

Know Your Bible

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

LESSON 5

Denominationalism

In lesson four we studied "**The Church of the New Testament.**" We found out these things: **1)** Christ built His church; **2)** Christ built only ONE church; **3)** the saved are added to His church; **4)** which means that all Christians in the first century were members of Christ's one church. In the New Testament we read of only this church - no other.

We also found that all the members of Christ's church followed the teaching of the apostles, worshiped in the way they taught the church, and organised each congregation with elders, deacons, evangelists and teachers.

But today there are hundreds of different churches. They teach different things, worship in different ways, and have different organisations.

Where did they all come from? Do they please God? And what does God want us to do about this division?

It is the purpose of this lesson to show that dividing up into denominations is SIN. It is the purpose of this lesson to prove that all believers can and should be ONE in Christ Jesus. This is an important lesson, therefore study carefully.

TRUE

OR

FALSE

1. Christ built only one church. **True** **False**
2. All Christians of the first century were members of Christ's one church. **True** **False**
3. In the New Testament we read of many denominations. **True** **False**
4. It is not important to know whether denominations please God or not. **True** **False**

I. What is Denominationalism?

The Oxford English Dictionary gives this definition for the word "denomination": "*A religious sect or body designated by a distinctive name.*"

This means that a denomination is a separate religious body with a special name. Denominationalism is the dividing up of believers in Christ into separate religious groups. Each denomination has its own name, beliefs, organisation, and terms of membership. Each denomination must remain distinct (separate) from the other in order to continue in existence. Each one considers itself to be right, no matter whether it thinks others may also be right or not.

TRUE **OR** **FALSE**

5. Denominationalism is the dividing up of believers in Christ into separate religious groups. **True** **False**

But when we studied about the New Testament church we did not find denominations. The church of Christ comes from Jesus Christ. It is not a denomination in any sense of the word.

Churches which began after Christ started His church come from men and from the wisdom of men. They are denominations because they teach different doctrines from what was believed by the original church. This is the way a person can identify a denomination. A denomination teaches things which are different from the teachings found in the New Testament.

God does not want man to change a single thing which the apostles taught. *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed"* ([Galatians 1:8](#)). Because denominations teach and practice things which are not taught in the New Testament, they are teaching a gospel which causes them to be cursed by God! Denominationalism is a sin!

TRUE **OR** **FALSE**

6. The church of Christ is not a denomination. **True** **False**

7. Denominations teach exactly the same as what was believed by the original church which Jesus started. **True** **False**

8. A denomination teaches things which are different from the teachings found in the New Testament. **True** **False**

9. God is happy when we teach things that are different from the gospel the apostles preached. **True** **False**

10. Denominationalism is a sin. **True** **False**

Denominational Error

1. Wearing *Human Titles* (Baptist, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Methodist, etc.)

2. *Infant Baptism*

Bible Truth

1. *Wear Christ's Name*-[Acts 11:26](#); [Romans 16:16](#); [Colossians 3:17](#)

2. *Believer Immersion*-[Mark 16:16](#); [Romans 6:4](#)

Denominational Error

3. *Instrumental Music* (Piano, Organ, etc.)
4. *Sabbath (Saturday) Worship*
5. *Clergy - Titles and Dress* ("Reverend", "Pastor", "Father"; robes, collars)
6. *Tithing and Suppers*

Bible Truth

3. *Singing Only*-[Ephesians 5:19](#); [Colossians 3:16](#)
4. *First Day (Sunday) Worship*-[Acts 20:7](#), [1 Corinthians 16:1-2](#)
5. *No Clergy: All Christians as Priests*-[Matthew 23:5-12](#), [1 Peter 2:5](#)
6. *Giving "according to prosperity" on Sundays*-[1 Corinthians 16:2](#)

TRUE

OR

FALSE

11. God is happy when men call themselves "Lutherans," "Catholics," or "Zionists." (See number 1 on chart above) **True** **False**
12. Paul and Peter taught Christians to call them "Reverend." (See number 5 on chart above) **True** **False**
13. In [Matthew 23:5-12](#) Jesus tells us that teachers should wear special robes. (See number 5 on chart above) **True** **False**
14. [1 Corinthians 16:1-2](#) tells us to have church suppers to get money for the church. (See number 6 on chart above) **True** **False**
15. Infant baptism (baptising babies) is not found in the Bible. (See number 2 on chart above) **True** **False**
16. [Ephesians 5:19](#) tells Christians to play an organ. (See number 3 on chart above) **True** **False**
17. Christians ate the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week and gave their money on the first day of the week (See numbers 4 and 6 on chart above) **True** **False**

II. Why Denominationalism Is Wrong

It is clear that denominationalism is wrong. Denominations use human religious titles and practices, and this is wrong. However we want to study this problem more. We want to make it very clear to everyone who is looking for the truth that denominationalism is not the plan of God. Denominationalism comes from MAN.

