

A HOUSE DIVIDED

(No. 1285 – 5/25/26 – Sermon Online Zoom)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Last week’s message (members of Christ’s body, unity)
- B. **Mark 3:24-25:** *²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.*
 1. The devil knows a divided kingdom will fall.
 2. Jesus is coming for ONE Church, ONE Body, ONE Bride!
How are we doing?

II. ONE UNITED BODY

- A. God has always wanted unity
 1. The mystery of the Trinity—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are ONE:
Gen. 1:26: *Then God [Heb. *elohim* (plural)] said, “Let Us make man in **Our** image, in **Our** likeness...”*
 2. **Ps. 133:1-3:** *¹How **good and pleasant** it is when brothers live together in **unity** [“*armonía*” (harmony) in RVR]! ²*It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down upon the collar of his robes. ³It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For **there the LORD bestows His blessing**, even life forevermore.**
 3. Harmony isn’t unison—it consists of different (yet consonant) notes that blend together in a constructive way that is pleasing and reinforcing, producing a richer sound than simple unison. (We’ll see later that God wants the same in His Church—diversity AND unity at the same time!)
- B. God’s plan for the Church is to come to “complete unity”:
John 17:15-23: *¹⁵My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷Sanctify them by the truth; **Your word is truth.** ¹⁸As You sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹For them I sanctify Myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. ²⁰My prayer is not for*

*them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. ²²I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one: ²³I in them and You in Me. **May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.***

1. There can be no unity without truth—God’s word.
2. The world is watching us! Is our behavior inspiring unbelievers to turn to Jesus, or are we turning them off and away?
3. Jesus is *still* praying and interceding for unity (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25)!

C. The Early Church

1. **Acts 2:1:** *When the day of Pentecost came, they were **all together** [“with one accord” NKJV] in one place.*
2. **Acts 2:41-47:** *⁴¹Those who accepted His message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴**All the believers were together and had everything in common.** ⁴⁵Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶**Every day they continued to meet together** in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and **ate together** with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*
3. **Acts 4:32:** *All the believers were **one in heart and mind.** No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they **shared everything** they had.*

D. Members of ONE Body

1. It is common practice in most local churches (I did it for years!) to indoctrinate newcomers in a Membership Class and have them seek formal membership in the church. There is NO BIBLICAL PRECEDENT for doing this!

2. There are only two types of members mentioned in the NT—members of religious councils/institutions or members of the Body of Christ:
 - a) **Mark 15:43:** *Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council...*
 - b) **John 3:1:** *Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council.*
 - c) **Acts 5:17:** *Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy.*
 - d) **Acts 6:9:** *Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen [they were responsible for stirring up the crowd to martyr Stephen!]*
 - e) **Acts 17:34:** *A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.*

3. The only “church” members mentioned in the NT are those who were UNITED to Christ, NOT an organization or institution:
 - a) **Rom. 6:4-5:** *⁴We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵If we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection.*
 - b) **1 Cor. 6:15-17:** *¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” ¹⁷But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in spirit.*

4. **Eph. 3:1-6:** *¹For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—²Surely you have heard*

about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³that is, the **mystery made known to me by revelation**, as I have already written briefly. ⁴In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶This mystery is that through the gospel the **Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body**, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

5. **Eph. 2:19-22:** ¹⁹Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and **members of God's household**, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹**In Him** the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²²And **in Him** you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.

<p>One body, one temple, NOT many!</p>
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6. **Eph. 4:25:** Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all **members of one body**.
7. **Eph. 5:30-32:** ³⁰For we are **members of His body**. ³¹"For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."
³²This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

- a) In v.30, NKJV adds: "[members] of His flesh and of His bones."
- b) This naturally follows from the text in Genesis that Paul is using to show Adam and Eve as a type of Christ and His Church:

Gen. 2:21-24 (NKJV): ²¹And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. ²²Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. ²³And Adam said: "This is now **bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh**; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴Therefore a man

shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

- (1) Where did Eve come from? From Adam's rib (flesh and bone)!
 - (2) Where did the Church come from? Paul says from Christ's flesh and bones!
8. **Col. 3:15:** *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as **members of one body** you were called to peace. And be thankful.*
9. **1 Cor. 11:29** (NKJV): *For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, **not discerning the Lord's body.***
- a) We can be blinded by a denominational or "my church" spirit and not be able to discern the Body of Christ.
 - b) We need to have our minds renewed and receive a fresh vision of the ONE AND ONLY CHURCH—the worldwide Body of Christ. I want to be a member of *that Church!*
10. **1 Cor. 12:4-29:** *⁴There are **different** kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are **different** kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are **different** kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. ⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are the work of **one and the same Spirit**, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines.*
- ¹²**The body is a unit**, though it is made up of **many parts**; and though all its parts are many, they form **one body**. So it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by one Spirit into **one body**—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the **one Spirit** to drink. ¹⁴Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵If the foot should say,*

“Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

*¹⁶And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But in fact **God has arranged the parts in the body**, every one of them, just as **He wanted** them to be.*

*¹⁹If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are **many parts, but one body**. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, **“I don’t need you!”** And the head cannot say to the feet, **“I don’t need you!”** ²²On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵so that **there should be no division in the body**, but that its parts should have **equal concern for each other**. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.*

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸And in the church, God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?

- a) What a marvelous revelation God gave Paul—the Church is one functioning unit, just like the human body!
- b) Every member of the body is important—no member can exist without the rest of the body, and no member can say to another member, “I don’t need you!”
- c) Different gifts, ministries and members all united into ONE body—this is *harmony*, not unison!

Rom.12:16: *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*

III. UNITY IN EPHESIANS

- A. God's eternal purpose: To unite all things under the Head Christ Jesus:

Eph. 1:9-10 (NKJV): ⁹*Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times **He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.***

- B. Jews and Gentiles united into one Body, one Temple:

Eph. 2:14-22 (NKJV): ¹⁴*For He Himself is our peace, who has made both [Jews & Gentiles] one, and has **broken down the middle wall of separation,** ¹⁵having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as **to create in Himself one new man from the two,** thus making peace, ¹⁶and that He might reconcile them both to God **in one body** through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but **fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,** ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being **built together** for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*

- C. Make every effort:

Eph. 4:1-6: ¹*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³**Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace. ⁴There is **one body and one Spirit**—just as you were called to **one hope** when you were called—⁵**one Lord, one faith, one baptism;** ⁶**one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.***

1. Unity is going to require “every effort”!
2. Note how often Paul repeats the same words throughout his epistles, “one body... one body... one body!”

D. The need for the five-fold ministry:

Eph. 4:7-16: ⁷But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸This is why it says: “When He ascended on high, He led captives in His train and gave gifts to men.” ⁹(What does “He ascended” mean except that He also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹It was **He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,** ¹²to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³**until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.** ¹⁴Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

1. Unity cannot come without ALL of these ministries.
2. Their job is not done “UNTIL we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God”!

IV. THE MYSTERY OF THE LAMPSTAND

A. **Rev. 1:12-13, 20:** ¹²I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and among the lampstands was Someone “like a son of man,” dressed in a robe reaching down to His feet and with a golden sash around His chest... ²⁰The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in My right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the **seven lampstands are the seven churches.**

1. These were 7 churches defined by geography—Ephesus, Smyrna, etc.—NOT denominations or “Bob’s Church,” “Raphael’s 4th Pentecostal Church,” etc.
2. The imagery is taken from the Tabernacle in the OT, and all seven lamps were hammered into ONE piece!

B. **Ex. 25:31-32, 36-37:** ³¹*Make a **lampstand of pure gold and hammer it out**, base and shaft; its flowerlike cups, buds and blossoms **shall be of one piece** with it.* ³²*Six branches are to extend from the sides of the lampstand—three on one side and three on the other...* ³⁶*The buds and branches shall all be of **one piece** with the lampstand, **hammered out** of pure gold.* ³⁷*Then make its **seven lamps** and set them up on it so that they light the space in front of it.*

1. Seven lamps, one lampstand—it was all one unit.
2. Maybe God is going to have to hammer on us a bit more to make us “one piece”:

Jer. 23:29: *“Is not **My word** like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a **hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?**”*

C. Jesus warned the Ephesian Church (how interesting—the same church Paul had written so much about unity) that they could lose their place in His Lampstand if they didn’t repent:

Rev. 2:5: *Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and **remove your lampstand from its place.***

