

What is Denominationalism?

The term ‘*denomination*’ was never used as a reference to differing religious groups until the 1600’s. The words ‘denominate, denomination, and denominationalism all spring from the same Latin roots, **de** + **nominare**, literally meaning, “*to name*.” In mathematics, children learn that a ‘denominator’ represents the number of parts into which a unit may be divided. In the religious sense of the word, ‘*denomination*’ refers to church bodies known by specific names (or doctrines, and organizations, etc.).

Something not taught in the Bible, but found in most Protestant literature, is that a denomination is any ‘*Christian church*’ that believes it is a ‘*part*’ of the universal church (of Christ), but only ‘*one part*’ among many (which differ in doctrine or practice). Denominationalism, is larger than its individual congregations, but smaller than the whole body of Christ. The majority of denominations known today find their roots in the reformation period, not in the first century when Jesus said He would build His church (Matthew 16:18).

To the denominational as well as non-denominationalist, the word ‘*denomination*’ is a specific term that represents only those churches who believe themselves to be ‘*part*,’ of the whole, but **NOT ALL** of Christ’s church. However, the ecumenical movement has stepped in to blur the lines by working to unite denominational churches on their **common** beliefs, while overlooking their doctrinal **differences**; something even the Roman Catholic Church has been involved with since Vatican II.

The result of the reformation movement was not a complete return to the old paths of the apostolic church, but a mere tweaking of doctrines held by the Roman Catholic Church. The advent of the reformation, was due to the ‘**mess**’ Catholicism had made of Christianity; which began more to resemble heathenism, with the indulgence of flesh lusts, than what was intended by Jesus and His gospel. The reformers did not denounce the Catholic Church as heretical, only that its doctrines required reforming. The reason denominational

Christianity is sinful, is because it exists without God’s authority, and abides by the doctrines of men, and not of God.

Unauthorized Religion

The oft used question by men and women wondering about another individual’s religious stance, is “*what faith are you?*” If everyone followed the commands of God found in the New Testament, this question would never be asked. Why? Because God has stated that there is only ONE FAITH (Ephesians 4:5). Just the same as there is only **ONE BODY/CHURCH** (Ephesians 4:4; 1:22-23). When men and women chose to reject God’s commands, and doctrine, then denominational Christianity (among other false beliefs) is the result.

Sin, is the transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4). Therefore, ANY system of religion that adds to God’s Word, or subtracts from it transgresses God’s law, and therefore sins (Revelation 22:18-19; Deuteronomy 4:2). We are commanded to have authority from God in EVERYTHING we believe, teach, and practice (Colossians 3:17). God never authorized the Gentile nations to consider themselves a ‘*part*’ of His chosen people, without actually proselytizing into the Jewish faith. The same is true today. To be a Christian (God’s chosen, His spiritual Israel), one must proselytize into the Christian faith. This only occurs when one obeys the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8; Romans 6:3-6), and God ADDS them to the one true church of Christ (Acts 2:47).

Joining a denomination only serves as a false sense of security, since one is not a true member of God’s family. No one is authorized by God to propagate error, nor to cause religious division. No one is authorized by God to establish additional churches that are to be considered ‘*part*’ of the whole. John wrote of robbers entering the sheepfold in a way not authorized by God (John 10:1). Like the parable of the tares, this is a reference to denominational Christianity, which chooses to follow man’s brand of righteousness rather than Gods.

All denominations, ‘*Catholic*’ and ‘*Protestant*,’ stand as an organization that is sinful in the sight of God because it has no authority to exist in the first place. Every denomination teaches doctrines foreign to Biblical principles and truth. The church Jesus founded was not divided into ‘*parts*’ of a whole. The apostles did not establish twelve different denominations, each teaching its own doctrine and practice. Christians were members of one and the same church, all believing and teaching the same doctrine, and practicing Christianity in the same way.

Jesus prayed that His disciples (followers) ALL be one/united (John 17:20-21). He understood the harm that would come through religious division, by adding, “*That the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.*” But Satan is shrewd, as he convinced Eve that she would not surely die by eating the fruit (Genesis 3:4), so he has convinced men today that they will not die being members of denominations. Peter said, “*IF any man speak, let him speak the oracles of God*” (1 Peter 4:11). The only way to find the true church is by returning to the Bible alone for our example and authorization.

Common Errors of Denominationalism

While it is true that denominations teach ‘*some*’ truth, it is not enough to grant them God’s approval. Jesus warned, “*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*” (Matthew 7:15). John also warned, “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (1 John 4:1). Paul said, “*Prove (test) all things; hold fast to that which is good*” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

We understand that error in any part of our lives is dangerous. Just one miscalculation, and buildings fall, medicine kills, airplanes fall out of the skies, and table salt becomes hydrochloric acid. The same is also true of religion. Denominationalism originated in the mind of Satan and sprouted from the desires of men who sought to worship God in their own way.

There is not enough room to list every error believed and taught by the over 38,000 denominations found on earth today. Errors common to the majority of denominations will help narrow that list down, and still give enough reasons why a person should not involve themselves in denominationalism should they desire a heavenly home. Jesus told His apostles that He would build **HIS church** (Matthew 16:18), not Martin Luther’s, or Joseph Smith’s, or any other man invented church. The number one error of denominationalism is the name. Since the church belongs to Jesus, because He shed His blood for it (Acts 20:28) and is it’s one and only head (Ephesians 5:23), should its name not give Him the glory? Of course it should! The church of Christ, designates to whom the church belongs, as well as giving all the glory to its founder.

