***Just Christians***

Acts 11:26

**I. Introduction:**

1. 1, 2, 3 The concept of “just Christians” is difficult to communicate (religious traditions and denominations).

According to the *Center for the Study of Global Christianity* (CSGC) at *Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary*, there are approximately 41,000 Christian denominations and organizations in the world.

2. Many “Christians” actually celebrate this confusion/division (“The branches of Christ’s church have developed diverse traditions that enlarge our store of shared understandings.” --*United Methodist Church* official website). But a careful reader of the NT will easily and quickly conclude Jesus did not die so followers could be divided into sects/parties.

A. Jesus died to reconcile all men in *one* body to God (Eph. 2:16).

B. Belonging only to Christ, being *“by one Spirit…baptized into one body”* of which Jesus is the Savior, is something altogether different from belonging to any one of the hundreds, yea thousands, of denominational religious bodies in the world (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 20:28).

3. 4 The Bible teaches there is only “*one body*”; “*one faith*,”; etc. (Ephesians 4:4-6).

A. “*one body*” = Christ’s church (Eph. 1:22-23); Jesus built (Matt. 16:18), not men (Heb. 8:1-2).

B. It is a *“spiritual house”* made up of Christians who are *“living stones”* (1 Pet. 2:5), citizens of God’s kingdom (Col. 1:13), and *“saints”* (holy, set apart) of God (Col. 1:2; 2 Cor. 7:1).

C. They’ve been born again of water and the spirit (Jn. 3:3-5) into God’s family (Eph. 2:19) which is His church the *“body”* of the saved (Eph. 5:23).

4. 5 The church of Christ is “*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*” (Eph. 2:20), not on the sands of denominational creeds, catechisms and traditions; not on the *“diverse traditions”* which the *“branches of Christ’s church have developed…and that enlarge our store of shared understandings”*!

A. Jesus is the “*chief cornerstone*”; only *“foundation”* (1 Pet. 2:6-7; 1 Cor. 3:11); and the only head (Eph. 1:22) and all authority in heaven and in earth rests in Him (Matt. 28:18). This leaves no room for Popes, Presidents, councils, synods, conventions or so-called “latter-day prophets” (2 Jn. 9-11).

B. Jesus built the church according to the divine pattern God gave Him (Heb. 8:1-2). 6 A house built by any other (e.g., Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Joseph Smith, Ellen White, Mary Baker Eddy, Popes of Rome, Watchtower Society, etc.) is not recognized by the Lord: “*Except Jehovah build the house, they labor in vain that build it*” (Psa. 127:1; cf. Matt 15:13).

C. Jesus condemned the various sects and parties of His day (Mk. 7:6-9, 13) causing great offense to these sectarians (Matt. 15:12).

D. The true biblical concept of the singular nature of Christ’s church and its exclusiveness is very *politically incorrect* in today’s society where “diversity” and “tolerance” are deified. Those teaching and adhering to the true nature of the church as taught in the New Testament are severely criticized, scorned and held in contempt as bigots, extremists and even accused of being “un-Christlike.” (Even by some claiming to be our brethren!)

***Proposition:*** So dear friend, we humbly ask you: Does the appeal to be simply ***just a Christian*** interest or offend you?

**II. Discussion:**

1. **7 Simply Christians**

A. When people on the first Pentecost after Jesus’ death complied with the conditions of grace for salvation (Acts 2:38-41) what happened to them? “...*the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*” (Acts 2:47)

B. To which church did the Lord add them? Were they Lutherans? Mormons? Roman Catholics? Was Peter a member of one denomination and John another? When Paul was baptized (Acts 9:18) did he become an Episcopalian, Methodist, or Baptist?

C. Do these questions seem absurd to you? Certainly, because no one would claim that those baptized in Acts 2 or Peter, John and Paul were anything other than ***simply Christians***!

D. Ironically if they were alive today, no denomination could claim them, for the apostles’ teaching made men and women ***just Christians***, not members of a denomination, they were neither Protestant nor Catholic. If they could be *simply Christians* why can’t we?

2.8 **The “Seed” Principle**

A. In Matt. 15:13 Jesus makes this statement: “*Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.*” How do you get plants?

B. Everyone knows the first step in the process is to sow seed. Furthermore, everyone knows if you plant corn seed you get corn plants; 9 if you plant tomato seed you get tomato plants. 10 It is impossible to plant corn seed and produce tomato plants! The “seed principle” is inviolable! Seed always produces after its own kind!

C. 12 The Bible says that seed also produces Christians. What type of seed? The word of God! (Lk. 8:4-15; 1 Pet. 1:23)

D. 13 In 1 Cor. 3:5-7 Paul tells us that it was his duty as a minister of God to go about sowing this seed, the word of God. Now we ask you, “What did the seed (word of God) Paul planted produce?” Methodists? Presbyterians? Catholics? Mormons? Sounds ridiculous doesn’t it?