V. DIVISIONS—ENEMIES OF UNITY

- A. Pastor Tom and I were ministering in a certain city in Dominican Republic, and there were three different churches that had split off from the same church and their buildings were all on the same street! (God has a sense of humor and He sometimes uses it to show us just how foolish we have become!) We knew the leaders and their members from all three churches. We were staying in the home of one of the pastors and we were holding special meetings in one of the other churches. We tried to get the three churches to come together for a joint meeting, but they refused! How tragic. Remember, Jesus said the world is watching all of this! Why would any unbeliever want to join this mess?
- B. There are churches that Pastor Tom and I have helped start (and pastored!) that will not even receive us now! That’s right, we are not welcome! I’ve tried explaining this to my Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim friends—they can’t understand what’s wrong with us! Do you blame them?
- C. There are many causes of division—here are a few common ones:

D. Bitterness and unforgiveness

1. **Mat. 5:23-26:** ²³Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that **your brother has something against you**, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. **First go and be reconciled to your brother**; then come and offer your gift. ²⁵**Settle matters quickly** with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.
2. **Mat. 18:15-17:** ¹⁵If **your brother sins against you**, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. ¹⁶But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that “every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.
3. **Mark 11:24-26:** ²⁴Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ²⁵And when you stand praying, if **you hold anything against anyone**, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. ²⁶[But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins.]
4. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation:
 - a) **2 Cor. 5:18:** *All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.*
 - b) Paul had to call out two women by name in Philippi and beseech them to reconcile:

Phil. 4:2-3: ²I *plead* [“entreat, implore, beseech”] with Euodia and I *plead* [“entreat, implore, beseech”] with Syntyche **to agree with each other in the Lord.** ³Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, **help these women** who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

- c) A third-grade teacher at LGCS has a nice, simple way of resolving conflicts between two of her students—she tells them: “First one to the Cross wins!” Maybe we should try that in the Church!

E. Selfishness & pride

1. Testimony: I spent a number of years with 3 different ministries—each one thought they were better than everyone else! Make no mistake—pride is very prevalent in churches!
2. Ministries can become modern versions of the Tower of Babel:
 - a) **Gen. 11:1-9:** *¹Now the **whole world had one language and a common speech.** ²As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. ³They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. ⁴Then they said, “Come, **let us build ourselves a city**, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may **make a name for ourselves** and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.” ⁵But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. ⁶The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷Come, **let Us go down** [the Triune Godhead united to deal with this proud rebellion!] and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” ⁸So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. ⁹That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.*
 - b) Testimony: Vision of Babel in Honduras
3. Sadly, many churches are a “one man show”—there is no need or room for a five-fold ministry!
 - a) Home building requires many different specialists (excavation, foundation, framing, etc.)—the Church is no different!

- b) Have we forgotten what happened to self-exalting Lucifer?

Isa. 14:12-15 (NKJV): ¹²*How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!* ¹³*For you have said in your heart: “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.”* ¹⁵*Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.*

- c) Let’s humble ourselves and follow Christ’s example:

Phil. 2:3-8: ³*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.* ⁴*Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.* ⁵*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

4. Leaders with a “Diotrephes spirit”

- a) **3 John 1:9-11**: ⁹*I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.* ¹⁰*Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.* ¹¹*Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.*

- (1) Diotrephes was obviously a church leader with authority (and a big ego!)
- (2) He had a controlling spirit—he mistakenly thought the church was his, and he had no need of the Apostle John or any other ministers.

- (3) If anyone questioned his actions or authority, he shunned/excommunicated them!
- b) Pastor Tom and I have had some very unpleasant experiences over the years with “Diotrephes” pastors. There are churches we have labored in for years—we only brought blessing and help, never trouble or harm—but now we are NOT WELCOME in those churches! Does that sound like unity and the Spirit of Christ?
5. Other churches are merely “family-owned businesses”—most if not all ministry and leadership positions are family members! Sound familiar?
- a) The world calls this *nepotism*: “Nepotism is the practice of using your power or influence to grant jobs, promotions, or other unfair advantages to family members, regardless of their qualifications. It frequently happens in business, politics, and the entertainment industry, often alienating qualified candidates and hurting overall morale.”
- b) Churches like this tend to be very carnal and cliquish.

