

# Know Your Bible

## Correspondence Course

### Lesson 5

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As Edited by Ashley Goosen for use with the NASB

## I. DENOMINATIONALISM

In lesson four we studied the church of the New Testament. We discovered that Christ had come to build His church and that the saved were added to it. We also saw that Christ only built ONE church and that every Christian in the first century was a member of that church.

Today it is different! There are hundreds and hundreds of differing churches.

Where did they all come from? Do they please God? Is there a remedy for religious division? These and similar questions enter the mind of the student as he reads the Bible. ***It is the purpose of this lesson to demonstrate that all believers can and should be one in Christ Jesus.***

### WHAT IS DENOMINATIONALISM?

Webster says a denomination is "A class, or society of individuals, called by the same name; a sect." To go further it may be said that denominationalism is the dividing up of believers in Christ into religious parties. Each has its own human name, creed, organization, and terms of membership. Each must remain distinct one from the other in order to survive. Each one considers itself to be right, no matter how tolerant of others it may be.

The church of Christ was of divine origin; hence it was not a denomination in any sense of the word. Churches established since the first century are of human origin and of human wisdom. They are denominations because they teach differently from the original church. It is exactly in this way that one may identify a denomination. God does not intend for man to change one single thing originally taught by the apostles: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!"

**In the chart below we point out some errors practised by denominations. Please compare these errors with the Bible truths stated below.**

<b>DENOMINATIONAL ERROR</b>	<b>BIBLE TRUTH</b>
1. Wearing Human Titles (Dutch Reformed, Apostolic Faith, Zionist, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist)	1. Wear Christ's Name - Acts 11:26; Romans 16:16; Colossians 3:17
2. Infant Baptism	2. Believer Immersion - Mark 16:16; Romans 6:4
3. Instrumental Music (Piano, Organ, Guitar)	3. Singing Only - Ephesians 5: 19; Colossians 3: 16
4. Sabbath (Saturday) worship	4. First Day (Sunday) Worship - Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2
5. Clergy Titles & Dress "Reverend," "Pastor," "Father"; Robes, Collars)	5. No Clergy; All Christians as Priests - Matthew 23:5-12; 1 Peter 2:5

**DOES THE CHURCH YOU ATTEND PRACTICE ANY OF THESE ERRORS?**

## **QUESTIONS ON SECTION I.**

### **FILL IN THE BLANKS**

1. Every \_\_\_\_\_ in the first century was a member of the one \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Today there are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ churches.
3. Denominationalism is the \_\_\_\_\_ of believers in Christ into \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The Church of Christ was of \_\_\_\_\_ origin.
5. Churches established since the first century are of \_\_\_\_\_ origin.

### **TRUE OR FALSE (circle correct answer)**

1. T F Christ only built one church.
2. T F It is all right to teach a gospel different from the one Paul preached.
3. T F The man who preaches another gospel will be accursed.
4. T F Denominations teach differently from the original church.
5. T F The Bible authorizes us to wear human names in religion.
6. T F The New Testament church wore Christ's name.

- 7. T F There are examples in the New Testament of infants being baptized.
- 8. T F Paul and Peter taught Christians to address them as "Reverend."
- 9. T F In Matthew 23 :5-12 Jesus tells us that teachers should wear special dress.
- 10. T F 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 authorize church Fetes and Bazaars to raise funds.

## II. WHY DENOMINATIONALISM IS WRONG

It should be clear at this stage that denominationalism is wrong. When man takes upon himself human religious titles and practices, this alone is sufficient reason to condemn sectarianism. However, we wish to pursue the matter further to make it abundantly clear to every sincere seeker after truth that denominationalism is not the plan of God, but man.

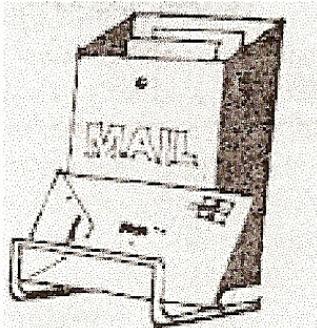
### UNSCRIPTURAL

"Unscriptural" means that denominations are unknown to the New Testament arrangement. What denomination do you read of in the Bible? Instead of many churches, only ONE is spoken of. Jesus said, *"I will build my church"* - (notice the singular use of the term "church") - Matthew 16:18. Paul makes this clear when he says: *"But now there are many members, but one body"* - 1 Corinthians 12:20.

