

## **IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG WITH DENOMINATIONALISM? (John 17:20-23)**

### **I. It violates that for which Jesus prayed.**

- A. Notice what was read for us from John 17:20-23.
  - 1. Jesus prayed for and commanded unity for those that followed Him.
  - 2. The only way that unity can be achieved is by agreement on the same principles.
  - 3. Those principles come from the One who devised them and brought them into existence through His death.
- B. As clearly as we can see Jesus prayed for unity, we can see that denominationalism results in disunity.
  - 1. Each group teaches different acts of worship.
  - 2. Some teach different means of salvation.
  - 3. On top of that, each denomination exists separate and apart from the others.
  - 4. They wear different names and believe in different things.
  - 5. If there weren't any differences, they would all be the same group.
- C. Some of you had to pass different denominations to get to this building.
  - 1. In those buildings you past were neighbors and friends.
  - 2. They work, play and eat together on occasion, but they cannot worship together because they are divided.
  - 3. This violates the prayer of Jesus for unity.

### **II. It denies biblical teaching about the oneness of the church.**

- A. The Bible plainly teaches that there is one church belonging to Jesus.
  - 1. Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18).
  - 2. Paul said there is "one body" (Ephesians 4:4-6) and that "one body" is "the church" (Colossians 1:23).
  - 3. Jesus is the Head of that body (Ephesians 1:22-23).
- B. The church which belongs to Christ is that church which worships like the New Testament teaches, is organized as the New Testament teaches, is identified by names found in the New Testament and teaches the same plan of salvation that the New Testament teaches.
- C. On the other hand, any church that does not worship like the New Testament teaches, is not organized as the New Testament teaches, is not identified by terms found in the New Testament and does not teach the New Testament plan of salvation does not belong to Christ.

### **III. It denies the authority of the scriptures.**

- A. From the beginning of recorded worship, God's word has always been the source of authority for acts of worship.
  - 1. Genesis 4:1-15; Leviticus 10:1-4; 1 Samuel 15:22.
  - 2. All of these passages show the authority of God's word.
  - 3. The New Testament reveals God's will for us, and we have to make that our final source of authority in religious matters.
- B. Most people in denominationalism will tell you they follow the Bible.
  - 1. Sadly, when the light of scripture is shown on their practices, one sees that it is not the New Testament alone that is followed.

2. For instance, whatever denominations teach that baptism is not essential to salvation are teaching something not found in the New Testament.
  3. Or, those religious groups that use mechanical musical instruments in worship are doing something the New Testament does not teach or authorize.
- C. Just as the differing beliefs set denominations apart from one another, those differences also set them apart from God's word.
- D. When a person or group teaches something or practices something for which there is no scriptural authority, it is shown that there is no belief in biblical authority being essential.

**IV. It makes the Lord the author of confusion.**

- A. Think about all the different beliefs in various denominations and then think about the fact that they all claim to belong to Jesus.
- B. God, which Jesus was and is, is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).
1. He would have to be in order for denominationalism to be scriptural.
  2. There is no other possibility.
- C. With all of this confusion, it is easy to see why people get turned off to the Bible and religion in general.

**V. It is sinful because it does matter what one believes.**

- A. To accept or defend denominationalism makes one assume or conclude that it does not matter what one believes, teaches or practices concerning God.
1. If denominationalism is fine, then doctrines and beliefs that contradict each other are fine.
  2. Such has to be the case because denominations are full of conflicting doctrines and beliefs.
- B. The truth is, it does matter what one believes religiously.
- C. Notice what the scriptures teach about this matter.
1. Jesus taught that no matter how sincere a person may be, if he/she does not do the will of the Father he/she will be lost (Matthew 7:21-23).
  2. Paul wrote that those who don't obey the gospel are lost (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).
  3. If a person can be religious without doing God's will and without obeying the gospel, then it doesn't matter what one believes.
- D. Also, the New Testament teaches that the gospel is God's only power to save (Romans 1:16).
1. It also teaches that if one obeys some other gospel that person is accursed (Galatians 1:6-8).
  2. It also teaches we are not to give aid or encouragement to those who preach contrary to the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11).
- E. Peter and Paul both promised there were false teachers that would come, even in their day (2 Peter 2:1-2; 2 Timothy 4:1-4).
- F. Why did these men, writing by inspiration, warn those to whom they wrote it it doesn't matter what a person believes or teaches?
- G. Surely we can see that it does matter very much what we believe and practice when it comes to religion.
- H. Also consider this logically.

1. What if a preacher preached one thing this Sunday and something totally contradictory next Sunday?
  2. What do you think would happen?
  3. How long would people sit and listen to him?
- I. However, this is essentially what happens every Sunday in denominations everywhere.
1. One preaches one thing, while another preaches a message that contradicts that one.
  2. How can this be unacceptable in one preacher but acceptable in different preachers?

From an article by David Sain