F. Carnality/national & ethnic distinctions

1. **1 Cor. 1:10-13:** ¹⁰*I appeal* [“entreat, implore, beseech”] **to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.** ¹¹*My brothers, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.* ¹²*What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.”* ¹³**Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?**
2. **1 Cor. 3:1-7** (NKJV): ¹*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.* ²*I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;* ³*for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?* ⁴*For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?* ⁵*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but*

*ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷So then **neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.***

3. Pastors and ministers—did you hear that? You and I are NOTHING! Stop thinking you are God’s main man, the star of the show! This is why the Church is so divided!
4. **2 Cor. 5:16-17** (NKJV): ¹⁶*Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.***
5. **Gal. 3:26-29:** ²⁶*You are all sons of God through faith ⁱⁿ Christ Jesus, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is **neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** ²⁹*If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.**
6. **1 Pet. 2:9:** *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, **a holy nation**, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.*
7. **Phil. 3:17-20:** ¹⁷*Join with others in **following my example**, brothers, and take note of those who **live according to the pattern we gave you.** ¹⁸For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, **many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.** ¹⁹Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. **Their mind is on earthly things.** ²⁰**But our citizenship is in heaven.** And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.*
8. If we cling to our national pride and want to have an American church, a Korean church, etc., God has a place for the *nations* on New Earth, but NOT in New Jerusalem:
Rev. 21:24-26: ²⁴*The **nations** will walk by its [New Jerusalem’s] light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶The glory and honor of the **nations** will be brought into it.*

G. False leaders and wrong doctrine

1. **Acts 20:28-32** (NKJV): ²⁸*Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹For I know this, that after my departure **savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.** ³⁰Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. ³²So now, brethren, **I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.***
2. **2 Pet. 2:1-3**: ¹*But there were also false prophets among the people, even as **there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.** ²And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³By covetousness **they will exploit you** [“make merchandise of you” KJV] with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.*
3. **Jude 1:17-19**: ¹⁷*But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: ¹⁸how they told you that **there would be mockers in the last time** who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. ¹⁹These are sensual persons, **who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.***
4. **Rom. 16:17-19**: ¹⁷*Now I urge you, brethren, **note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.** ¹⁸For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. ¹⁹For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore, I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.*

5. The only way to avoid divisions over doctrine is to unite around the TRUTH of God's Word, NOT our own opinions, interpretations or traditions:
 - a) **2 Pet. 1:19-21:** ¹⁹*And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;* ²⁰*knowing this first, that **no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,*** ²¹*for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*
 - b) **2 Tim. 3:15-17:** ¹⁵*And that from childhood you have known the **Holy Scriptures,** which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁶*All **Scripture** is given by inspiration of God, and is **profitable for doctrine,** for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,* ¹⁷*that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*
6. Before Jesus prayed for unity, He prayed for sanctification through the truth:

John 17:17-19: ¹⁷*Sanctify them by the **truth;** **Your word is truth.*** ¹⁸*As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.* ¹⁹*For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.*
7. Testimony: Tuning instruments in a band—you need a standard that everyone tunes to.
8. The Church must mature and reach a unity in doctrine and belief in order to avoid false doctrines:

Eph. 4:13-15: ¹³*Until **we all reach unity in the faith** and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature,** attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.* ¹⁴*Then **we will no longer be infants,** tossed back and forth by the waves, and **blown here and there by every wind of teaching** and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.* ¹⁵*Instead, speaking the **truth** in love, we will in all things **grow up into Him** who is the Head, that is, Christ.*
9. NOTE: There may be minor differences in interpretation of certain unclear scriptural passages, but when it comes to essential, foundational doctrines handed down by the apostles, the Church must come to unity in the faith.

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. The purpose of this message is not to bash or criticize churches and pastors—this comes from a heart that loves the Church and aches over the divisions that are hindering us from getting ready for Christ’s soon return.
- B. Let’s all humble ourselves and stop thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought
- C. Let’s study and put into practice the many “one another” commandments in the NT:
 - 1. We are members one of another
 - 2. Love one another
 - 3. Be kind and compassionate to one another
 - 4. Bear with one another
 - 5. Submit to one another
 - 6. Serve/care for one another
 - 7. Greet/receive one another
 - 8. Honor one another
 - 9. Be devoted to one another
 - 10. Live in harmony/agree with one another
 - 11. Encourage one another daily
 - 12. Offer hospitality to one another
 - 13. Fellowship with one another
- D. Christ is building His Church—it is One Body, One Holy Temple—a beautiful harmony of many different people becoming One Holy Nation. Amen.

*How wonderful and pleasant it is
when brothers live together in harmony!
For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil
that was poured over Aaron's head,
that ran down his beard and onto the border of his robe.
Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon
that falls on the mountains of Zion.
And there the LORD has pronounced His blessing,
even life everlasting.*

Psalm 133:1-3 (NLT)