E. No, it produced *just Christians*, because he simply planted the *word of God*. 14 Remember, seed always produces after its kind. Remember, to get corn one must plant corn, to get tomatoes one must plant tomatoes. Therefore, to get: Methodists🡪*Methodist Discipline*, Baptists🡪*Baptist Manual*; Catholics🡪*Catechism of the Catholic* Church; Mormons🡪*Book of Mormon*. **Why?** The “seed’ principle!

F. Why can we understand this inviolable principle when it comes to tending our farms and gardens, yet we cannot understand it when it comes to the plain teaching of God’s word?

3.15 **Do You Realize What This Means?**

A. It simply means that all the creeds, traditions, “revelations,” catechisms, instruction manuals, and institutions of men that have cropped up over the past 1900 years to clutter the religious scene and to confuse our minds are at best unnecessary.

(1) They are unnecessary to obey God, unnecessary to salvation, unnecessary to completeness in Christ, unnecessary to life and godliness, and unnecessary to the hope of heaven.

(2) But it also means that the whole concept of modern denominationalism is not part of the true Christianity originating in the mind of God, revealed by the Holy Spirit, and written in and preserved in the New Testament.

B. 16 God purposed the church of Jesus Christ before He made the world (Eph. 3:10-11; 1:3-4).

(1) Did God purpose the Lutheran Church or the Episcopal Church from eternity?

(2) Did anyone ever become a Jehovah’s Witness or a Mormon simply by obeying the New Testament?

(3) Did the Holy Spirit, who inspired the apostles guiding them into *“all truth”* (Jn. 16:13) in the first century, reveal to them the doctrines, teachings and peculiar names that make the Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Catholics distinct denominations?

4. 17 **Can We Be Simply Christians?**

A. Certainly! Without question!

B. No one ever became anything else by following the Bible and Jesus alone. Let us follow the Word of God as it stands, not after it has been filtered through the creeds and doctrines of men, then let His word make of you what it will.

C. It will make of you what it made of others in the book of Acts. 18 Those who obeyed and continued in the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42) were believers, disciples, saints, Christians (no “hyphenated Christians in NT!); it made a group of them the church of God or the church of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:2; Rom. 16:16). That is all the apostles’ doctrine made of anyone then and it is all it will make of anyone today!

5. 19 **Our Claim and Our Aim**

A. We do not claim to have a special knowledge of God’s word that others cannot obtain.

B. We do not claim to have an exclusive franchise on the truth.

B. Paul instructed all man can understand God’s word (Eph. 3:1-5).

C. If they have the right attitude (Lk. 8:15; 1 Thess. 2:13; Acts 17:10-12) recognizing Jesus and His word are the source of all truth (Jn. 14:6; 17:17; 16:13).

D. The only worship to God followers of denominational doctrines, traditions and teachings can offer is vain (empty and useless) worship (Matt. 15:9).

E. 20 Regardless of how good it may seem it is sheer folly to listen to and follow these doctrines, traditions and teachings of men (Prov. 14:12; Jer. 10:23).

F. It is for these reasons: our love for God and men, the shortness of life, and the certainty of judgment, that we will use great plainness of speech. We speak this way, not with a purpose of offending, but to challenge you to “*examine yourself to see if you are in the faith*” (2 Cor. 13:5).

G. 21 Our claim and our aim are neither boastful nor arrogant. We humbly seek to be ***just Christians***, nothing more and nothing less.

(1) We are not associated with, nor have allegiance to, any denomination; because, denominationalism is condemned in God’s word (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-4).

(2) Denominationalism is diametrically opposed to the singular nature of the church Jesus promised to build (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; Col. 1:18).

(3) 22 We have no earthly head, report to no earthly headquarters. Our head is Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:20-23) and He resides at the right hand of God in heaven (Heb. 1:3; Eph. 1:20).

(4) Our aim and sole desire is to imitate those in the New Testament who were members of Christ’s church (Acts 2:42, 47).

(5) 23 To meet this goal we use God’s word as our only guide (1 Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17) for we believe, as Jesus Himself said that “*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*” (Jn. 12:48).

**II. Conclusion:**

1. 24 Do you want to be “just a Christian” today?

2. Invitation: ***Hear*** (Rom. 10:17), ***Believe*** (Heb. 11:6; Jn. 8:24), ***Confess*** (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37), ***Repent*** (Acts 17:30), ***Baptism*** (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26-27), whereupon Jesus will *“add”* you to the body of the saved ones, His church (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23); then ***remain faithful*** (Col. 1:22-23).