

## INTRODUCTION

### I. Review

#### 1. Cults or Counterfeits

##### (1) Counterfeits

- i. the gospel may be present within its confession, but has become obscured or distorted, inadvertently or otherwise, by superfluous doctrines, authorities or practices, wherein the gospel is often not central in the life of the community.
- ii. Some are saved.

##### (2) Cults

- i. the gospel is absent from its confession, while at the same time, may leverage the gospel, its language or its components, to advance its doctrines and practices.
- ii. No one is saved.

#### 2. Orthodoxy

##### (1) ortho (right) + doxy (doctrine)

##### (2) Guide

- i. Trinity
- ii. Authority
- iii. Liberty

#### 3. Jehovah's Witnesses

##### (1) Cult or counterfeit?

- i. **Reject** the authority of Scripture, but rather the Watchtower Society is their final authority on earth.
- ii. **Reject** that eternal liberty is imputed by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But rather, salvation requires faith, association with God's organization (Watchtower), and obedience to its rules.
- iii. **Reject** the Trinitarian God of the Bible, instead opting for an impersonal force in God the Spirit, a created angel in God the Son, and an overemphasized name in God the Father.

## II. Distinctions (v3a)

### 1. Is it helpful to make distinctions? (chart)

#### (1) Oneism

- i. Genesis 3 = obliterate distinctions (like God)
- ii. Pantheism
- iii. Gender
- iv. Sin

#### (2) Twoism

- i. Creator from Creation
- ii. Man from Woman
- iii. Light from Dark
- iv. Truth from Lies
- v. Jew from Gentile
- vi. Christian from the world

### 2. Distinct doesn't always mean separate.

- (1) Man is distinct from woman, but unified in marriage
- (2) Jew is distinct from gentile, but unified in the Gospel

(3) Jesus is distinct from Father/Spirit in personhood, but one in nature

(4) Church is distinct in emphasis, but unified in essentials (Trinity/Authority/Liberty)

### III. Denominations (v3b)

#### 1. Reformation (16th Century)

- (1) Rise of denominations traced back to the Protestant Reformation, the movement to "reform" the Roman Catholic Church
- (2) Four major distinct traditions of Protestantism would emerge:
  - i. Lutheran - Martin Luther on justification
  - ii. Reformed - emphasis on sanctification
  - iii. Baptist (Anabaptist) - emphasis on the importance of baptism
  - iv. Anglican - structured church of England; bridge between catholic and protestant
- (3) From these four, other denominations grew over the centuries:
  - i. Methodists - got their name because their founder, John Wesley, was famous for coming up with "methods" for spiritual growth
  - ii. Presbyterians - named for their view on church leadership—the Greek word for elder is '*presbyteros*'

#### 2. Intention (to contend and emphasize)

- (1) Each denomination has a slightly different doctrine or emphasis from the others:
  - i. method of baptism
  - ii. the availability of the Lord's Supper to all or just to those whose testimonies can be verified by church leaders
  - iii. the sovereignty of God vs. human responsibility in the matter of salvation
  - iv. the future of Israel and the church
  - v. pre-tribulation vs. post-tribulation rapture
  - vi. the existence of the "sign" gifts in the modern era
  - vii. and so on.
- (2) The point of these divisions was never intended to have anything to do with the Triune God of the Bible, the Authority of Scripture, or Liberty by grace alone through faith alone.
- (3) But rather honest differences of opinion by godly, albeit flawed, people seeking to honor God and retain doctrinal purity according to their consciences and their understanding of His Word.
- (4) Diversity is a good thing, but disunity is not.

#### 3. Two Major Problems:

- (1) Scripture is Silent
  - i. method of baptism
- (2) Impetus is Conflict

- i. Denominationalism is the result of, or caused by, conflict and confrontation which led to division and separation of the church.

**1 COR. 1:12-13** | "What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"

**MK. 3:25** | "And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand."

- ii. Disagreements over the interpretation of Scripture are taken personally and become points of contention.
- iii. This leads to arguments which can and have done much to destroy the witness of the church. (Horizon vs Anthem) (Alan vs Allen)
- iv. Unity is found in the ability to create relationships, pool our gifts, and share our resources to promote a unified Gospel to a lost world. This, to some degree, runs contrary to divisions caused by denominationalism.

#### 4. Corruptions (v4)

- (1) Every denomination runs, at least the risk, of becoming a corruption: a cult or counterfeit, who **perverts the grace and denies Jesus**.
- (2) How do you know the difference between a faithful, denominational attempt at emphasis from a corruption who is perverting grace, denying Jesus and we should distinguish and separate from?
  - i. Trinity, Authority, Liberty.

### IV. Implications (How to distinguish without separating) (v17-23)

- 1. Divisions are about "ungodly passions"
  - i. Obedience becomes about prosperity
  - ii. Mission becomes about activism
  - iii. Love becomes syncretism (vs sectarianism)
- 2. They will force separation by their "scoffing" at your "contending"
  - i. Faithfulness to the Word
  - ii. Exclusivity of the gospel
  - iii. Clarity on sin
- 3. "Build yourself up"
  - i. Holy faith - the word and the community are the best instruments
  - ii. Prayer
- 4. "Keep yourself in"
  - i. the love of God = the Gospel
- 5. "Have mercy on those who doubt"
  - i. Because they may not be as distinct as you think
- 6. "Save others"
  - i. Because they may be more distinct that you think (so use the grid)
- 7. "Hate even the garment stained by flesh"
  - i. Anything that disrupts our unity
  - ii. **Pastor Bill Berry**

### V. Doxology (v24-25)

**VIDEO:** "Fix You"

