***Ecumenicism and Unity

RV26-01***

We continue with the letter to the church of Thyatira. This is recorded for us in Revelation 2:18-29. The letter to the local church in the city of Thyatira in Asia Minor dealt with a spiritual condition which in time produced the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages.

In Thyatira, we have found that there was a woman who was championing a spirit of toleration and cooperation with a satanic religion of the Babylonian mystery cults. This woman was acting in the tradition of the Old Testament Jezebel who had corrupted Israel with the worship of Baal, and we have looked at that in some detail. This Jezebel-like woman in the city of Thyatira was permitted to act as a spiritual authority in the local church there. This would indicate to us that there was a problem on the part of the pastor-teacher whose business it was to see that women do not dominate in spiritual leadership in the local assembly. This is particularly odd because, as you know, as we went through the details of the words that we find in verse 19, this church was in many respects an outstandingly fantastic Christian operation that the Lord was extremely pleased with. But at the same time, it had within it the seeds of spiritual decay in the form of this woman and the fact that they did not stop this up short.

This was, of course, illustrated by the Lord Himself in the parable of the woman who hid the leaven (which stands for evil) in the meal, and which then permeated the whole loaf. The principle of permitting evil to begin, and not stopping it at the first, will inevitably result in the whole loaf being permeated and contaminated.

So this woman in Thyatira was seducing believers away from the Lord Jesus Christ, and into practices of worshiping as the pagans worshiped – through fornication and through eating food which had been sacrificed to the idol gods. The Roman Catholic Mass, as we know it today, evolved directly from this pagan practice of the worshipers eating part of the sacrifice in order to appease the wrath of the deity. That is the basis of the Mass, which of course goes even back further than that, because the Mass was practiced in the Babylonian mystery cult system that Nimrod had invented. When the Roman Catholic Church began to come into existence by the gradual amalgamation of paganism into Christianity, one of the things they took was the system of the Mass, and the eating of the flesh and the blood of Jesus Christ in order to appease deity. Unfaithfulness to Bible doctrine was spiritual immorality. In time, spiritual immorality always inevitably leads to physical immorality. When you become adulterous in spiritual matters (in violating doctrinal principles), you will become in time sexually immoral in actual fact.

God in His grace, however, gave this system of apostasy time to repent and return to the doctrines of the Bible. But the evidence that we have is that the women in Thyatira and her followers refused to take advantage of the opportunity of grace. History records the increasing corruption of the Roman Catholic Church and the evil practices of the hierarchy. Those practices were evil. Make no mistakes about them. They were evil on the highest echelons of the Roman Catholic hierarchy right on up to the Pope himself.

Finally, in the 16th century, God used the Protestant Reformation to bypass the Roman Catholic Church, and to return mankind to the Word of God. The consequence of that bypass is what we will look at eventually in the next letter to Sardis which comes up following this one.

The fundamental principle in dealing with religious institutions is one that you must always clearly keep in mind. We have a lot of confusion about religious matters today: this church; that church; this religious view; that religious view; what you think; what I think; who's right; and, who's wrong. There is a fundamental principle that the Lord Jesus laid out and said, "Now this is what you must anchor yourself to, and hold on, or you're going to be made a patsy in a religious matter." Someone is going to sucker you if you don't get this principle straight.

That is recorded for us in Matthew 7:13-14. The basic principle of evaluating religious institutions and spiritual viewpoints is stated in these words: "Enter in at the narrow gate. For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many go in that way, because narrow is the gate and hard is the way which leads unto life, and few there be that find it." The truth is not a broad boulevard. The truth of God is a very narrow pathway, and it is very clearly delineated in the Scriptures. And it's the only place where it's clearly delineated. It is never delineated by man naturally. For centuries, men have tried by reason to come up with ultimate truth. That ultimate truth that human reason arrives at never matches up to the revelations of Scripture. Only the Bible will give you the narrow boundary lines which lead into divine viewpoint from salvation to rewards in eternity. And that's the only place. This is a very important passage of Scripture. You enter into the gate of doctrinal truth which is very narrow. You walk on a path which is very narrow.

