

## **Why don't we have fellowship with all other churches? Pleasant Plains 8-9-2015PM NICK ANGEL**

- Many years ago, Rodney King asked the question, "Can't we all just get along?" Many people still ask this question today. Except today, that question is often asked in regards to religion. You can drive around town and see the "Coexist" bumper stickers that are spelled out with all the religions symbols of all the major world religions. This bumper sticker is a plea for all people of all faiths across the world to come together. Even within Christianity the question is often asked.
- As members of the Church of Christ, we specifically are challenged with this question because we do not participate other churches in denominational programs or events. We are asked why we don't have fellowship or associate ourselves with all other churches as most do. Often, this is viewed as us having an arrogant or exclusive attitude. We are seen as the "holier than thou" church. Obviously, none of these labels are really positive in nature, but that should not get us down. There are some things that we would have to consider in order to answer the question of why we don't have fellowship with all other churches, and I would like for us to consider 3 points on this issue this evening.

### **I. Jesus desires for unity and fellowship among His people.**

- A. The thought of having fellowship with all churches is a noble ideal, especially when considering the fact that Jesus desires for all of His followers to be unified in Him.
  1. It makes logical sense for Jesus to want His followers to not be divided while trying to live and work for Him.
  2. He prayed for His disciples to all be unified together as He and His Father are one. **(John 17:20-23)**
  3. The Apostle Paul was very upset with the Corinthians who were dividing themselves up into different groups instead of simply uniting under the name of Christ. **(I Cor. 1:10-13)**
  4. Jesus didn't want divisions and His Apostles didn't approve of divisions among God's people either.
  5. We should strive to be joined together in fellowship with all disciples of Jesus.
- B. The issue occurs when not all "followers" of Jesus follow His will and commandments.
  1. Sadly, not all those who "claim" Jesus actually live according to the will and commandments of Jesus.
  2. Our Lord recognized that this would be the case very early on. He knew that there would be many who claimed to be disciples that, in fact, were not true followers. **(Matt. 7:21-23)**
  3. Those who love God, desire to be pleasing to Him, and to have fellowship with Him must walk in the light and according to His commandments. **(II John 6-11)**
  4. If we are not willing to believe and live according to the doctrines of Christ then we cannot have fellowship with Him or with others who are living according to His doctrines.
  5. Fellowship is not based solely on the claim of following Jesus, but it is based upon our actions, beliefs, and teachings of God's Word.

### **II. Having fellowship with all churches would not be logical.**

- A. Churches through Christianity differ completely on different issues.
  1. Some teach that we must worship on Sunday while others teach that we must worship on Saturday.
  2. Some teach that we must observe the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day while some only on certain special days.
  3. Some teach that you can use mechanical instruments of music while worshipping and others teach that you cannot use mechanical instruments of music while worshipping.
  4. Some teach that sins are forgiven with the sinners prayer while others say that faithful baptism is the point where sins are forgiven.
  5. It should be obvious that there is great diversity on some of the most basic teachings of Christianity.
- B. Therefore, to have fellowship with all churches would mean that we approve or condone teachings that directly contradict what we teach from Scripture.
  1. John made it very clear that there are just some things that are true. It was true that Jesus came in the flesh and he and the other Apostles proclaimed that. **(I John 1:3)**
  2. If the reader wanted to have fellowship with them then they had to also believe in Jesus and walk in the light. **(I John 1:4-7)**
  3. It is not logical to think that John would accept fellowship with someone who denied Jesus as God in the flesh. That just cannot happen.

4. It cannot happen because something cannot be true and false at the same time. (The Law of Noncontradiction) Two contradictory beliefs cannot both be true at the same time. That may be politically incorrect to some to many, but the simple truth is that someone must be wrong when two ideas are completely different and contradictory.
5. Therefore, two groups who hold completely contradictory beliefs on essential issues cannot have fellowship. To do otherwise would be completely illogical.

### **III. Having fellowship with all churches would require an abandonment of convictions.**

- A. The plea of many today is that we should simply “agree to disagree.”
  1. There are times when we can practice different things and still be in fellowship based upon liberty.
    - a) Different worship orders
    - b) Different times of services
    - c) Different frequency of services
  2. We have liberty to choose how we will go about our way with some things concerning the church.
  3. However, the plea for “agreeing to disagree” often reaches out toward things that are not left up to our judgement.
  4. The plea to “agree to disagree” is often coupled with a call for humility. If you do not “agree to disagree” then you are being arrogant in thinking that only what you believe is true. We should have convictions based upon our study of God’s Word, and if we truly believe those convictions then we should be willing to boldly stand upon them until our position is proven to be incorrect.
  5. We ought to be anchored in the truth of God’s Word. He wants us to be anchored so that we are not “carried about by every wind of doctrine.” **(Eph. 4:14)**
  6. The last ditch effort for many would be to say that we should just “agree to disagree” on all things since we all are simply seeking to love Jesus.
- B. Again, this plea is made with the best of intentions, but it is not a Biblical approach to fellowship.
  1. Fellowship must be based upon righteous believes and practices in the light. **(I John 1:7)**
  2. There is can be no argument or disagreements on certain things that God has given us as true. **(Eph. 4:4-6)**
  3. If we were to have fellowship with all churches then we would have to come off of our believes and practices that are based upon Biblical truth. We would have to acknowledge that there is no absolute truth.
  4. However, if there is Truth then we should seek to believe and behave according to Truth. That would mean that we could not have fellowship and approve of that which is not true.
  5. Our fellowship with others must be based upon a common respect and obedience to the Truth of God’s Word.

The call to have universal fellowship among all those who profess Christ is a noble one. However, it is something that just cannot happen unless all agree upon a set standard of Truth from God’s Word. Our goal should be to have fellowship with all believers of Truth, and may God help us to always hold fast and strong to Truth and uphold and support all those who are willing to do the same.