Denominationalism is Unscriptural

"Unscriptural" means that denominations are not found in the New Testament. Can you read of a denomination in the Bible? No. Instead of many churches, the New Testament speaks of only ONE church. Jesus said, "I will build my church" ([Matthew 16:18](#).) Jesus did not say "many churches." He said "my church."

Paul makes this clear when he writes in [1 Corinthians 12:20](#): *"But now are they many members, yet but one body."* He told the Ephesians that they must continue in their oneness and not split up into different groups. He wrote, *"keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* ([Eph. 4:3](#)) Then he told those brethren what that unity was: *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."* ([Ephesians 4:4-6](#))

There were no denominations at that time. The church of Christ was under the authority of God. Everywhere in the world Christians practiced the same things, believed the same things, and worshiped the same way.

TRUE **OR** **FALSE**

18. It is God's plan for believers to divide up into denominations. **True** **False**

19. The Lutheran Church, the Catholic Church, and the Nazareth Baptist Church are found in the New Testament. **True** **False**

20. Jesus said, "I will build my church." **True** **False**

21. The New Testament says, "There is one body." **True** **False**

22. There was one way of worship for the early Christians. **True** **False**

Denominationalism is Anti-Scriptural

Denominations are not in the scriptures. AND they are actually against the scriptures! When man decides to follow his own plan instead of following what God says, he always goes against God's wisdom. This means man is against God, and God is angry with him for doing this.

Christ died so that all believers can be united in His church. He planned that the unity of His followers would cause people to believe in Him. Christ prayed this for His disciples: *"That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."* ([John 17:21](#)).

People who split up into denominations are not listening to the prayer of Jesus Christ! They are listening only to their own desires.

TRUE **OR** **FALSE**

23. Men should follow their own ideas, not God's. **True** **False**

24. God wants people to split up into denominations. **True** **False**

25. Jesus prayed that believers should be one (united). **True** **False**

Paul the apostle found out that the Christians in the city of Corinth were beginning to divide up into groups. They were not yet denominations, but if they continued in their division they would become denominations. he wrote the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians to stop this division.

Here are some of the things he wrote. *"Are ye not carnal and walk as men?"* ([1 Corinthians 3:3](#)) He showed them that their divisions were because of jealousy and strife. The main cause of denominations is the same. It is caused by jealousy when men want high positions.

In [1 Corinthians 1:10](#) Paul wrote, *"Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."* Paul did not think that different personalities need different churches. He urged these brethren to be of the "same mind" and of the "same judgment."

Then in [1 Corinthians 1:13](#) he asked three questions: *"Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"* Student, look at these questions carefully. Answer each one for yourself. These questions show that denominationalism is SIN.

Believers who listen to the verses in this section of the lesson will not be divided. They will not follow men. They will not wear men's names in religion. They will be united in the one body of Christ.

- | TRUE | OR | FALSE |
|---|--|------------------------------------|
| 26. The brethren in Corinth were beginning to divide up into different groups. | True <input type="radio"/> | False <input type="radio"/> |
| 27. Paul told these brethren that it is good to follow after different men. | True <input type="radio"/> | False <input type="radio"/> |
| 28. The reason the Corinthians were following after different men was because they were carnal (fleshly). | True <input type="radio"/> | False <input type="radio"/> |
| 29. We must all speak the same things. | True <input type="radio"/> | False <input type="radio"/> |
| 30. We are baptised in the name of Jesus. | True <input type="radio"/> | False <input type="radio"/> |
| 31. We must not follow after someone who was not crucified for us. | True <input type="radio"/> | False <input type="radio"/> |
| 32. Denominationalism is sin. | True <input type="radio"/> False <input type="radio"/> | |

III. The Remedy For Denominationalism

The church at the time the New Testament books were being written was the answer to our Lord's prayer for unity. Paul wrote: *"there is ONE body."* He told the Corinthians to *"all speak the same thing."*

How did this amazing unity come about? How could thousands of Christians all speak the same things, be of the same mind, and be of the same judgment? The answer is: Because they were all following the same teaching.

[Acts 2:42](#) tell us that the disciples in Jerusalem *"continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine."* It is important to notice that it was the apostles' doctrine these early Christians followed.

The apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit in their teaching. Christ promised them: *"Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."* ([John 16:13](#)) Paul wrote, *"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."* ([Galatians 1:11-12](#))

This means that when we follow the teaching of the apostles we are following the teachings of Christ! If people today follow only the apostles' teaching we will be united like those early Christians were.

TRUE **OR** **FALSE**

33. The disciples in Jerusalem continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine.

True

False

34. The apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit in their teaching. **True**

False

35. If we follow the teaching of the apostles, we are following Christ. **True**

False

36. If we all follow the teaching of the apostles, we will be united. **True**

False

Denominations began because men followed the teachings of men instead of the teaching of the apostles. For example: The Lutheran Church follows the teachings of Martin Luther. The Methodist Church follows John Wesley. The Presbyterian Church and the Dutch Reformed Church follow the teachings of John Calvin. The Nazareth Baptist Church follows the teachings of Shembe.

Let us give up human names and human teachings and return to the Bible as our ONLY authority in all religious matters.

What can you do? It won't do any good to wait for all the churches to unite because this will probably never happen. But there is a way in which you can defeat denominationalism in your own life - by becoming SIMPLY A CHRISTIAN!

How can you do this? Begin first of all by studying what Jesus wants you to do. Make sure you listen to what Jesus says and not to what other people

say. Then FOLLOW HIM! If you will Believe in Jesus Christ, Repent of your sins, Confess His name, be Baptised (immersed) for the forgiveness of your sins, He will make you a Christian. You will be added to the church by the Lord ([Acts 2:47](#)).

You will not be a member of any denomination, and you should not join any denomination. Instead, find other disciples who have obeyed the gospel just as you have. Work together with them to be the New Testament church - Worship regularly on the first day of the week; wear no human names; do the work Jesus has given the local church to do; add nothing to the organisation of the church found in the New Testament. Then you will be united to Jesus Christ, the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit. You will be united with all other Christians who are following Jesus only. You will not be a part of denominationalism. You will be a member of the one church which Jesus built. This is the remedy for denominationalism. It is the only way.

- | TRUE | OR | FALSE |
|---|-----------|------------------------------------|
| 37. Denominations came because all people followed only Jesus. True <input type="radio"/> | | False <input type="radio"/> |
| 38. God wants us to wear human names in religion and follow the teachings of _____ men. True <input type="radio"/> | | False <input type="radio"/> |
| 39. The Bible must be our only authority in religion. True <input type="radio"/> | | False <input type="radio"/> |
| 40. You can defeat denominationalism by becoming simply a Christian. True <input type="radio"/> | | False <input type="radio"/> |
| 41. When you become a Christian you will be added to the one true church by _____ the _____ Lord. True <input type="radio"/> | | False <input type="radio"/> |
| 42. After you become a Christian you should become a member of a church started _____ by _____ a _____ man. True <input type="radio"/> | | False <input type="radio"/> |
| 43. If you do only what Jesus teaches in the New Testament you will not be a part of denominationalism. True <input type="radio"/> | | False <input type="radio"/> |

IV. The End of Denominationalism

At a time when the Pharisees were opposing the word of God, Jesus said, *"Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."* ([Matthew 15:13-14](#))

This is what will happen to denominationalism. God did not plant it. Religious division and denominationalism come from man, not from the mind of God. Denominationalism opposes the will of God and of Christ, because Christ wants all His disciples to be one. Denominational doctrines are different from Bible doctrine. Denominations do not teach God's way of salvation. They are plants which God did not plant. They are "blind leaders of the blind." It shall be rooted up, they shall fall into the pit.

Listen to another statement of Christ. *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity"* ([Matthew 7:21-23](#)).

Read those verses carefully because they are shocking! These people are religious. They call Jesus "Lord." They prophesy. They can cast out devils. They did many wonderful works. Yet, THEY ARE LOST. *"I never knew you,"* are the words of Christ.

It is not enough to be religious. We must do the will of our Father in heaven. It makes a big difference what we believe and practice in religion. We must believe and practice what is right. What about you?

TRUE

OR

FALSE

44. The person who follows a blind teacher will fall into the pit with him.

True

False

45. Everyone who says, "Lord, Lord," will go to heaven. **True**

False

46. Everyone who does mighty works in the name of Jesus will go to heaven.

True

False

47. We must do the will of our Father in heaven in order to go to heaven.

True

False

48. We must believe and practice what is right. **True** **False**

MAY WE HELP YOU?

We want to help you to be saved. If your conversion is not the same as the conversions we have studied, you need to do what they did. We want to help you become a New Testament Christian. Let us hear from you.