If you find that you're in a group where everybody is for it; the gate is wide; it's a broad boulevard; everybody's traveling with you; and, you have a great, wonderful camaraderie with everyone around you, you can almost be sure that this is not of God. You can always be sure that if you're where the popular movement is, you're not where God is. God's movements, today especially, is the least popular movement of all. Satan's religious movements are where the popularity lies. That's where the numbers are. That's where the vast capacities and potentials economically and the power-moving forces are to be found. They are not to be found within the area of truth. Divine viewpoint is not the dominant view of mankind. This is Satan's world. Don't you ever forget it. It is Satan's world, and he is fully in control of it. Man's natural thinking leads to death and to sorrow. It does not lead to life and blessing.

Let's look at the Book of Smarts, which we generally refer to as Proverbs. In Proverbs 14:12, you have it this way: "There is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." People follow religious systems today not because they think they are wrong. They follow them because they think that this is really where it's at: this is really the truth. But these ways that seem so right to men are the ways of death. How many times, perhaps, have you in your own heart been guilty of saying to yourself about something that you were doing that made you a little uncomfortable: "How can this be wrong when it feels so right?"

I heard a high school girl some time ago singing a song on a bus coming back from a campground. Those were the very words: "How can this be so wrong when it feels so right?" That's exactly the principle. That's the way the devil works. Here it is in Proverbs 14:12: "There's a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." It's not a matter of how you feel, or how the rest of society agrees to it. It's a matter of the narrow, constricted path about which God says, "This is the point of wisdom." And you don't have it when you're 12, and 14, and 17, and 18, and 20, and 25... It takes some age. We have a lot of youth with high IQs. But that does not mean that you have insight.

Our phrase around here (that we have coined that explains it all) is "ignorant intellectuals." Ignorant intellectuals run our government; ignorant intellectuals run our sources of communication (our media); and, ignorant intellectuals predominate our educational system, and they are producing what seems right to them, but the end of it is the ways of death. That's why you do not want to be an ignorant intellectual. You want to listen to people who know better than you do. You want to listen to people whose minds are oriented to divide viewpoint, because they are smart people. It's not because they have a high IQ, but because they have God's orientation. That's what makes you smart. It's not just an IQ.

So divine viewpoint is absolutely not the dominant viewpoint of society. You are not going to find it out in our world. Man's natural thinking leads to death. Without Bible doctrine, therefore, resident in the mentality of the soul, one cannot discern a false teacher nor distinguish between human good and divine good. You have to have a frame of reference of doctrine in your soul, or you cannot judge. You will be victimized every time without that frame of reference. The teachers of false doctrines such as the Roman Catholic Church and the charismatic movement today appear to be kindly sheep: very innocent; very mild; and, very nonthreatening. But they are not sheep. They're ravenous, dangerous, devouring wolves.

How can you protect yourself from this? Today's American mentality is devoid of the doctrinal frame of reference necessary to distinguish between human good and divine good, and between real love and false love. These satanic systems proliferate today. In 1 Corinthians 3:18, we see what's riding upon your being able to distinguish between divine and human good: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, 'He has taken the wise in their own craftiness, and again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise – that they are vain.'" So the viewpoint of mankind by and large is vain. God says, "It's nothing."

Going back to Matthew 7, the ultimate results of the subtle deceits of false doctrine are very costly. It is important for you to be able to distinguish. That's what they were not doing in Thyatira. They were not distinguishing. The result historically was the horror of the Roman Catholic Church. We see the ultimate result of subtle deceit when we move on to Matthew 7:21: "Not everyone that says unto me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name; in Your name have cast out demons; and, in Your name done many wonderful works;" (that is, miracles)? Then will I profess them to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.'"

So the next time you hear somebody who says, "I'm giving all the glory to the Lord for what I'm doing here in this charismatic movement," and so on, just remember this passage. The ultimate deceit is going to cost some people their souls. But if it does not cost you your soul, remember 1 Corinthians 3:13-15: that it will cost you, as a believer, some very ultimate rewards. Many sincere people are simply never going to make it.

