (Acts 2:42).
 2. To be one in doctrine we must:
 - a. "*continue*" [abide] in the Lord's Word (John 8:31-32)
 - b. "*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. WE MUST OVERCOME OBSTACLES THAT PREVENT CHRISTIANS FROM BEING ONE
 - 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 "Christians are to be one."
2. According to Psalm 133, the Lord is pleased when His people are one.