

# THE N.T. CHURCH Vs DENOMINATIONALISM

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Morally and religiously the world of today is much like it was when Jesus came and fulfilled his personal ministry on earth.
  - a. At that time the majority were morally corrupt and religiously indifferent or wrong – today it is the same.
  - b. At that time there was much confusion and religious division among professed worshippers of God – with many different religious sects all claiming to be the people of God – today it is much the same.
2. Today we have a host of different Denominations (over 1200 in this country alone, Good Housekeeping Magazine, Mar. 1980, article, “The 1,200 Religions in America,” compiled by J. Gordon Melton) all claiming fellowship with the Most High of Heaven.
  - a. In N.T. days there were the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Herodians, The Zealots and others, all claiming to be the people of God.
  - b. Today there are hundreds of different Denominations all differing in name, faith, doctrine and practice, but with each claiming to be doing God’s will as God’s people.
3. Just as the Jewish religious sects of N.T. days could not get together and have full and complete fellowship one with the other, neither can the different Denominations of our day.
  - a. In spite of all their efforts at union or unity on a world-wide basis they still remain hopelessly divided with most still holding to the truth-defying concept of “you leave me alone and I’ll leave you alone.”
  - b. Because this or a similar idea is so universally accepted among Denominational people, ANY challenge to ANYONE’S personal beliefs is often more insulting to them than a challenge to the deity of Jesus Christ would be!
4. In spite of the religious division of that day there was a way of truth and holiness and a divine standard in which and on which all could have been united – the same is true today!
5. Division of that day was caused by men ignoring the divine standard in favor of human opinion and man-made doctrines perverting the way of truth, and thus corrupting the way of holiness – the same thing is true today.
6. Just as the divided state of the Jewish religion of that day did not have God’s blessings, neither does Denominationalism of our day – and because of several reasons:
  - a. Denominationalism is not founded upon the principles of the gospel of Christ and a “thus saith the Lord,” Gal.1:6-9; Mt.15:9; Prov.14:12; Mt.7:21.

- b. Denominationalism is not a plant which the heavenly Father has planted, Mt.15:13,14.
- c. Denominationalism is rooted in human opinion, fostered by false teaching, and exists in a divided state, which the Lord condemns, instead of blessed unity, which he desires, and for which he prayed, Psa.133:1; Jno.17:20,21; 2Jno.9.
- d. Denominationalism does not do all things by the authority of Christ, but rather by human authority, Cf. Mt.15:9; Col.3:17; 2:20-23; 2Tim.3:12-4:5.
- 3. Also, there are digressive churches of Christ of today following the same pattern and causing division in the Lord's church!
- 7. The divided state of Denominationalism of our day seems to make little difference to most individuals who are content, satisfied with their religion and refusing to entertain the thought that there is a drastic need for change.
- 8. Those who do insist there is need for such change and who offer Biblical reasons for their insistence are labeled as bigoted, narrow-minded, bereft of love for their fellow-men, are "legalistic", and do not "know Jesus."
- 9. Our purpose in this lesson is to emphasize there is a way and a means of spiritual unity in N.T. Christianity and the N.T. church, the church belonging to Christ, the church we can read about in the N.T., and to show the vast difference between it and the entire human Denominational system of religion.
- 10. Thus our topic: The N.T. Church Vs Denominationalism – wherein we shall note several points of distinction – where we are asking that you compare N.T. Christianity with Denominational Christianity; that is, compare that which you can read in the N.T. with what we see all around us known as Denominationalism and which purports to be N.T. Christianity.

## II. DISCUSSION

### A. THE N.T. CHURCH IS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM DENOMINATIONISM IN ITS STRUCTURE (constitution, composition, make-up).

- 1. The N.T. church is identified in the N.T. as the church:
  - a. Jesus promised to build, Mt.16:18.
  - b. Jesus purchased with his own blood, Ac.20:28; 1Pet.1:18,19; 1Cor.6:19,20; Eph.5:25; Cf. Gal.3:26-29; Rom.6:3-6.
  - c. Of which Jesus is the head, Eph.1:22,23; Col.1:18.
  - d. Of which Jesus is the Savior, Eph.5:23,25-27.
  - e. To which Jesus adds all the saved, having purchased them with his blood, Ac.2:47 (Ac.2:36-41); 1Cor.15:1,2; Ac.18:8; 1Cor.1:1,2.
  - f. Composed of saved individuals, not of organized bodies called churches or Denominations, Ac.2:47; Jno.15:1-8.
  - g. Belonging to Christ, of which he has only one, Mt.16:18; Rom.16:16; Eph.4:4.
- 2. The N.T. uses the term "BODY" or "CHURCH" in reference to the "church of Christ," the N.T. church in two differences senses:

- a. In the UNIVERSAL sense, i.e., referring to all of the saved, the saved in the aggregate, all of God's people everywhere who by faith have obeyed the gospel of Christ, Eph.1:22,23; Mt.16:18; Mk.16:15,16.
  - (1) In this sense there is only one and it has no organization or function or treasury.
- b. In the LOCAL sense, the congregational sense, i.e., God's people in a given locality joined together for work and worship, 1Cor.1:2 1Th.1:1; Rom.16:16; Rev.1:4,11.
  - (1) When spoken of in the local sense it is composed of the saved in a certain location who have by divine authority joined themselves together into an organic entity to work and worship in harmony with God's will according to the N.T. pattern.
  - (2) There are many of these local churches:
    - (a) With one existing whenever and wherever a company of saints have so joined themselves together by divine authority according to the N.T. pattern.
    - (b) With each one having elders and deacons to serve when it has men qualified, Phil