Why Denominationalism Is Always Wrong

Intro: Christianity Today has estimated there are currently at least 41,000 denominations in the world today. Millions are going to be lost in the sin of denominationalism. Thus, we (the Lord’s church) need to have a solid Bible answer for all men as to why it is wrong. Paul commands, “21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Th. 5:21). Let us prove that denominationalism is always wrong.

I. Promotes Many Ways Instead Of One Way.
   A. The mantra for denominationalism is: You go your way and I’ll go mine.
   B. The ways of man are never right.
      1. Pro. 14:12 “12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”
      2. Jer. 10:23 “23 O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.”
   C. Ultimately there are two ways.
      1. One way leads to death, the other way leads to life.
      2. Mat. 7:13-14 “13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”
      3. John 14:6 “6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
      4. Denominationalism is the way that leads to destruction.

II. It Denies There Is Only One Body.
   A. Denominationalism affirms there are thousands of bodies
      1. Denominationalism has as many bodies as there are denominations.
      2. Yet, Christ is supposed to be the head over all of them; what a monster denominationalism has created.
   B. The Scriptures show there is only one.
      1. Eph. 4:4 “4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;”
      2. Eph. 1:22-23 “22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
      3. Anything that denies this one body is wrong.

III. It Promotes Many Gospels.
   A. Each denominational group has its own set of teachings.
      1. Various teachings regarding morality.
      2. Various teachings regarding the church.
         a. Its worship
         b. Its organization
         c. Its salvation
   B. Those who teach contrary to what the Scriptures teach are teaching a different gospel.
      1. Gal. 1:6-9 “6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another: but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that
which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

2. Thus, they do not have God; 2 John 9 “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”

IV. IT OPPOSES CHRIST’S PRAYER FOR UNITY
A. Denomination (nor any of its forms) is found in the Bible.
1. The word means, “the action of naming or classifying something.”
   a. Thus, we speak of “the face value of a banknote, coin, or postage stamp.”
   b. Religiously, “a group or branch of any religion.”
2. Biblical background of denominations:
   a. Heresy: Greek ἀἵρεσις (hairesis)
      (1) Denotes a choosing or choice, then that which is chosen.
      (2) Thayer: “1. act of taking, capture. 2. choosing, choice. 3. that which is chosen, a chosen course of thought and action; hence one’s chosen opinion, tenet; according to the context, as opinion varying from the true exposition of the Christian faith. 4. a body of men separating themselves from others and following their own tenets. 5. dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims.”
   b. Sect: Greek σχίσμα (schisma)
      (1) It is a rent or division.
      (2) Vines states: “metaphorically of the contrary condition to that which God has designed for a local church in ‘tempering the body together.’”
   c. A heresy or sect is a group that has chosen some belief or tenet (generally false) thus, separating themselves from others. As a result, there is the naming of that group designating them according to that particular tenet.
3. Thus, by their nature denominations are based on division.
4. 1 Cor. 12:25 “25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”

B. Christ prayed for unity.
1. John 17:20-21 “20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”
2. 1 Cor. 1:10 “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.”
3. It is sinful to call ourselves after men; 1 Cor. 1:12-13 “12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. 13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”

V. IT IS BASED UPON DOCTRINES THAT WILL BE UPROOTED.
A. The only reason to have a separate denomination is because of some doctrine that others do not believe.
B. Only truth saves and God will destroy all false doctrines.
1. John 8:32 “32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
2. Mat. 15:13 “13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.”
3. 2 Pet. 2:1-2 “1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”

VI. IT HAS MAN AND NOT CHRIST AS FOUNDER AND HEAD
A. The church has Christ as its founder and head.
   1. Mat. 16:18 “18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”
   2. Acts 20:28 “28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
   3. Eph. 1:22-23 “22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
   4. Col. 1:18 “18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”

B. Denominations have man as their founder.
   1. Catholic Church: Boniface III in 606
   2. Lutheran Church: Martin Luther in 1517
   3. Episcopal Church (Anglican; Church of England): Henry VIII in 1533
   4. Calvinism: John Calvin in 1536
   5. Presbyterian Church: John Knox in 1560
   6. Baptist Church: John Smyth in 1607
   7. Methodist Church: John Wesley in 1739
   8. Mormon Church: Joseph Smith in 1830
   9. Seventh Day Adventist: Ellen White in 1860
   10. Salvation Army: John Booth in 1865
   12. Christian Scientist: Mary Baker Eddy in 1879
   13. Pentecostalism: Charles Parham in 1900

VII. IT HAS ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE
A. Zeal is a good thing to have.
   1. Gal. 4:18 “18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.”
   2. Tit. 2:14 “14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

B. Zeal without knowledge is a dangerous thing.
   1. Rom. 10:2-3 “2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”
   2. Peter attempted to prevent the arrest of Jesus; Mat. 26:50-52 “50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. 51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest’s, and smote off his ear. 52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”
3. Saul of Tarsus tried to destroy the church.
4. This is like denominationalism; many have a zeal for God, but it is not according to knowledge.

Conclusion: Knowing the truth of God’s Word requires that we try and teach people out of denominationalism. Christ has only one bride—the church of Christ; 2 Cor. 11:2 “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”