



Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths... and walk therein"
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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DENOMINATIONS DO NOT MAKE UP THE CHURCH

Ivie Powell

*By turning to the Bible, can you find the **Baptist Church, Methodist Church, Episcopalian Church, Jehovah Witness Church, Mormon Church, Presbyterian Church** or any other denomination?*

One would think as often as people use the word "church" they would know its meaning, but that is not necessarily the case. Many think the church is the building. Still others think in terms of entertainment and recreation. Probably the great majority believe the church is a denomination among denominations. The reason there is so much confusion regarding the church can be attributed to many factors, such as prejudice, pride, laziness and ignorance. So imbedded is denominationalism in the hearts of people that it has blinded them to the simplicity of undenominational, pre-denominational, New Testament Christianity.

What then is the church? The word "church" appears in the Bible eighty-one times and "churches" thirty-seven times. As stated, the vast majority of religious people think in terms of a denomination when the word church is mentioned. So entrenched is the concept that it is extremely difficult to disassociate the two in their thinking. Guy N. Woods well defined the word church when he wrote:

The word "church" in our English translations is the rendering of the Greek word *ecclesia* (pronounced ek-la-sia), from *ek*, signifying "out of" and *kaleo*, "to call" thus, literally, "to call out." It is

used in the New Testament to designate the body of people which, in full and free response to the preaching of Jesus as Lord believed his word and obeyed his will. The steps, particularly taken in this response to him are faith (Jno. 8:24); repentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38); confession (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37); and baptism in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). (Guy N. Woods, "What Is The Church?," The Spiritual Sword, Vol. 1, No.4, July 1970).

The term "denomination" when applied to religious groups has reference to division. Thus the concept of "choosing the church of your choice." Of course, such a choice is totally against the prayer of our Lord when He prayed for the unity of believers (John 17:20-21). Religious division was also condemned by Paul in First Corinthians 1:10, "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." Therefore, denominationalism is inherently sinful and exists in direct opposition to the teaching of Christ and His apostles!

The view that the church is made up of all denominations is totally

without any scriptural support! As pointed out by Guy N. Woods:

All denominational bodies have arisen centuries this side of the apostolic age and thus sustain no relation to the body of Christ. ... This simple historic fact should not be overlooked that all religious denominations, having originated since the close of the apostolic age, are too recent to be the church of which our Lord spoke when he said, "Upon this rock I will build my church (Matt. 16:18)." *Questions and Answers*, Guy N. Woods, pp. 205,206).

The religious world has for years advocated "unity in diversity" which is not only a contradiction of terms, but without biblical support! The facts are that denominationalism creates division; promotes agnosticism, and in many cases atheism!

Pause and give careful consideration to the following questions: By turning to the Bible, can you find the **Baptist Church, Methodist Church, Episcopalian Church, Jehovah Witness Church, Mormon Church, Presbyterian Church** or any other denomination? On the other hand, by turning to the Bible, can one find the **church of Christ**

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Denominations...

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(Rom. 16:16)?

Every diligent student of the Bible knows that none of the apostles were members of any denomination. It takes something more than the Bible or less than the Bible to be a member of a denomination (divided, division)! However, to become a Christian, one must simply follow the Bible!

The church of our Lord came into existence on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ as recorded in Acts 2. On that day about 3,000 were baptized "*for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38), and *the Lord added them to the church* (Acts 2:47, all the saved are in the church). Observe, carefully, please, that their obedience to the gospel did NOT produce one single denomination! They simply became Christians, members of the body of Christ.

Beloved, if responsible people today will do exactly as they did on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), they will become Christians, members of the church of Christ, the body of Christ, and not a denomination!

PO Box 92
West Plains, MO 65775