

So Many Denominations, Which One Is True?

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This one comes from Matthew. "Denominations. There's lots of them today. It's frustrating finding the truth. Is everyone wrong? There's only one truth. One interpretation. One right answer. How on earth do you find it?" Think that's a good question? The thing I would say to Matthew, is Matthew, for one, I'll tell you this, you don't find it in denominations, and you don't find it in men. Basically, what is the source of truth? Jesus Christ says, "Sanctify them... by Your truth. Your Word is truth." That's where we have to go. John 8:31, "Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him, 'If you abide in My Word, you are truly My disciples. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"

How does anybody come to know the truth? I mean, if you don't know what the truth is, how do you come to know it? You go to God's Word. What happened? You go to Acts 17. Who was noble? You know what I would have Connie put on the calendar? That this is called the Berean Bible Study. You know why I wanted it to be called that? Basically people that searched the Word of God; they were noble and they searched the Word of God to see if these things were true. That's how we're going to find truth.

Listen, the reality is that you can come across Methodists, Lutherans, you can come across Presbyterians, you can come across Brethren, you can come across Congregationalists, EV Free people that have truth. And you can come across a lot of Baptists who don't have much truth. You know, we can get all hung up with denominations. And of course, the Catholic church likes to say, "Well, they all broke away from us. That's why there's so many of them. We were the true church in the beginning And there's all this multiplicity of denominations. We're the only one. And then you have all these denominations because they broke off from us."

That's not true. And basically what all the denominations prove to us, is that you've got a lot of different people interpreting a lot of different things in the Bible, in a whole lot of different ways. And you say, well, how am I supposed to know? If you've got these people over here that interpret it that way; and these people over here, that interpret it that way. These people over here, interpret it that way.

Well, I can tell you this. There are some basic essentials to the Gospel that if you believe, you'll be saved. Even if you're off on other parts. Folks, wouldn't we agree, there are Presbyterians in heaven that got it wrong on baptism. Right? Congregationalists. We might say there that they got it wrong over here. But there are those that got it right enough.

Folks, I'm reading right now about some Lutherans that had a whole lot right. And I've read before about some Methodists that have a whole lot right. And bottom line, how do we determine right and wrong? It's not by the denominational label that somebody holds. It certainly isn't, you drive down the road and you see a sign that says "Baptist" and you can say, "Oh, well, they've got the truth."

How do you know? The Apostle John said this, he says "test the spirits." How in the world do you test the spirits? Paul speaking to the Thessalonians said the same thing. Test

everything. Hold fast to what's good. Or, hold fast to what's true. How do you know? How do you know what to hold fast to? You've got to be like the Bereans. What happened? What was it that the Bereans did? They searched the Scriptures. But what did they search the Scriptures to do? What in the world even possessed them to search the Scriptures? Well, they had heard teaching, right? They sat under teaching. They'd heard somebody preach, and then they went to the Word of God to see if it was true.

You know what? I call this Berean Bible Study, because I hope that you folks are going to be folks that are going to know the Bible much. Jesus Christ said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." How do people know the truth? They know the truth when they're taught of the Spirit. They know the truth when God opens their eyes to realize that certain things are true. I suspect that God gave us enough difference to test our love. To test our graciousness.

You know what Jesus Christ said? You know, some of the disciples came to Him one day and said, "Lord, we told these people over there to stop." Why? Because they weren't with us. In other words, another denomination. Right? It's just like that. They went, Lord, they weren't with us. We're the in group. We're the in crowd. And see, we tend to think that. Most people think: we've got the truth. Very few others do. And what did Jesus say? He said look, if they're not against Me, then what? If they're not against us, they're with us. It is a sad fact of those who do bear witness to the truth, now that's not to say there's a whole lot, but it's interesting how we write certain things up.

Can I tell you something? When George Whitefield preached, anybody know what denomination he was affiliated with? Whitefield never sought to start a denomination. He pretty much pledged himself to the Anglican movement Whitefield and Wesley came out of Anglicanism. Now Wesley made definitely more of a concerted effort. And you know we have the Wesleyan Methodists, the Arminian Methodists that came more out of Wesley's efforts; and then more of the Calvinistic Methodist movement came out of those that God raised up in Wales, like the Daniel Roland's, the Howell Harris's. And then also the George Whitefield's. You know, Anglicans. Anglicans!

