

## Denominationalism

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### ➤ Intro:

- **denominationalism began in the 1<sup>st</sup> century**, and has grown **worse and worse**, as foretold by Paul (**2 Tim. 3:13**)
  - **thousands of “Christian” denominations today**
  - **important to know whether God authorizes denominations**, and whether **we should organize** ourselves as a denomination
  - **if we don’t learn from history, we are prone to repeat**
- **this lesson: Denominationalism – broad overview**

### ➤ What is a denomination?

#### - **definition: denomination**

- **“the act of naming** or designating a person or thing” (dictionary.com)
  - **wearing name designated by man rather than God**

#### ➤ - **“A large group of religious congregations united under a common faith and name and organized under a single administrative and legal hierarchy”** (American Heritage Dictionary).

- **human organization**

#### ➤ - **definition: nondenominational**

- **“Not restricted to or associated with a religious denomination”** (American Heritage Dictionary)

### ➤ Why are some denominations considered cults?

#### - **definition: cult**

- **“A religion or religious sect generally considered to be **extremist or false**, with its followers often living in an unconventional manner **under the guidance of an authoritarian, charismatic leader**”** (American Heritage Dictionary).

#### ➤ - **examples of denominations considered to be cults**

- **Seventh-day Adventists:** their prophet is **Ellen White whose teachings they follow**, who had numerous prophecies that failed
- **Jehovah’s Witness:** founded by **Charles Taze Russell**, who had numerous failed predictions, also founder of the Watch-tower **Bible and Tract Society** which controls the churches
- **Christians Scientists:** founded by **Mary Baker Eddy whose teachings they follow**, after claiming to be healed by Dr. Quimby, then having a revelation claiming to have received the teachings of Christian Science
- **Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints):** founding prophet was **Joseph Smith whose teachings they follow**, alleging that he was given gold plates which he transcribed into English, which constitutes another testament of Jesus Christ

- **Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS Church)**: current prophet is **Warren Jeffs** whose teachings they follow, recently jailed for being an accomplice to raping of girls as part of the religion

- **International Church of Christ**: started as the **Boston Church of Christ** (Boston Movement) by **Kip McKeen** whose teachings they follow, a disciple of Chuck Lucas with the Crossroads church in Gainesville, FL, considered a cult because of their use of authoritarian mind control among other things

➤ **Broad history of denominationalism:**

- **Acts 2:38, 41-42, 46** Pentecost, Lord's church began – **not a denomination**

➤ - **1 Cor. 1:10-12** denominationalism had begun by middle of 1<sup>st</sup> century, wearing of man-made religious names

➤ - **Acts 20:29-30** Paul foretold that apostasy would come, some elders would lead people away from God  
- soon thereafter some elders began sinfully ruling over multiple congregations as bishops, **beginning of denominationalism** (cf. **1 Pet. 5:2**)

➤ - **Catholic**: In the **6th century**, 5 patriarchs (head bishops of Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople, and Rome) were overseeing all the apostate churches. Boniface III (patriarch of Rome) declared himself Universal Bishop. (Jeff Smith)

- **Roman Catholic Church**: began A.D. 606, founder is Boniface III

- **Orthodox Catholic Churches also exist today**: usually hold to older catholic traditions the Roman Catholic Church departed from (Syrian Orthodox Church, Russian Orthodox Church)

➤ - **Reformation (Protestant Churches)**: reform the Roman Catholic Church, which has departed from its earlier traditions, and was corrupted the vile evil

- **Lutheran**: 1530, followers of Martin Luther, oldest Protestant denomination

- **Luther was a Catholic priest** who grew weary of corrupt practices such as the selling of indulgences and the wicked lifestyles of priests. **Reformation began when he** posted his Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses on the doors of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, October 31, 1517, protesting against Roman Catholic doctrines

- **Presbyterian**: 1540, follows the doctrine of John Calvin (Calvinism), emphasized leadership of a presbytery that oversees several churches

- **other major Protestant denominations: Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist**

➤ - **Adventist Movement**: 1831, under the leadership of William Miller, predicted the end of the world

- advent - coming of Christ

- several denominations began, the most famous today is the Seventh-day Adventist

- - **Pentecostal Movement:**
  - **1901, Bethel Bible College**, Topeka, Kansas, Agnes Ozman received what she called the baptism of the Spirit and spoke in "tongues" - began the Holiness movement in the USA
  - **1960, in Van Nuys, California, the modern Charismatic movement** began in St. Mark's Episcopal Church, outburst of tongues speaking in this church, both Time and Newsweek covered the story, spread rapidly through Protestant churches, later it also spread to Catholic churches
  - **1980's evangelical churches began**, believing in miracles (signs and wonders), stresses "power evangelism" demonstrated by supernatural signs and wonders.
  