Luke 13:23 puts it this way: "Then said one of them, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' And He said unto them, 'Strive to enter in at the narrow gate, for many I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.'" There is the principle. The vast majority of humanity is not going to be in heaven. You happen to be in an elite select company, as part of the body of Christ, who will be in heaven someday: "When once the master of the house has risen up and has shut the door, and you begin to stand outside to knock at the door saying, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us', and He shall answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' Then shall you begin to say, 'We have eaten and have drunk in Your presence, and You have taught in our streets.' But He shall say, "I tell you, I do not know where you are from. Depart from Me all you workers of iniquity.'" So you're not going to be able to claim, "Jesus, I belonged to an organization that honored You. I was part of this religious group," or "I was part of that religious group." Jesus says, "That means zero – nothing. If you have not received Me by faith as your Savior, and you have not entered the new birth apart from any of your human doings, then you are nowhere."

That's the background. That's the basic principle that truth is a narrow line. You must know it, and you will pay dearly for not having doctrine resident in the mentality of your soul.

In Revelation 2:22, therefore, we read of the divine judgment upon this woman: "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her, into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds." The word "behold" is the Greek word "idou." "Idou" is one of those Greek words that tells us that an important statement is about to be made. The statement is that God is going to do something: "I'm going to cast." The Greek word is "ballo." The word "ballo" simply means to be thrust someplace. In the Greek language, this is in the present tense which means that this is a constant treatment by God of false religion. God is always going to do this to false religion. It's active voice which means that God himself is going to execute this judgment. It's in indicative mood which means it's a statement of a fact.

All religions do not lead to heaven. That is the point that this word makes. As we've already indicated, there's a very narrow path that leads to heaven. If you miss that, that's it. There's no other way.

"I'm going to cast her." The word "her" is the Greek word "aute." "Aute" is a feminine word, and it refers to this woman: historically to the woman in Thyatira which was causing this deceit." But it also ultimately refers to the apostate church that evolved out of the concepts that she promoted in the form of the Roman Catholic Church.

It's going to be cast into a "kline." "Kline" is the Greek word for either "a banqueting couch" upon which one would recline at meals such as in Mark 4:21, or it's a sickbed – a bed of suffering used to carry a person who is ill, as in Matthew 9:2 and Mark 7:30. At this point, it refers to a sickbed: "I'm going to throw her into a bed of suffering." This is a description that God's judgment is going to come upon this female. And that's what she is. She is not a woman. She is a female. She looks like a woman, but she isn't. This female is conducting this heretical deceit in the church at Thyatira.

"I'm going to cast her into a bed of suffering, and". The word "and" is the Greek word "kai" that indicates an addition. This is someone else who is associated with her: "Them that commit adultery." This is the only time we have this word used in the book of Revelation: "moicheuo." "Moicheuo" means to commit adultery. It's not just fornication, which would basically connote merely illicit sex. This is adultery. This means violation of a vow that one has taken before God. This is violation of an oath which one has made before God. This is even more serious because it's not only a violation of a moral law, but it's a violation of the fact that you took an oath before God and said, "So help me God."

When you stand in a marriage ceremony and you say, "I do" in terms of being faithful to the one you're taking in marriage, that oath is taken before Almighty God. To say, "I do," and then to violate it is a serious crime. Therefore, the word adultery is brought in here to enhance how serious was the error that this woman was promoting. It refers to those in Thyatira who are participating in sexual immorality in the form of worship. That's how the pagans worshiped. The pagans communicated with their God through the temple prostitution system. This woman has incorporated into this local church sympathy toward this system of worship. This is hard to believe, but many of these who had come out of that as Christians we're used to. It wasn't really hard to convince them that you could worship God in this way.

This applies, of course, to spiritual adultery as well – the spiritual adultery which is contained in human viewpoint which the Bible very seriously condemns. God had this problem with his people of old. In Jeremiah 3:8, we had this very same problem of spiritual adultery brought before the people of Israel, because this is what ultimately destroyed them as a nation. The prophet says, "And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding (or reversionist) Israel committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went on and played the harlot also." As you may remember, the nation of Israel was divided into two parts. The northern part was called Israel. The southern part was called Judah. That's what this verse means. The prophet says, "When God took Israel and sent them off into Assyrian captivity because of their spiritual adultery, did Judah learn a lesson? No, Judah didn't learn lesson. Judah went and did the same thing until God had to take them off to Babylonian captivity. For what reason? For spiritual adultery: violating God's moral principles – human viewpoint."