Do you know that the Baptists would discipline their members if they went to hear Whitefield preach? I had a man that I highly respect tell me he would not allow George Whitefield in his pulpit. Why? You know what? Can I tell you something? In the first and second Great Awakenings, the Calvinistic Baptists were largely passed over. It's historical. You can read about it. Why? For that very reason right there. They would discipline their members if they'd go listen to Whitefield preach. The Spirit of God rested upon Whitefield. Multitudes were being converted. The Spirit of God rested upon John Wesley, as much as a lot of Calvinists don't want to admit it. And the Baptist churches were disciplining members if they'd go.

By and large, in the first and second Great Awakenings, the Spirit of God passed over the Baptists. Isn't that shameful? And you know what's likely to happen today? If revival breaks out in this land, I'm not going to say it might not happen among Calvinistic Baptists, but what if it broke out among Lutherans? What if it broke out with Methodists? Would we even know? What if true revival broke out among the charismatics? Would we even know?

I just watched a video - just a little part of it last night, like the first five minutes. Some guy did a message on charismatic Calvinists. Just bitter and hateful. You can see it. It's one of

the most popular videos on sermonaudio.com right now. You see that kind of thing. If revival broke out among charismatics, I can tell you that guy preaching that message wouldn't even know.

Brethren, bottom line, if we see something that seems to be a move of God; we see something preached out there, we need to test the spirits. Not by the denominational label, but by "thus saith the Lord." Go to the Word of God. You know what, if they love Christ, I think we should stand, I think we should be willing to spill our blood for our convictions regarding baptism and the Lord's Supper. We ought to be willing to die for our convictions. But the fact is, we'd have to admit that people have had different ideas about the Lord's Supper and about baptism that are in heaven now. And I know there are some Baptists that don't like to admit that. Folks, look, there are a lot of different ideas out there, but I'll tell you this, who's the pillar and ground of truth? The church is.

And so you know what? Even though there's a lot of differences, there are good churches out there, and they are few and far between, as I've told people lately that I've counseled to, and people over the Internet and by phone. Look, I think behind any decisions you make about receiving Christ, I think next to choosing the right spouse in life, the third most important decision you can make in life has to do with what church you go to. I believe that you should choose where you live, where you work, based on what church you're going to go to. Where you're going to raise your children, based on where a good church is. Because I'll tell you what, it will have a lot to do with your life. It will have a lot to do with your fruitfulness. But we need to be testing them.

Listen to this, you know this - Revelation 2:2 Jesus said this of the Ephesian church, "I know your works; your toil, your patient endurance; how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested..." Look at that. "...but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false." How do you test? How do you test somebody and find them to be false? I'll tell you what Jesus said about false prophets. You've got false churches; you've got bad doctrine. Jesus says this, "Beware of false prophets. They come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." How did He say we'll recognize them? By their fruits. I'll tell you this, where you find unholy living, you've got bad doctrine. Guarantee you. You want to know what's most important? What are the doctrines that are really essential? Let me just throw some off the top.

Listen, the devil attacks primarily in two places: The person of Christ. And the work of Christ. Guarantee it. And it's Christ. He is always the issue. So you want to look for good doctrine. You want to look for a good church. I don't care what the denomination is. You're looking for a church that is really a pillar, a ground, a buttress of truth. You're going to go in there, and you're going to look at these two things. What do they do with Christ? His person? What do they do with Christ - His work? Guarantee - the devil attacks in both places. You've got false doctrine? What are they doing? Oneness doctrine: The Father is the Son. Rejection of the deity - the JW's. He's not God. There will be some rejection in His person. The devil always goes after the glory of Christ. He wants to chop it down somehow. And then the work. What about the work? Anywhere where there's works? Run for your life! Because it's damnable. Because the only Gospel that saves, is the Gospel that is 100% based on the merits of Jesus Christ.

That doctrine of justification is essential. We are justified by faith aside from any works of the law. And anytime people want to add to it, whether it's - you've got to be baptized; you've got to speak in tongues; they add anything whatsoever, no matter how pretty it might sound, if they're adding anything to the merits of Jesus Christ, run from it like the plague. But I'll tell you this, where they make much of Christ, and much of the work of Christ, though they may go wrong in many things; they're with us. They're with us, folks. Where Christ is the sole basis of our acceptance with God. Where Christ is made much of, where He's exalted, and where what's said of Him in the Scriptures is said of Him by that church or by that preacher, they may go wrong in things like baptism; they may go wrong in things like the Lord's Supper; they may go wrong and their ecclesiology may be off and they may have problems with regards to their cessationist views or non-cessationist or various works of the Spirit... Test the spirits, brethren.