

holding the same faith and order. The so-called universal invisible church theory is simply Satan's tool to justify those who have departed from the faith.

## **7. It robs the New Testament Churches of any abstract Instruction**

It is common for a Pastor to make the statement, "This morning I will be preaching on the church and its ordinances." He didn't say what particular church or what particular ordinances but it is a common abstract statement that is commonly understood to mean the kind of church and ordinances practiced by that very Pastor and church. Most admit that the epistles written by the apostle Paul were circular letters intended to be passed from church to church (Col. 4:16) for common edification of all the churches since he was imprisoned and unable to return and build up each church. His letters are full of abstract language for teaching about "*the servant*" and "*the wife*" and "*the husband*" and "*the laborer*" and "*the old man*" and "*the new man*" and "*the body*" and "*the church*" and the list goes on. Such is common abstract language intended to instruct the particular person or church that reads it.

Yet, every passage where this same abstract use of language occurs, it is robbed from New Testament churches and applied to something that cannot possibly make any kind of application of *practical* unity between its membership or *practical* assembling of its membership. Instead it justifies practical division and separation.

## **8. It promotes irresponsibility and disobedience to God's Word**

The Great Commission is about making "disciples" and that very term necessarily includes discipline in New Testament faith and practice. The local visible church is placed in authority over its membership for instructive, corrective, and if necessary, purgative disci-

pline (Mt. 18:15-18; 1Co. 5; 2Th. 3:6). However, the doctrine of the Universal Invisible Church completely invalidates any kind of church discipline whether it is instructive, corrective, or purgative. The disciplined person simply tells the church, "*I belong to the TRUE church and I can worship God upon the hill or at my home or go to another church of "my" choice.*" Such a person will leave and will either join some church that promotes their sin or they will meet in their home and start a new denomination to promote their sins. Yet, they will leave and justify their departure on the boast they belong to the "TRUE" Church that requires no accountability to anyone and in reality promotes disobedience to Christ. This doctrine is the safe haven for all kinds of apostasy under the guise of the "true" church of Christ.

### **CONCLUSION**

In reality the theory of a Universal Invisible Church is the doctrinal justification of the Great Harlot of Revelation 17-18. She is the inclusion of all denominational confusion and division. God calls upon His people to "*come out of her my people and be not a partaker*" with her in her confusion and rebellion.

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## **Eight Common Sense Reasons Why The Universal Invisible Church theory Is a False Doctrine**

### **1. It's theory contradicts its practice**

This doctrine is commonly preached and taught to be the Biblical basis for UNIFYING God's people in actual practice. However, in reality, even though it is common that several churches embracing this doctrine are to be found in almost every city throughout this country, and yet not once, has this theory ever been able to bring such churches together as one church body/denomination even though they exist sometimes only blocks or a few miles apart. It simply does not work.

Surely if it were Biblical and if it were true, then somewhere at some time, it would achieve practical unity at least between the churches embracing that theory, which only exist within walking distance from each other in the same cities!

### **2. It promotes division and confusion rather than unity**

Without this doctrine there would have been no basis for the excommunicated Reformers (Luther, Calvin, etc.) to respectfully call themselves churches of Christ. They would have remained simply excommunicated Roman Catholics or have had to come over to the dreaded and hated Anabaptists. This doctrine gave them a way to separate from Rome **and from each other** and has been the basis for countless numbers of such separations until this very day. Indeed, it is reported that there are now over 37,000 different Christian denominations in the world and five new ones are formed each week. This doctrine is the ONLY basis used for justifying the existence

of each new one and thus creating further division and confusion. The character of this doctrine is seen in its only fruit – further division and disunity within Christendom. Its fruit manifests it to be a false doctrine.

### **3. It's Advocates cannot agree on its membership**

Its advocates cannot agree among themselves who is included in this kind of church. *Dispensational* Universal Invisible advocates deny that all the saints living before Pentecost are in this church. Amazingly the distinguishing factor according to this theory is that all saints after Pentecost to the Rapture are "in Christ" and those previous to Pentecost are not "in Christ" and therefore the very gospel is attacked demanding there is another salvation OUTSIDE of Christ.