Can you see where the United States stands today? I can tell you that there has never been a nation historically which has been guilty of spiritual adultery, when it got to a certain point, that it was not destroyed by God. We're standing right on the line.

Jeremiah 5:7: "How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by them that are no gods (spiritual adultery – false gods). When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses." He had fed them and taken care of them, and they turned from the true God to the false god.

In the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 11:2 says, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy. For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." That's the view that the Lord has of Christians. They are the bride of Christ, and spiritual adultery is out of the question.

This word "committing adultery" is in the present tense. Present tense in the Greek means it was constantly being done. It's in the active voice, which means the devotees of this Thyatira Jezebel chose to do this evil. It's a participle, indicating that a spiritual principle is being stated.

"Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her." The word "with" is the Greek word "meta," and it actually means "in the midst of." So we have a broader picture of what was taking place during the era of the Roman Catholic Church – this kind of spiritual adultery within the context of that organized religious system. "Into bed with her" means with this Jezebel woman. "Them that commit adultery with her (in the midst of her, with this Jezebel system), I will cast them into." "Into" is the word "eis." "Eis" is a preposition indicating direction. He says, "Into (what he calls) great." The word "great" is the Greek word "megas," which refers to "intensity" or "degree." Of what? Of "thlipsis." "Thlipsis" is a word for "pressure." It symbolically stands for affliction. Putting these two together ("megas thlipsis"), you have "great tribulation."

God is going to cast this woman and her followers into something that the Bible calls "great tribulation." It refers to divine punishment upon them. The Great Tribulation, of course, also refers to the apostate church organization after the body of Christ has been removed from this earth in the rapture. The divine judgment upon apostate Christendom, which is built around the Roman Catholic Church, is to be cast into the tribulation.

The church age began (at Pentecost). The church age has run for almost 2,000 years. Someplace along the line, the rapture is going to take place. All believers are going to be caught up to be taken out of the earth. For seven years, then, the earth is going to go on, and this is called the tribulation period. The Bible divides this into three-and-a-half and three-and-a-half years. The first half is simply the tribulation. The second half is described in the Bible as the great tribulation. It takes place on earth while the church, the true body of Christ, is gone. There is not a single believer left here upon the earth. The earth moves into this period with a world population entirely of unbelievers. There is no restraint upon religion at all. That's when the apostate church rises to its maximum degree. This church and its destiny is described, and we will look at it in greater detail eventually, in Revelation 17.

**Ecumenicism**

The Thyatira church actually became (what we call today) the ecumenical church. You should be acquainted with the word "ecumenical." The ecumenical church today is the attempt to unite religious people – to unite religious groups. This is the going thing. This church is going to be an ecumenical church. We'll look at a little more of that in a moment.

But the god of grace always leaves a way out. I don't care what you're doing now that's evil. I can tell you on the authority of the Word of God that you've got a way out. God is going to judge. He's going to lower the boom. But because He's a God of grace, He just waits and waits and waits. He sits there tapping his foot, marking time, waiting for you to turn around.

**Repent**

"Except" is two words in the Greek: "eon me" That means "unless." Unless you do what? Unless this woman and her followers (and the Roman Catholic Church that developed out of the system) do something: Unless they repent: "metanoeo." Most of you know that this word means "to change the mind." To repent means to change the mind. Repent does not mean to cry; repent does not mean to walk down an aisle; repent does not mean to raise your hand; repent does not mean to promise to do better; repent does not mean that you will love your mother more on Mother's Day; and, repent does not mean anything that you do. It just means you change your mind toward what? About the sin that you're guilty of: turning from sin to God. Repent is an about-face: to escape divine punishment by abandoning the vile mixture of paganism and Christianity that this woman had interjected. It means to depart from false doctrine and the consequent false practices. It means to turn from spiritual adultery back to faithfulness to Jesus Christ and His Word.

