

Do Denominations Do Any Harm?

Bible Answers About Denominations

Denominationalism is inherently sinful and stands in opposition to the will of Christ. This is not an indictment against the sincerity of those who are members of denominations because we believe the members of all denominations sincerely believe they are following Jesus Christ. However, denominationalism is not a solution to our religious problems, but is in reality a part of the problem. Denominationalism does great harm for the following reasons:

Underlying the problem of denominationalism is the question of authority. When religious leaders modify, change and alter the Scriptures then the authority of Christ is rejected and confusion reigns. The rejection of Christ's authority and the Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice allows denominationalism to minimize the importance of doctrine and teaching. Paul emphasizes the importance of "sound doctrine" (I Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Tit. 1:9, 13; 2:1). Jesus instructed Christians to "observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20).

Denominationalism makes "doctrine" unimportant and as a consequence "false doctrine" is preached and believed. This was also condemned by John when he wrote, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into {your} house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds" (II Jn 1:9-11 NAS). We must not go beyond "the teaching of Christ" and must not accept and receive into fellowship anyone who does.

As a consequence of denominationalism rebelling against the authority of Christ and teaching false doctrines, division reigns in the place of unity. Denominationalism is divided into thousands of different religious groups each bearing different names, teaching and practicing different doctrines from those doctrines taught and practiced by each other. The consequence is religious confusion and rebellion to Christ's plea for unity. Jesus prayed for unity of all believers based on the revealed Word of God. "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, {art} in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me" (John 17:20-21 NAS). Paul condemned division as the "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:20). Paul wrote very clearly, "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor 1:10 NAS). The "same mind" implies unity of faith and purpose and the "same judgment" implies action. Paul further instructs us to "mark them that are causing division and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Rom. 16:17). Denominationalism does great harm by promoting such division.

Denominationalism does great harm by rejecting Christ's teaching on salvation. Most denominations believe and teach Calvinism concerning salvation; i.e., man is so depraved that he cannot so much as believe the gospel until he is made alive by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. While this underlying principle exists, the various denominations do not teach the same thing concerning salvation though all claim to be on the same road to heaven. The Scriptures clearly teach that those who heard the gospel were pricked in their hearts and cried out "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). These people were told to "repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins" (Acts 2:38). As we continue to read in the chapter we find that "they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41 KJV). The Bible teaches that when one is baptized the blood of Jesus Christ is applied to the soul cleansing the sinner and God then raises that person to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4; Eph. 1:7). The process of becoming a Christian is the same process that makes one a member of the church.

Denominationalism has caused millions to go through life believing that they were saved, thus fostering a false sense of security. They joined a religious body, gave up sinful habits, and committed great amounts of time, energy and money to religious endeavors because they believed they were saved. In reality they had merely joined a man-made organization that believed and practiced many things that were only similar in appearance to the beliefs and practices of the God-made body—the church. Denominationalism does great harm because it leads people into an irrational spirit of assurance that destroys their capacity to objectively examine their true condition in the light of God's Word. Jesus said, "and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32 NAS).

Denominationalism has done great harm and cannot stand the light of God's Word. We encourage you to abandon all man-made churches and take your stand on the truth of God's Word even as those of us at the Monte Vista church of Christ have done.

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