*Non-dispensational* Universal Invisible advocates include all the elect in all ages but then contradict themselves by interpreting I Corinthians 12:13 as "*Spirit baptism*" which they also demand is the means to enter into their kind of church, when in fact, the baptism in the Spirit had no previous existence before the day of Pentecost. They have the problem of explaining how those saints living before Pentecost could enter into this kind of church one way and those after Pentecost another way!! One false doctrine can only lead and demand more false doctrines.

### **4. It includes what God commands local churches to exclude**

New Testament churches are commanded to separate from any "brother" who walks disorderly (2Th. 3:6) or who lives in openly known sin (1Co. 5:11) and have no fellowship with such (2Th. 3:14). New Testament churches are commanded to mark and avoid heretics (Rom. 16:17). However, what many refer to as the so-called "true" church embraces the very ones that New Testament

Churches are commanded to separate, mark, and avoid. Yet, the advocates of the universal invisible church theory claim that the local church is the visible expression of it!!

New Testament churches don't receive into their membership un-baptized persons. However, the so-called "true" church receives un-baptized, sprinkled, poured, or immersed persons into its membership. Yet its advocates claim that local churches are the visible expression of the universal invisible church!

This theory makes God the author of confusion. According to this theory what God demands for membership in *the visible expression* (local church) is *not expressed* in the membership requirements of the Universal invisible church. Only a false doctrine would demand such interpretations.

### **5. It can't be found in Church History before the Reformation**

If the so-called Universal Invisible Church is Biblical, then, why can't it be found prior to the Reformation Period?????? Why is the very first recorded discussion on the nature of the church just a few hundred years after the Apostles completely silent about this doctrine? Nearly 900 preachers from all over the known world convened to discuss the true nature of the church and the idea of a universal invisible church never surfaced among them! It was the council of Nicaea in 425 A.D. consisting of over 400 Donatist Anabaptists and over 400 churches that ultimately became the Roman Catholic Church.

Augustine led the debate for the Catholic and tried to introduce a new concept called the Universal VISIBLE church while the Donatists rejected it and accused him of teaching two different kinds of churches, one that was local and visible and another that was universal and visible. In the Reformation the Anabaptists accused Luther of the very same thing when he introduced the "Universal INVISIBLE church" theory. If this theory is Bib-

lical then why didn't those closest to the time of the New Testament teach it? Why did the Donatists accuse Augustine of teaching TWO KINDS of churches if there were already two kinds of churches (one visible another invisible)?????? Why? The answer is simple. It is because it is a false doctrine invented by the Reformers 1500 years after the writing of the New Testament.

### **6. It Perverts the Historical Biblical Context**

It must be remembered that during the New Testament period, all churches were like faith and order with one another and jointly referred to as "*the churches of Christ*." The contextual "*we*" found in New Testament epistles were united in the same faith and practice within the same kind of churches. Therefore, it is a perversion of the historical and Biblical context to define or interpret the contextual "*we*" in these epistles as Christians divided into contradicting denominations. This is especially true since the contextual "*we*" found in these epistles are explicitly commanded to avoid, have no fellowship with, but place under discipline such brethren who establish another kind of faith and order or conflicting and competing denominations (2Th. 3:6,14; 1Co. 5:6-13; Rom. 16:17).

Therefore, in the context of the body of Christ and the churches of Christ, the contextual "*we*" at the very minimum refers to Christians who were like faith and order existing in the same kind of churches or what today we would call the same "denomination" of churches. Yet, the universal invisible church advocates rip the pronoun "*we*" out of its historical context and make it apply to a post-New Testament era of professed Christians existing within conflicting denominations as well as inclusive of those who have no kind of church affiliation whatsoever. The truth is that the contextual "*we*" refer to all Christians who are members of the same kind of church,