In the Greek, this is in the future tense, which means anytime that you decide to turn around. It's active which means it's a personal volition on your part – a decision. It's indicative. It's a statement of fact. The Bible here says, "Except they repent of their deeds." The Greek Bible does not say, "Their deeds." The Greek Bible has the word "oute" which is a feminine for the personal pronoun "her:" "Unless they repent (change their minds) about what she has been telling them. When you are in spiritual trouble, and you are in spiritual deception, the person you have to go back to is: who told me this? Who is my teacher? Who is my source of information? That is the first person you turn against. That is the first person you turn away from if you're going to turn to God. You reject that source of influence.

In Thyatira, they had to be looking at this woman and saying, "She's wrong. We're detaching ourselves from her. We're turning our back upon her, and in turning our back upon her, we turn and face the living God. This is specifically turning against her in terms of their "ergon." That is a word that we've had before, and it means "your deeds" or "your doing" – the physical things that you do. That's what the Thyatira church is talking about. The future of the organized church is described for us in 1 Timothy 4:1-3: "Now the Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith (that is, from sound doctrine), giving heed to seducing spirits (demonic spirits) and doctrines of demons, speaking lies and hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by them who believe and know the truth." All of these things have been fulfilled in a maximum degree by the Roman Catholic Church. The historical pattern of apostasy has followed this route.

**Apostasy**

The first evidence of apostasy historically was the denial of the premillennial return of Jesus Christ. That truth is still being beaten around today. That was the first step in the earliest days of the Christian church. For the first two-and-a-half centuries of the Christian church, everybody was premillennial. In every writing we have and every record we have, they were very clearly premillennial. They all understood that Jesus Christ was going to return to this earth and establish a millennium. He was going to come before the millennium. That's what premillennial means. But then they began combining Greek philosophy, which exalted the human capacity, with Christianity. The result was that less and less that they thought that they needed Jesus Christ to return to straighten out the world. Consequently, less and less did they look for the return of the Lord. They said that man can solve man's problems. Well, man cannot solve man's problems. The world has increasingly come to a worse mess than it has ever been in before, and the Bible says that it's going to end up in a catastrophic way.

So the first step of apostasy was a denying of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to set up a kingdom on this earth. The second step of apostasy historically was the denial of salvation by grace. These two things were involved in what this woman at Thyatira was doing. The grace of God was viewed as being given through the organization of the church and through the sacraments. So if a person wanted to go to heaven, you had to have the church send you there. It was not something between you and God. It destroyed the Bible doctrine of justification by faith, and it substituted the system of human works (of human doings) in order to please God.

When the Protestant Reformation came along, they restored this principle of salvation by grace through faith. But since then, modern liberalism has undermined this doctrine by attacking the authority of the Bible itself which has taught this doctrine. Modern liberalism does not for one moment deny that the Bible says you go to heaven without doing anything on the basis of what God does for you through Jesus Christ. Modern liberalism says, "But that's man's opinion, who wrote the Bible, and they were wrong. The Bible and the Word of God, as we have learned, had been declared to be two different things. So the Word of God is only contained in the Bible, and man's mind must decide which part is true and which part is false.

Well, you can see where that would go. The apostate church in time, following this principle, then denied the deity of Jesus Christ; it denied the virgin birth of Jesus Christ; it denied the substitutionary atonement; it denied the physical resurrection; and, it denied the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. All of the basic doctrines were denied, and this is held by the major denominations. The churches that are the biggest; that are the wealthiest; that have the most members; that have the greatest programs; and, that are the most active are the churches that go right down the line that do not believe that Jesus Christ died to substitute for us on the cross; that He was God at all; that He was really virgin born so that He did not have a sin nature; and, that He really died and rose again. And they certainly don't believe He's ever coming back to this earth.

This is apostate Christendom. As a matter of fact, a few years ago (you all remember) there was a big movement on called the "God is Dead" movement. That was the epitome of the claim that there wasn't even any God. Again, we're talking about the greatest theological schools in this country. They were teaching ministers who were now in the pulpits that this God is dead – not that God really died, but that He never existed in the first place.

