

Where's the Difference? Charlie Brackett

Seeing this decade rush on towards its conclusion has caused me to reflect back over the nature of biblical discussions which I've had during the last half dozen or so years. There have been a variety of subjects, but perhaps the most dominant theme has, in some way, to do with the concept of denominational Christianity. In addition to many discussions about doctrinal differences we have with the denominations, there have been discussions about the right of denominations to exist, how they came into existence, reasons why their teachings contradict and why they teach doctrines not found in the Bible.

According to Webster, denomination is a general name for a category, in other words, it is a designation for some part of the whole thing, but could never be the whole. Inherent to the concept of denominationalism is disunity. Identity derives from differences of view and of practice. Everything about this concept is in opposition to Biblical principles.

The word "denomination" cannot be found in the Bible. During Jesus' walk here on earth there were sects, divided by doctrinal differences in the same way denominations are divided today. But, as far as I can tell, the Lord was displeased with every one of them because the very differences that they celebrated were born of men and the traditions of men.

Paul strongly rebuked those at Corinth who were divided. He said they were spiritually immature and told them to be made complete in the same mind and judgment. (1 Corinthians 3:13; 1:10) We are to be of the same mind so that with one accord we may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:5, 6)

Perhaps the most disconcerting of the Bible discussions I've had are those questioning why the churches that we call "the Lord's church" or "the churches of Christ" look so much like just another denomination. Is that view of us really fair? Assuming we once had them, have we lost the distinguishing marks of being the body of Christ, added by Him, owned and directed by Him? Have we been so motivated by a natural desire to be like those around us, accepted by religious peers, that the Lord cannot recognize us for our "denominational sameness?" Have we been so shaped by apathy and inactivity that we are being swept along into the monotony of modern "Christianity?"

Jesus said, *"Not every one who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."* (Matthew 7:21)
Have you given your allegiance to Christ or to man?