

## Unity in Jesus

In Jesus' time, the Roman Empire which dominated Europe, the Middle East and North Africa naturally used military force to provide for its integrity and unity. The job of the military was not only to quash rebellion but also by controlling piracy it was to provide a fantastic security for trade. Along with this Rome sought common points to support unity in the empire. There were various tribes, peoples and languages and religions in the empire. Rome did not command people to abandon their mother tongues or their religions. They did command people at times to perform common worship rites directed to Rome itself or of the emperor to secure loyalty.

Throughout history regimes have throughout conquered territories tried to wipe out people's mother tongue or heart religion to provide unity and loyalty to the regime. Sometimes it is successful. A conquered people can lose their language and their religion. Most of the time although it may be partially successful, in the long run the method is unsuccessful.

Today, in Turkey, there are various languages, religions, races and ideas. Turkey's leaders are trying to maintain Turkey's integrity and unity. On every side there are factions who either want to divide Turkey or change it according to their own ideals. They resort to violence and terrorism. We condemn this violence and terror. To the families of our countrymen and guests who have lost their loved ones to terrorism we extend our condolences. God has not called us to violence but to peace.

Romans 13:1-10 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. <sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. <sup>4</sup> For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil. <sup>5</sup> Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. <sup>6</sup> For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. <sup>7</sup> Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due*, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. <sup>8</sup> Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if *there is* any other commandment, are *all* summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law.

Unity begins in the heart. So Jesus does not call us to a political movement. He calls us to love and respect. Politics cannot change our hate and animosity to love and respect. What can change the heart?

Roughly 10-12 hours before Jesus was crucified Jesus was together with his disciples. They ate together and they spoke. Afterwards Jesus prayed for the disciples. In His prayer He said:

John 17:20-23 " I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; <sup>21</sup> "that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. <sup>22</sup> "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: <sup>23</sup> "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

Nations and even soccer teams shout, "We are one!" What do they mean? Their goals are the same. They work together to defend their homeland, to further a cause or to win a game. O.K. was Jesus talking about this kind of unity?

Of course Jesus' call included the disciples working together steadfastly and together in the cause of God. But the unity that Jesus is talking about goes deeper.

John 17:21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us

There is a mystery here. How can the Almighty God be in Jesus and Jesus be in the Almighty God?

Luke 4:1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit. God was in Jesus and Jesus in His Father through the Holy Spirit. Jesus calls us to be in Jesus and in the Father through the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Romans 8:9-10 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. <sup>10</sup> And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

In these verses the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are the same. They are one. When we accept the Spirit of Christ who did not sin, we become new creatures. We are new. It is not politics that changes our hearts. It is the Spirit of Christ.

How can we receive the Holy Spirit?

John 7:38-39 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." <sup>39</sup> But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

The unity that is in Christ is different than what the world offers, it is not man-made and transitory. The unity that Jesus gives is spiritual and powerful because the unity is provided by the Holy Spirit of God.

We celebrate the Lord's Supper today. The Lord's Supper is a rite that symbolizes the Lord in us and we in the Lord. So the rite is for those who have believed in Jesus and received the Holy Spirit in their hearts and shown this by being baptized.

May God bless His children and through His children the world.