The departure from New Testament Christian doctrine leads to some kind of substitute because man has a yearning. It's not going to be squelched. It just has to be fulfilled: There's something out there. What is it? Who is it? And if you will not go through Scripture, and if you will associate yourself with a pagan system of a man-made religion such as the Thyatira Jezebel was doing, then you go into occultism. You go into practices of trying to find contact with God through the spirit world; through séances; and, through the ultimate worship of Satan and the subjections of demonic powers.

Please remember that there are two things that are true relative to a Christian's relationship to the demonic world. One: a Christian can be controlled by a demon; and, two: a Christian can never be indwelt by a demon. It is great to realize that you cannot be controlled by a demon because the tenant within your body is God the Holy Spirit. That's who indwells. But your whole body can be completely controlled by demons, and don't ever, ever forget that.

One of the places that this is becoming more and more evident is in the charismatic movement. People are coming out of that movement and are realizing that what they were experiencing was the complete lack of control. That's one of the signs of demon control – that you lack control. You can't keep yourself from babbling in tongues. You can't keep yourself from doing these things that are exhilarating, but which then put a depression upon you because they are contaminating influences of the demonic world. That's a sign of being controlled by the demons.

People who are coming out of the charismatic movement and into the light of the Word of God realize now that what had happened to them was that they were controlled by demons, and that they thought they had lost the control of their own volition. And when you go into false doctrine, that's what can happen to you. You become negligent about the intake of doctrine on a regular basis. And don't tell me that you took it in last week, so you're all set for this week. It's a day-by-day basis. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. You live by bread daily, and you live by the Word of God daily. That's the only way you're going to make it in this age of extreme, subtle deception.

**The Devil is Subtle**

What I've been trying to hammer home here is that the devil is subtle. The people that you think are the most sound and the most reliable to listen to are giving you a little diversion at some point. That's how the devil will do with you. The devil will never come upon you people and try to get you into what we call gross immoralities. You have to really be pretty well deteriorated spiritually before that can be an appeal. He's going to get you by getting you off into a little deviation.

Anybody who flies an airplane, for example, or navigates a ship knows that all you have to do is be one degree off in your heading. It doesn't make much difference if you're one degree off of a heading. It doesn't make much difference if you're all you're doing is going a short distance. You're just slightly off. But when you're going a long distance, that one degree takes you way off from where you're supposed to go. And that's how the devil works. He pulls you just one degree off from the heading that you're supposed to be on. Ultimately you get out there and it's disaster land.

These false teachers we found in the Timothy passage are without conscience. They foist the errors on their followers under the guise of love. Remember that Satan's code word today is "love." Moral degeneracy always follows.

Well, the true church, as the body of Christ, is going to be removed from the earth before the apostate church reaches its full development. Then, during that seven-year period of the tribulation period of mankind on the earth, the apostate church is going to come into complete domination over humanity. That is the reference that we have here in Revelation 2:22. God says, "I'm going to throw this apostate church into the great tribulation. During the last three-and-a-half years, this apostate church (Revelation 17 tells us) will be destroyed by the world political ruler – the dictator of all the world.

The ecumenical movement today is the expression of the Revelation 17 church. The ecumenical movement today is the latest expression of what the Thyatira woman was championing. The ecumenical movement today proposes to do this: It has four basic steps. The ecumenical movement is represented by the World Council of Churches and the National Council of churches. Their goal is to do this: Step number one is to unite all Protestant churches. It has millions of liberal Protestant groups that are united in that way now. Step number two is to take the Protestant union and to unite it with the Eastern Orthodox Church (what we usually call the Greek Orthodox Church). Step number three will take the union of the Protestant and the Greek Orthodox and unite them with the Roman Catholic Church. Then you have one monstrous organization. The fourth step is self-evident: Now that you have Protestants, Greek Orthodox, and Roman Catholics united, then they will unite them with the religions of the world, with all roads leading to the one supreme being. That is the condition that will exist in the tribulation era.

There's only one question: What's going to hold them together? How are they going to be drawn together? I suspect that what we are seeing as evidence for this is that they are going to be drawn together on the basis of the charismatic movement that we see today which draws denominations together which would not have touched each other a few years ago. That is the cement. I have no doubt in my own mind that the charismatic movement is going to go sailing right out of the tribulation, full strength, and full blast. It is going to be the thing that they unite around.