To the one church in the city of Ephesus, Paul made an impassioned plea exhorting them to *"keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* The inspired writer went on to explain: *"There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; (5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."* Eph. 4: 4-6. NAS

It is evident then that no denominations existed in the first century. The church of Christ was under the authority of God, and throughout the world Christians all practiced the same things, believed the same things and worshipped the same way.

— If this lesson raises questions in your mind, we would like to help you solve them. At the back of this lesson is a space for your Bible questions. We promise a Bible answer.



If you are enjoying this Bible study course and would like to see others enrolled, too, why not talk it over with them today, and send us their name and address as provided in the space below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

# ANTI-SCRIPTURAL

Not only is denominationalism unscriptural, it is actually against the Scriptures!

When man adopts his own plan in preference to what God has said, he always goes against divine wisdom, incurring the wrath of God. Christ died that His disciples might all be united in the Church. He planned that through their unity the world might believe in Him. Christ prayed this for His disciples: *"that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."* - John 17:21. Do you not think that man is extremely audacious when he not only ignores the prayer of our Saviour, but proceeds to establish denominations to pamper his desires?

Paul delivered a scathing rebuke to the disciples at Corinth when division threatened.

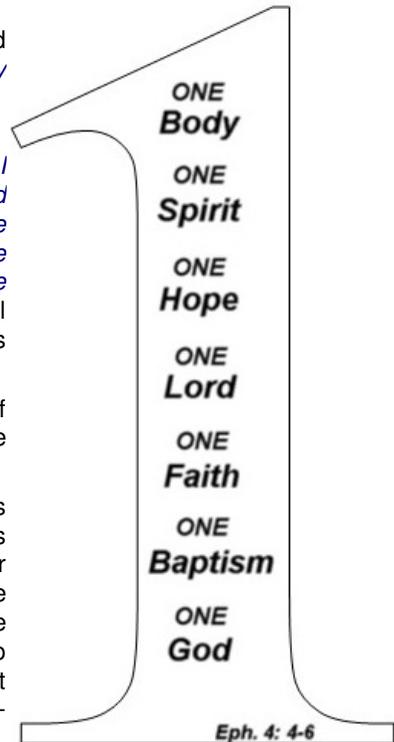
The Corinthians being guilty of envying and division, Paul asks them: *"Are you not fleshly and are you not walking as mere men?"* -

1 Corinthians 3:3.

In chapter one the inspired Paul says: *"Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment"*. - 1 Corinthians 1:10. Paul did not think that differing personalities needed different churches.

He urged rather that Christians not only be of the "same mind," but even the "same judgment."

As pointed out in Lesson 4, three questions were asked the Corinthians in verse 13 - "Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" The correct answer to these inspired questions spells the death blow to denominationalism. Believers who accept these instructions will not be divided, nor follow men, nor wear men's names in religion.



## QUESTIONS ON SECTION II

### FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. Denominationalism is not the plan of , but of \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. "But now are they many members, yet but \_\_\_\_\_ body."

3. It is evident that no \_\_\_\_\_ existed in the first century.
4. Jesus prayed that His disciples might all be \_\_\_\_\_ "so that the \_\_\_\_\_ may believe that You sent \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to be made complete in the same \_\_\_\_\_ and in the same \_\_\_\_\_.

### TRUE OR FALSE (circle correct answer)

1. T F Denominationalism is both unscriptural and anti-scriptural.
2. T F The one body is the church (see Ephesians 1:22. 23).
3. T F The Bible offers but one hope. one faith and one baptism.
4. T F Christ prayed that His disciples would divide up into denominations.
5. T F Paul wanted the Corinthians to wear his name.

## III THE REMEDY FOR DENOMINATIONALISM

The church of the first century was the answer to our Lord's prayer for unity. Paul could write in an affirmative way to the Ephesians. saying there is ONE body. The Corinthians were instructed to *"all speak the same thing."* How did this amazing unity come about? How could thousands of first century Christians all speak the same things, be of the same mind and judgment? The answer lies in the fact that they were all following the same teaching or doctrine. Acts 2:42 tells us that the Jerusalem disciples were continually devoting themselves to 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 this teaching. Christ himself promised: (John 16:13) *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth;"* Paul affirms this of his gospel: (Gal 1:11-12) *"For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.(12) For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ".*

*So to follow the apostles' teachings is to follow the teachings of Christ.*

If people today follow only the apostles' teaching we will be united as those early Christians were. Because men have followed the teachings of men rather than the apostles, denominationalism has resulted. For example: The Lutheran Church follows the teachings of Martin Luther; the Methodist Church follows John Wesley; the Presbyterian Church follows John Calvin. Let us give up human names and human creeds and return to the Bible as our sole authority in all religious matters. The Bible not only gives us a solid basis for unity, it assures us that we are following the will of God. John says: *"but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."* - 1 John 1:7.

