

**DENOMINATIONALISM**  
**By Dr. Kent A. Field Ó 1979**  
**Topical Study**

How does God feel about religious division? It is not enough to say He doesn't like it! How does He respond to it, especially among those who call themselves His followers? Many religious and sincere people really do not think it makes any difference to God. They say that "we're all heading for the same place, just taking different roads." Some also say that "we're all serving the same God, just in different ways." But what does God say? Are we left without any clear direction from God in the area of religious unity? What does the Bible say on the matter? How does God really feel about this thing modern man calls "denominational Christianity?"

A number of important passages are listed here for your prayerful consideration. It is important to understand just what God wants us to learn from these passages. The points made by the passages listed should be quite obvious. However, a few very specific questions are asked which refer back to the verses listed. The answers to all the questions can be easily found within the verses themselves. Take the time to compare the Bible's answers to how you or others may have otherwise answered. It is very important that your answers to these questions come right out of God's Word alone! Remember, as taught in the Heart study, God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways God's ways (*Isaiah 55:8*). Therefore, mere thoughts and opinions won't tell us what God has said! For our ways are not His ways!

**I. John 17:20-23**

1. From verse 20, through what are we to believe in Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_
2. From verse 21, did Jesus pray for His followers to be divided? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What did Jesus earnestly pray for? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are all Jesus' true followers "one" in Him? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Does Jesus approve of divided believers? \_\_\_\_\_
6. From verse 23, what does complete unity promote? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Therefore, how does the world react to religious division and confusion? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Does division help people to believe in Christ and His message? \_\_\_\_\_

**II. 1 Corinthians 1:10**

1. Does God approve of divisions within the church? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many divisions does God approve of? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is it God's desire that we agree with one another? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are we to be perfectly united in mind and thought? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are you aware of groups that teach different things from one another? \_\_\_\_\_

**III. Romans 15:4-6**

1. What type of spirit must we possess? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Must we glorify God with one heart and mouth or with a divided heart? \_\_\_\_\_

**IV. 1 Corinthians 1:11-15**

1. Is Christ divided? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is it wrong to call ourselves after mere men? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you aware of groups that call themselves after men other than Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

#### V. Ephesians 4:2-6

1. Are we to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many bodies are there (*body=church--see Eph. 1:21-22*)? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many Spirits are there? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many hopes are there? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many Lords are there? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How many true faiths are there? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How many authorized baptisms are there? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Yet how many faiths exist in today's society? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How many bodies (or churches) exist today? \_\_\_\_\_

#### VI. Ephesians 4:11-16

1. Does God expect us to reach unity of faith? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Does unity and knowledge of Christ promote maturity in Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Therefore, what does division and ignorance produce? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do false and deceitful teachings come from the craftiness of men? \_\_\_\_\_
5. From verse 15, in order for us to grow up into Christ, what must we do? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is *truth*? (See John 17:17) \_\_\_\_\_

#### VII. I Corinthians 12:12-27

1. How many bodies can a person be validly baptized into? \_\_\_\_\_
2. From verse 27, is the body of Christ (the church) made up of whole denominations or individual persons? \_\_\_\_\_

#### VIII. Ephesians 2:11-16

1. Did Christ break down the barrier between Jews (*the circumcised*) and Gentiles (*non-Jews*)? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are Christian Jews and Gentiles expected to live as "one" in Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Would this teach that there must also be unity among the races in Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you know of situations where people are spiritually divided along racial lines? \_\_\_\_\_

#### IX. 1 Timothy 1:3

1. What was Timothy commanded to do here? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is doctrine important to God? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are there many groups today teaching different doctrines that are foreign to each other? \_\_\_\_\_

#### X. 1 Corinthians 4:17

1. Did the Apostle Paul teach different things in different churches? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Back in Paul's day: Did every church teach the same doctrines? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How about today? Are the same doctrines taught in every denomination? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Must we teach the same things everywhere in every church of Jesus Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you aware of churches that teach different things from one another? \_\_\_\_\_

#### XI. 1 Cor. 11:18-19

The following is another of many topical studies and Biblical Chain References written by Dr. Kent A. Field starting in 1976 to the present day. Do you question the validity of topical studies? Think again! Consider the very purpose of the New Testament Letters. The Book of 1John was a topical study combating Gnosticism; Galatians combats the binding of circumcision; and so on...

1. Does the Bible acknowledge the existence of factions or divisions among those who profess to be members of the church? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Why does God allow such divisions to exist? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Does this agree with what some are saying in defense of denominational Christianity? \_\_\_\_\_

As seen from Scripture, the churches of the New Testament were of the same doctrine and practice! They were all churches of Christ, not some man-made organization based on man-made principles, doctrines, speculations or philosophies!

If we were to break down the word denomination, we would get the following:

**DE** - to break down or separate (like *de-ice, detach, defrost, etc.*)

**NOMIN** - to name (for example: "I *nominate* you as president...")

**ATION** - the act of (for example: *segregation=act of segregating*)

Therefore, the term *denomination* is defined as the act of naming a division or sect: Catholic, Methodist, Episcopalian, Baptist, Jehovah's Witness, Lutheran, etc.

During the days of Acts, the only groups that existed were Judaism, Paganism and Christianity--which is the only valid way to God (*John 14:6*). Today we have Reformed Judaism, Orthodox Judaism, Jew for Jesus, Catholicism, Pentecostalism, Protestantism, and so on. There are over 300 different religious denominations! Where did all these groups come from? Did they originate from God or from man?

God has made His word clear! He has made His will known to us in regards to religious worship! How does He feel about denominationalism? Does the promise of grace await those who defend and remain part of today's religious confusion and division? If Christ were here today: where would He worship? Would He approve denominations? How about Paul the Apostle? Would he worship with any denomination? What does the Bible say? Remember the words of Christ, "Every plant that My heavenly Father has not planted will be by the roots" *Matthew 15:13* and "...if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into the pit!" *Matthew 15:14*

"Yet a time is coming and now has come when the true worshiper will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth!" *John 4:23-24*