If you listen to charismatic speakers, you know that they say, "We don't care what doctrine you have. We don't care what differences you have. We don't care what denominations you have. As long as we are all centering around the Holy Spirit, that's all that counts. Well, they have a spirit that they are centering around, but it is not God the Holy Spirit. It is his majesty the devil.

**Unity**

The ecumenical movement makes a very logical appeal because they'll turn to John 17, and maybe the woman (I suspect) in Thyatira was appealing to this same concept. John 17:22, quoting the words of Jesus Himself, where Jesus said, "And the glory which You gave Me, I have given them, that they may be one even as We are one." If you talk to the leaders of the ecumenical movement who are liberals, and who are unbelievers, and who reject all the fundamentals of Scripture, they will point to this verse and say, "This is why we must get together, because Jesus says that we may be one even as He and His Father are one." That seems very impressive.

However, the Bible teaches us that there is a unity among believers. You and I have a unity which is irrevocable, and we cannot break it. This unity that is the result of what is described in 1 Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks; bond or free;" and, so on. We've all been made to drink into one Spirit. We have all been filled by one Spirit. There is a unity which is the result of being baptized into the body of Christ by God the Holy Spirit. This is a dry baptism without water. Water baptism pictures it. This dry baptism, the baptism of God the Holy Spirit, unites you forever, irrevocably to Jesus Christ, and thus to one another who are in that body. That's how you enter the body of Christ. Everybody has this point of unity at the moment of salvation. Everybody receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, John 17:22 is talking about we as believers being one as Jesus and the Father are one, and it is talking about something that already exists.

For this reason, Ephesians 4:4-6 tell us, "There is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called, in one hope of your calling: one Lord; one faith; one baptism (that is Holy Spirit baptism); one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Christians are never told to form a unity. If you look at Ephesians 4:3, you'll see exactly what they're told to do, in view of what we have already seen that God the Holy Spirit does: "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The only thing that we are called upon to do is, in our practice, to maintain the unity between each other as Christians, and between other Christian bodies, which Jesus Christ, through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, has already created.

So the ecumenical movement is completely wrong in using John 17:22 as the basis for Christian groups to get together. Of course, they only mean organizational unity. The unity we have is a spiritual unity. God the Holy Spirit has created it, and we as believers are simply to recognize and to preserve it. The ecumenical movement seeks a worldwide organizational unity. All beliefs and all religions are joined together, cemented into a super church by some unifying factor, such as in the charismatic movement. This movement is controlled by liberals who deny an inerrant Scripture and the fundamentals of the Word of God.

What is our attitude toward it? Please don't come up and quote to me after the service and point out to me that some well-known evangelist has fellowship with the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches, and speaks before the groups, and is invited to speak for their groups, and who has commendable things to say about their leaders, and who doesn't mind, even in his public meetings, having on his platform, as he did in England, an ecumenical leader who said that Jesus Christ is the illegitimate son of Mary and a German soldier, and then he called upon this man to pray in Jesus name in his campaign. That doesn't mean a thing. The thing that is important is not what some deluded religious leader, who is indeed born again, but who has a misconception of Christian unity contrary to what the Scripture says, and therefore is willing to lend his prestige to dignify what the Jezebel of Thyatira created. Jesus Christ condemned that and said, "I'm going to throw you into a bed of tribulation."

The thing that's at issue is 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship does righteousness have with unrighteousness, and what communion does light have with darkness, and what concord does Christ have with Belial (that is, with Satan), or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? And what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, 'I will dwell in them, and I will walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore, come out from among them and be separate,' says the Lord, 'and don't touch the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,' says the Lord Almighty."

That's exactly what you are. Don't you ever forget it. Don't contaminate yourself with the Jezebel style of ecumenical movements that surround you today. With the orientation of doctrine, you'll distinguish between divine good and human good. You'll distinguish between the teacher who is close to the truth and the one who's really on the nail. The one who is one degree off is sufficient to lead you into the loss of eternal rewards and consequences of great tragedy and great disappointment in your life now. You can be a winner, or you can be a loser. At the heart of it is being true to God's point of view. Nothing less will do.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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