- - **Restoration:** preachers from denominations returned to the first century pattern, Lord's church, quick growth of the disciples of Christ and church of Christ – **movement away from denominationalism**
  - **late 1800's - early 1900's many left the Disciples of Christ** and went to the church of Christ, broke away over the issue of missionary societies
  - **1930's - 1960's churches of Christ** divided over the issue of institutionalism
  - **note: discuss divisions over denominationalism and institutionalism in an upcoming lesson**
  
- - **Community Church Movement / Emerging Church Movement: late 20<sup>th</sup> century to present** (early 21<sup>st</sup> century) – Postmodern Christianity / Emergent Church
  - **ecumenical movement:** manifestation of the unity in diversity movement, all "Christian" faiths accepted, doctrine not taught, focus on entertainment, informal – **tickling ears**
  - **super churches** created in some places
  - closely related to the **house church movement**
  
- **Three components of a denomination:**
  - **name:** denominations usually wear man-made religious names
    - some names are taken from the **founder** (Lutheran from Martin Luther, Wesleyan from John Wesley)
    - some names are taken from a **peculiar doctrine** that sets them apart (Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian)
  
- - **organization (government): denominations unite multiple congregations under a single administrative and legal head, and have a common faith**
  - **Roman Catholic:** churches ruled by the Pope, considered to be infallible as the vicar of Christ
  - **Southern Baptist:** ruled by the Southern Baptist Convention, churches send money to the convention, the convention dictates which churches are recognized as members of the denomination
  
- - **doctrine:** denominations employ man-made religious documents that dictate the groups doctrine and organization, some groups recite them in their services
  - **creed, articles of faith:** statement or confession of religious faith
    - **Lutheran Church Apostles' Creed**
  - **confession of faith:** similar to a creed but longer, including doctrine and instruction
    - **Presbyterian Confession of Faith**
  - **catechism:** doctrinal manual
    - **Catechism of the Catholic**

- **The Lord's church isn't a denomination! – review of recent study on the church**
  - **name: wearing man-made religious names** (denominationalism) **forbidden** (Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, etc.)
    - **1 Cor. 1:10-13 forbidden**, not permitted to wear man-made religious names
    - **1 Cor. 3:3-4 the result of carnality** (fleshly)
- - **list of some names identifying the church from Scripture**
  - **the name "Church of Christ" used by denominations**
    - used by **Baptist** churches others in the past
    - used by some **Pentecostal** churches today
    - used by **Independent Christians churches**
    - used by **the International Church of Christ**, churches of Christ from the Boston movement, cult, changed name few years ago
    - used by **institutional churches of Christ** that unite themselves in congregationally, usually with a sponsoring church or mother church overseeing the work of more than one church, or by abrogating their work in a human institution
- - **organization: congregations autonomous** – no authority for uniting multiple congregations under a single administrative and legal head (denominationalism)
  - **Eph. 1:22-23 Christ is the head of the church**
    - **Heb. 1:3 Jesus, right hand God, headquarters** of the Lord's church in **heaven**
- - **1 Pet. 5:1a, 4a each church ruled by elders in congregation, the Chief Shepherd (Jesus) above them in rank** – **no one ruling over local church between elders in congregation, and Jesus – cf. Pope**
  - **Heb. 13:17 elders give account – no one else – cf. Pope**
- - **doctrine: church obeys and teaches the doctrine** (teaching) **of Christ**
  - **2 Jn. 1:9 abide in teaching of Christ** (doctrine, KJ) **or lost**
  - **2 Tim . 3:16-17 Christ's doctrine revealed in Scripture** (Bible)
- - **1 Tim. 6:3-4 not advocate different doctrine – creed, catechism, articles of faith, confessions of faith**
- **application: the Lord's church is not a denomination – name, organization, doctrine**
  - **to be saved**, we must be a member of the Lord's church – can't be a member of a denomination
- **Summary / Inv.**
  - **denominationalism began in the 1<sup>st</sup> century**, and has grown **worse and worse**, as foretold by Paul (**2 Tim. 3:13**)
  - **our job is to teach and live by God's word, light of the world, salt of the earth, pillar and ground of the truth**
    - **reject denominationalism**
  - **inv.:** obey, added to the Lord's church **not a denomination**