

Ecumenism

Charismatics claim such things as a focus on Jesus, praise, expectation of Christ's return, awareness of evil, and evangelism as the essential elements of their movement. These elements are in evidence in the Charismatic Movement, but they are not its most distinctive features. The essential elements of charismatics are: (Dictionary of Theological Terms)

1. Restorationism—the belief that the supernatural gifts of the apostolic church are available to the church today, especially speaking in tongues, healing, and prophecy.
2. Continuing Revelation—the belief that “God speaks to his people, corporately and personally, as directly and as regularly as in the first Christian century.” That is, the Holy Ghost gives new, authoritative, extra-Biblical revelations that are binding on the consciences of those to whom they are directed.
3. Ecumenism—the pursuit of unity on the basis of a shared experience rather than on the great essential doctrines of the gospel. David du Plessis, sometimes called “Mr. Pentecost,” insisted that to be truly charismatic you must be ecumenical, and to be truly ecumenical you must be charismatic.

These essential elements of the Charismatic Movement—restorationism, continuing revelation, and unscriptural ecumenism—mark it as a serious threat to the purity of the gospel and to the mission of the church as it seeks to be faithful to Christ in the face of widespread apostasy.

This lesson will focus on the last element, Ecumenism.

I. What is Ecumenism?

- A. the movement or tendency toward worldwide Christian unity or cooperation. The term, of recent origin, emphasizes what is viewed as the universality of the Christian churches.
 1. The word ecumenism is derived from the Greek word *oikoumenē* (“the inhabited world”) In the Gospel of Matthew the good news is proclaimed through all the world (*oikoumenē*; Matt 24:14; compare Rom 10:18). It can also refer collectively to all the inhabitants of this world (e.g., Luke 2:1; Acts 17:31).
 2. In Acts 19:27, Demetrius says that the whole world (*oikoumenē*) worships the Greek goddess Artemis. In Revelation, Satan is the deceiver of the world (*oikoumenē*; Rev 12:9). Finally, it can refer to the world at the time of the first century AD (i.e., Roman Empire; Acts 17:6; 24:5). In most cases in the bible the use of the word is talking about the entire world but not in a coming together but rather just being in existence.
- B. Christians in the Ecumenical movement.
 1. Christians make up the largest population of religion in the world as of 2015. (31% of the world's population claim Christianity)
 2. The fastest growing religion in the world is Muslim.

We all know that Christians and Muslims do not agree theologically. The problem comes from within the Christian faith. Many look at the Christian faith and want to have us all come together in unity but what does the Bible say. There are three questions that we must ask ourselves when faced with this movement:

- Do all Christians believe the same?
- Can we all serve God together?
- Do you know what you believe?

II. What We Believe!

A. Before we can begin, we must know what we believe about the most basic of theological doctrine.

1. We believe that the depraved sinner is saved wholly by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and the requisites to regeneration are repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and that the Holy Spirit convicts sinners, regenerates, seals, secures, and indwells every believer. Eph. 2:8-9
2. We believe that all who trust Jesus Christ for salvation are eternally secure in Him and shall not perish. John 10:29
3. We believe that Jesus Christ established His church during His ministry on earth and that it is always a local, visible assembly of scripturally baptized believers in covenant relationship to carry out the Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ, and each church is an independent, self-governing body, and no other ecclesiastical body may exercise authority over it. Matthew 16:18
4. We believe in the infallible, verbal inspiration of the whole Bible and that the Bible is the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. II Timothy 3:16 & 17

B. These are some of the most basic doctrine. There are many more that can be brought out. These are found in the ABA books.

III. What Others Believe.

A. We already know that Baptist do not agree with Muslims, Buddhists, or most eastern religions, but what about other so-called Christian faiths.

1. **Assembly of God** - "Salvation is received through repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, being justified by grace through faith, man becomes an heir of God, according to the hope of eternal life. But salvation can be lost by the person." AG.org
2. **Church of Christ:** believe that through the atonement of Christ all men may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel. Faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ must come through Repentance and Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. One can lose their salvation but does not have to be re-baptized.

3. **Roman Catholic** - Salvation is received by virtue of the sacrament of Baptism. It may be lost by mortal sin and may be regained by Penance. Catechism and book of Common Prayers
 4. **Methodist** - Methodists do believe salvation can be lost. "God accepts my choice ... and continues to reach out to me with the grace of repentance to bring me back to the way of salvation and sanctification." UMC
- B. As you can see many differ on the basic doctrines that Baptist hold so dear. I will also throw in at this point that even in the Baptist faith there is some disagreement. So know what you believe and why you believe it.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. The ultimate goal of all ecumenical efforts is full, organic unity - a single Church body, united both visibly and invisibly. What we as Baptist would call a Universal Church.
- B. Should a Child of God participate in the Ecumenical movement? Ask these three questions:
 1. Does it compromise the Word of God?
 2. Is God being glorified?
 3. Will it hurt your testimony for Christ?

One of the draws of ecumenism is that often theologically divergent groups are passionately like-minded regarding certain issues. Biblical Christians usually hold a strong pro-life stance, a traditional view of the family, a conviction to care for the homeless and sick, and a desire to see justice in the world. Other groups, which may have unbiblical theology, can hold the same social positions. Thus, the temptation to pool resources in pursuit of a common cause is sometimes great. Often, sharing the gospel becomes an afterthought, if it is even thought of at all. In place of the gospel, ecumenism tends to focus on political and social messages. Rather than seek to transform hearts, ecumenical endeavors often seek to transform environments—political, social, or financial. The ultimate goal of our actions should be the salvation of lost sinners. There is nothing in the Bible that says the angels rejoice when a law is passed, when a well is dug, or when a street is paved. (Not that there is anything wrong with accomplishing those things, but they cannot be allowed to overshadow the gospel.) As we contemplate ecumenical ventures, we need to make sure God's kingdom is being expanded and God is being glorified.