

The Voice of History

The record of the past 20 centuries reveals these facts concerning prominent religious sects:

Church	Time	Place	Founder
Roman Catholic	606 AD	Rome	Boniface III
Lutheran	1520 AD	Germany	Martin Luther
Episcopal	1534 AD	England	Henry VIII
Presbyterian	1536 AD	Switzerland	John Calvin
Congregational	1550 AD	England	Robert Browne
Baptist	1607 AD	Holland	John Smythe
Methodist	1739 AD	England	John Wesley
Mormon	1830 AD	America	Joseph Smith
7th Day Adventist	1860 AD	America	Ellen G. White
Christian Science	1866 AD	America	Mary Baker Eddy
Jehovah's Witness	1872 AD	America	Charles T. Russell

Examine these "churches" very carefully!

- ☛ **Were they established at the right time?**
- ☛ **Were they established in the right place?**
- ☛ **Were they founded by the right person?**
- ☛ **Are their members called by the right name?**

Whose Voice will we obey?

The Voice of History?
-or-
The Voice of God?

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Words of Life

Westside
church of Christ

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68



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The Church Jesus Built (Part 13)
The Sin of Denominationalism (#1)

Craig Thomas

Some estimate there are over 30,000 different denominations in so-called "Christendom." **What is a denomination?** A denomination is a distinct religious group with a peculiar name, doctrine, organization, terms of membership, etc. Webster defines a denomination as a "sect," a "party," or a "faction." Anyone familiar with religion in America could probably name dozens of denominations; for example, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic, Presbyterian, etc. What distinguishes Lutherans from Catholics, or Baptists from Methodists? They differ in name, doctrine, organization, terms of membership, etc. The question becomes: "Is denominationalism approved by the Bible?" The answer is a resounding NO! The church in the New Testament (NT) was not a denomination. The NT condemns such division time and time again. Let's consider some NT principles "denominationalism" violates.

1) **"I [Jesus] Will Build My Church."** The Bible teaches there is only "one body" and "one faith," (Eph. 4:4-6). The "one body" is Christ's church (Eph. 1:22-23) built by Jesus (Matt. 16:18), not men (Heb. 8:1-2). This spiritual house is made up of Christians who are "living stones" (1 Pet. 2:5), citizens of God's kingdom (Col. 1:13), saints of God (Col. 1:2). They are born again of water and the Spirit into God's family (Jn. 3:5; Eph. 2:19). Christ's church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2:20), not the sand of denominational creeds and traditions. Jesus is the "chief cornerstone" (1 Pet. 2:6-7; 1 Cor. 3:11) and only head (Eph. 1:22) and all authority in heaven and in earth rests in Him (Matt. 28:18-20). This leaves no room for Popes, Presidents, councils, conventions or so-called "latter-day prophets." Jesus built the church according to the divine pattern God gave Him. A house built by any other (e.g., Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Joseph Smith, Ellen White, Mary Baker Eddy, the Popes of Rome, the Watchtower Society,

etc.) is not recognized by the Lord. *“Except Jehovah build the house, they labor in vain that build it”* (Psalms 127:1; cf. Matt. 15:13). Jesus would condemn the religious sects of today just as He did in His day (Mk. 7:6-9, 13) even though it offended them (Matt. 15:12).

2) **“No Divisions Among You.”** Paul rebuked the church at Corinth for their division, their sectarianism, which is the very basis of all denominationalism (1 Cor. 1:10-13). In fact, the inspired apostle described such behavior with this scathing language, *“For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal...?”* (1 Cor. 3:3) In Galatians 5:20 Paul includes, *“factions, divisions, parties”* (ASV), the sins at the heart of denominationalism, among *“the works of the flesh”* which will cause a person to *“not inherit the kingdom of God.”* (v. 21) Our “politically correct” modern society exalts and extols the virtues of denominationalism while the Bible condemns it. Next week we’ll consider more on the sin of denominationalism.

Homosexuality: What does the Bible say?

Craig Thomas

In times the topic of homosexuality has come up quite often in the news. For example, Sunday (3/21/04) there was a news report about a lesbian, woman “pastor” in the United Methodist Church. There has been a great push by many for acceptance of the gay “lifestyle” and to brand those opposing it as hateful, narrow-minded bigots. Today homosexuality is equated with being a member of a minority race or religion. Everyone, from Hollywood movie stars to Washington politicians, appears bent on praising homosexuality as an accepted “alternative lifestyle” in our “politically correct” society. However, isn’t it time we asked ourselves “Does God approve”? Consider that the Bible says:

1. **It is against nature.** Read and study Romans 1:26-27. In that passage homosexuality is said to be *“against nature.”* One does not have to be a “rocket scientist” to see that Paul hit the nail squarely on the head with his inspired statement. Because God’s word plainly teaches that woman was made for man (Gen. 2:20-23) and marriage consists of a male (man) and female (wife) (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-6). God intended for Adam (man) and Eve (woman) to be married, not Adam and Steve or Alice and Eve!

2. **It will keep one from heaven.** In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 homosexuals are listed with others who *“shall not inherit the kingdom of God”* (KJV). While the churches of men, the media, and politicians may state otherwise *“be not deceived”!* The only homosexual to enter the kingdom of God is one that repents (1 Cor. 6:11).

3. **It is an abomination.** An abomination is something loathsome, repulsive, and detestable. In Leviticus 18:22 God said, *“You shall not lie*

with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.” Surely that is clear enough to understand. Further, the Bible says, *“If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death.”* (Lev. 20:13) We are not advocating the death penalty for homosexuals, only pointing out the dreadful and abominable nature of this sin in the eyes of God.

4. **It is a very grievous sin.** Sodom and Gomorrah were cities that accepted and engaged in homosexuality (Gen. 18:20; 19:4-8). Notice what their gay pride got them (Gen. 19:24-28; Lk. 17:29).

5. **It can cause a nation to be destroyed.** The Bible says the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah was an example *“to those who afterward would live ungodly”* (2 Pet. 2:6-8). Since the Lord brings nations to power and sustains them (Dan. 4:25), can He not also remove and destroy them? Certainly! (Psa. 135:6-11). America is no different *“For the nation...which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined.”* (Isa. 60:12)

Many will probably label these words as “homophobic” and hateful. In reality, they are words of truth and of love. Is it more loving to plainly warn people about sin or let them go on their way oblivious to their behavior God considers abominable? Galatians 4:16

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Joe R. Price

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.” (Philippians 4:8, NKJV)

The turmoil of unrest in our country and around the world impacts us in many ways. These things unsettle our thoughts, our emotions, and attack our faith. They give our adversary, the devil, an opening to infiltrate our hearts with evil thoughts, words, and deeds (1 Pet. 5:8). Scripture teaches us to meditate on good things – even when things around us are awfully bad. (Recall that Paul was imprisoned unjustly for more than two years when he wrote this exhortation.) The word translated *“meditate”* means *“to take an inventory”* (Strong, G3049). Rather than becoming immersed in the sinful venom and bile of worldly people, the gospel of Christ calls Christians to inventory our thought process and dwell on things that are 1) *Noble* (honest, honorable), 2) *Just* (innocent, equitable), 3) *Pure* (holy, clean), 4) *Lovely* (friendly towards others), 5) *Of good report* (of worthy reputation), 6) *Have virtue* (morally excellent), and 7) *Praiseworthy* (commendable). The God of peace guards our hearts with His peace as we trust Him and meditate on these heavenly things (Phil. 4:7, 9).