What can you do? It is not necessary to wait for all the churches to unite (this will probably never happen).

There is a way in which you can defeat denominationalism right in your own life - by becoming **SIMPLY A CHRISTIAN!** How is this done? Begin first of all by studying what Jesus requires of you; no more and no less. If you will *Believe* in Christ, *Repent* of sins, *Confess* His name, be **IMMERSED** for forgiveness of sins, this will make you a Christian. You will not be a member of any denomination and you should not join any. Instead, find and associate yourself with other disciples who have obeyed the Gospel in the same way you have. Strive together with them to be the New Testament church: Worship regularly on the first day of the week; wear no human names; practice nothing in the work or organization of the church unauthorized by God in the New Testament Scriptures. This is the remedy for denominationalism. It is a way that cannot be faulted.



### QUESTIONS ON SECTION III

#### FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The Jerusalem disciples continued \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ guided the apostles into \_\_\_\_\_ truth.
3. If we follow \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ teachings we will be \_\_\_\_\_ as early \_\_\_\_\_ were.
4. The Great Commission and the book of Acts tells one how to become a \_\_\_\_\_.
5. When one obeys these commands, he will not be a member of any \_\_\_\_\_.

#### TRUE OR FALSE (circle the correct answer)

1. T F The first century church answered Christ's prayer for unity.
2. T F There is one body.
3. T F First century Christians all spoke the same thing.
4. T F Paul received his gospel from other men,
5. T F We can answer Christ's prayer for unity today.
6. T F Denominationalism results when we follow the teachings of men.
- 7, T F The Bible should be our sole basis of authority in all religious matters.

8. T F If you become simply a Christian you are helping to defeat denominationalism.
9. T F After becoming a Christian you should join the denomination of our choice.
10. T F After becoming a Christian you should associate with others in striving to be the New Testament church,

## IV THE END OF DENOMINATIONALISM

On an occasion when the Pharisees were opposing the word of God, Jesus said: Mat. 15:13-14 *"But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."* And so it shall be with denominationalism. God did not plant it. Religious division and denominationalism are devices of man, originating in the mind of man rather than the mind of God. It opposes the will of God and Christ that His disciples should all be one, Its doctrines are contrary to Bible doctrine. It does not teach God's way of salvation. As God has done with every erroneous system, so He shall do with denominationalism: it shall be rooted up!

Consider yet another statement of Christ's: *"(21) "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. (22) "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" (23) "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS."* - Matthew 7:21-23. What a remarkable statement by our Saviour. Your attention is called to the fact that these people are *religious*: They call Him 'Lord:' They prophesy; they can cast out devils: They have done many wonderful works. Yet, **THEY ARE LOST** *"I never knew you"* are the words of Christ.

To be religious is not enough. WE must do the will of our Father in heaven if WE expect salvation. It makes a tremendous difference what one believes and practices in religion. We must be religiously right. What about you?

## QUESTIONS ON SECTION IV

### FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. God did not \_\_\_\_\_ denominationalism.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ opposes the \_\_\_\_\_ of God and Christ that His should all be \_\_\_\_\_.
3. "Not everyone who says to Me \_\_\_\_\_ will enter into the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. "Depart from me. you who \_\_\_\_\_.
5. To be religious is not \_\_\_\_\_. We must be religiously \_\_\_\_\_.

## **TRUE OR FALSE (circle the correct answer)**

1. T F There are some plants which God has not planted.
2. T F Denominationalism originated in the mind of God.
3. T F Denominationalism shall be rooted up.
4. T F Those condemned by Christ in Matthew 7:21-23 were religious people.
5. T F Those condemned had not done the will of God.

### **What We Have Learned From This Lesson**

- **The church of Christ is of divine origin.**
- **It is sinful to belong to any other church.**
- **You can defeat denominationalism by becoming simply a Christian.**

**Use this space to write in any question you may have.....**

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