

Denominationalism

Introduction

1. The religious world around us has arranged itself into denominations (distinct parts of the whole).
2. Originally there were just a few (Lutheran, Church of England, Presbyterian, Catholic, etc.). Now there are thousands.
3. We must comment on this situation because this idea is nowhere found in the doctrine of Christ. Denominations have no right to exist because they are not found in scripture.
4. The will of Christ is ONE CHURCH, ONE BODY, ONE KINGDOM. (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4; John 3:5)
5. The denominations argue that the totality of the denominations is the one church.
 - A. The New Testament, however, fails to use the word "church" in that sense.
 - B. There is the "church universal" (Matthew 16:18) and "church local (congregations)" (Romans 16:16).
6. Many in the brotherhood are seeking to make the churches of Christ into a denomination. (You can even find in some places documented statements that the church is a denomination.)
 - A. By compromising doctrine.
 - B. By changing the worship.
 - C. By changing the leadership.
 - D. We should be able to see the seriousness of the problem.

7. This morning we are going to notice 3 Dangers of Denominationalism.

- A. We need to be warned about it creeping in.
- B. We need to note that it is divisive.
- C. We need to see that it distracts the world from the truth.
- D. We need to recognize that it appeals to the pride of men.

Denominationalism Is Divisive

1. A denomination, by nature, distinguishes itself from another:
 - A. By name (We are told that a name is not important when we point out scriptural names for the church, yet they divide themselves from others by name.).
 - B. By peculiar doctrine.
2. **Example:** One cannot become a Baptist without accepting Baptist doctrine and taking the Baptist name – thus dividing from others.
3. For much of the history of denominations they were exclusive. “We’re the only ones saved.” “Must be one of us.”
4. Today most denominations claim that they are not divisive because they “fellowship” all others that “believe in Jesus.”
5. This only serves to divide them from those who will not fellowship on these terms.

6. The Bible teaches against this division.

A. Jesus prayed for unity.

John 17:20-21 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; **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.

1 Corinthians 1:10-13

Philippians 1:27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you **stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,**

Philippians 2:2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, **being of one accord, of one mind.**

B. How is it possible to have the same mind?

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

1 Corinthians 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us **not to think beyond what is written**, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

2 John 9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. **He who abides in the doctrine of Christ** has both the Father and the Son.

Denominationalism Distracts the World from the Truth

1. **By definition denominationalism departs from the Scripture. No departure - no denomination.**
2. **While the denomination is teaching its peculiar doctrine the people long for the truth.**
 - A. **The creation of a denomination in Israel was for the purpose of distracting the people from true worship.**
1 Kings 12:25-30
 - B. **The spread of another had indeed distracted the Galatian brethren from the truth.**
Galatians 1:6-9
3. **There are many that are hell-bound this hour trusting in their denominational conversions. The Galatian brethren trusted in their denominational righteousness.**

Galatians 5:4 You have become estranged from Christ, **you who attempt to be justified by law**; you have fallen from grace.

4. **Many teach that "faith only" is sufficient - that baptism adds one to the denomination. However, the Bible teaches otherwise:**

Hebrews 5:8-9 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation **to all who obey Him**,

Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. **He who believes and is baptized will be saved**; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

1 Peter 3:21 **There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism** (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

- 5. Many teach that the works of their church save. The apostle Paul warned about this.**

1 Timothy 4:1-4

- 6. Jesus taught the uselessness of the commandments of men.**

Matthew 15:8-9 'THESE PEOPLE DRAW NEAR TO ME WITH THEIR MOUTH, AND HONOR ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME. AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.' "

- 7. This question will assist us in cutting through the distraction. Is it from heaven (true, authorized) or from men (vain, distracting, denominational).**

Matthew 21:25 The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?....

- 8. We have before us a warning from the Old Testament.**

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Jeremiah 10:23 O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

- 9. Many will be lost because of the distraction of denominationalism.**

Denominationalism Appeals to Pride

1. **Pride is a destructive evil.**

Proverbs 16:18 **Pride goes before destruction**, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

2. **Many take pride in the size of their denomination. ("That many can't possibly be wrong!") However, the majority were on the outside of the ark.**

3. **Many take pride in the age of their denomination. However Baal worship was older than the worship of Jehovah under the law of Moses.**

4. **Some take pride in being in the minority. They take pride in persecution for their peculiar views.**

5. **At the Judgment all the pride in peculiar views will end.**

A. **The doctrines of men will not be referred to at the Judgment.**

B. **The words of Christ – spoken by Christ and His apostles, will be that which stands.**

John 12:48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges **him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.**

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance **all things that I said to you.**

1 Corinthians 14:37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are **the commandments of the Lord.**

- 6. We MUST listen to and heed the warning of the Lord.**
Matthew 7:21-23; 7:13-14

Conclusion

- 1. There may be some here who trust in a denominational gospel for salvation. The time to obey the truth is now.**
- 2. There may be those who thought of denominations as being acceptable to God and have taught that members of denominations are brethren.**
 - A. It is now time to repent of that, and realize the urgency to teach them the truth of God that leads to salvation.**
- 3. There may be those who, because of denominational teaching in the past, need to get back to the Bible.**
 - A. I encourage you to renew your commitment to study, believe and then obey the truth.**

Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and **let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith**, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