Another error of denominationalism, is the idea that the name ‘*Christian*’ belongs to anyone who professes Christ. But the Bible teaches us that a ‘*Christian*’ is a person who follows the doctrines of Christ, and who has been added to the church of Christ by God (Acts 11:26; 2:47). Therefore, the name ‘*Christian*’ only belongs to those who have obeyed the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8; Romans 6:17, 3-6), and been added to the one true church by God.

Which brings us to another error of denominationalists. Baptism is where the proverbial rubber meets the road, and much of the cause for division. The majority of denominations believe baptism is unnecessary for salvation, but is necessary to become a member of a particular denomination. What they are saying is that it is harder to become a member of their denomination than it is to become a true Christian. Then there are those who believe baptism means to ‘*pour*’ or ‘*sprinkle*,’ and that infants are the subjects of such ‘*baptism*.’ Nothing could be further from the truth! Yet again is another error, which says Holy Spirit baptism is essential to one’s salvation. A simple reading of the Scriptures and an honest heart will go far to reveal that none of these methods are Biblical, nor are they authorized by God.

The New Testament clearly teaches that there is only **ONE** baptism [which is immersion in water] (Ephesians 4:5), and it is **FOR** (in order to receive) the remission of sins (Acts 22:16; 2:38). Baptism as taught in the New Testament, is meant for believers only, men and women who have reached the age of knowing right and wrong, and who have the mental capacity to acquire faith upon hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). While some denominations **DO** immerse for the remission of sins, this does not make them Christians in the Bible sense of the word, because their faith is not built upon the Bible, but upon their denominational creed or manual. If a person has not heard only the gospel, been immersed in water for the remission of sins as an adult, then they must be baptized into Christ as per Acts 19.

Another error of denominations is how they recognize Communion or the Lord's Supper. Catholics refer to it as a '*sacrament*' and '*Eucharist*,' which is found nowhere in the Bible. They also partake of it as the literal blood and flesh of Christ and more than on Sunday; again not authorized. Lutherans say it is a '*sacrament*' that offers forgiveness of sins – not found anywhere in the Bible. Others observe it Bi-monthly, monthly, quarterly, yearly, rather than the command to take it **EVERY** first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

Most denominations believe in the error of Christ's return to sit on a literal throne in Jerusalem for one thousand years. Others believe in the error of keeping the Sabbath (Saturday). Denominations call their preachers "*pastor*," "*reverend*," "*father*," and other such non-authorized titles. They divide their members between 'clergy,' and 'laity,' when the Bible clearly teaches **ALL** Christians are priests (1 Peter 2:9). Most falsely teach that one cannot fall from grace when God says you can (Galatians 5:4). They add catechisms, creeds, manuals, statements of faith, when God warned not to add to His word (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19). They desire to follow the Ten Commandments when God meant it only for the Jews for a certain time (Exodus 20:2; Colossians 2:13-14). These and many other errors,

is why denominationalism is sinful, and not authorized by God.

Restoration Plea

To plea for restoration means that there must be an original that existed, and assumes a pattern that should be followed. It's simple, the Bible is our only guide and standard (1 Corinthians 4:6). All messages not preached by the apostles must be ruled out as unauthorized (Galatians 1:8). The Bible provides us with everything we need to know about God's will and our duty toward God and our fellowman (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Word of God is the truth (John 17:17), and is the only standard that will guide us to the original plan God established in the first century.

By accepting the Bible alone, as our only guide, it will require us to abandon every denominational name, and doctrine, and even family and friends in order to please God. What the New Testament teaches, is what the apostles taught, which is what Jesus taught them. One cannot accept Christ, without accepting His word (Matthew 7:21). Anyone who rejects the gospel and the one church, rejects Christ (Matthew 10:40). He that believes and teaches that doctrine does not matter to God, believes in the doctrine of demons (1 Timothy 4:1). The restoration plea, is a plea for all men and women to observe only what the New Testament teaches about the church, salvation, worship and daily living.

The seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11). When followed precisely, it alone will produce a New Testament Christian, who has been added to the one church by God (Acts 2:38-47). God desires that everyone worship Him in spirit **AND** in truth (John 4:24). To do that, we must only worship Him on the first day (Sunday) of every week, for the purpose of taking the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7); to give of our means (1 Corinthians 16:1-2); to sing hymns of praise unto God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16); and to continue steadfastly in the apostles doctrine (Acts 2:42).

The restoration plea limits us to what Christians in the first century did. They did not incorporate the

use of instruments in their worship to God. They did not pour or sprinkle water in place of immersing individuals. They did not use anything other than unleavened bread and grape juice for the Lord's Supper, and partook of it **EVERY** Sunday. They did not use suppers, raffles, bell ringers, bake sales for raising money, each member gave what was needed (Acts 4:32-37). They did not remove God's glory by naming the church after men or other things, it was only the church of Christ.

Entertainment was not used by the first century church as a means of evangelism. It was the preaching of the gospel, which is God's only method of saving (Romans 1:16). The church of the Bible consists of autonomous congregations, led by men of their respective congregations who met the qualifications of being elders/bishops/pastors, and deacons who served under those men (1 Timothy 3:1-12; Titus 1:5-9). The first century church did not divide the terms elder/bishop/pastor into three different categories or offices, because they were one and the same, with each term defining their duties in the church. Jeremiah exhorted, "*Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls*" (Jeremiah 6:16). God's institution, the church of Christ is perfect for providing rest to the soul. It is the fullness of God (Colossians 2:9), because it was bought with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). We can return to the old paths of New Testament Christianity and leave the sinfulness of denominationalism behind, if we so choose.

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*What Saith
the Scriptures?*
Concerning.....

**The Sin of
Denominationalism**



By Michael S. Demory