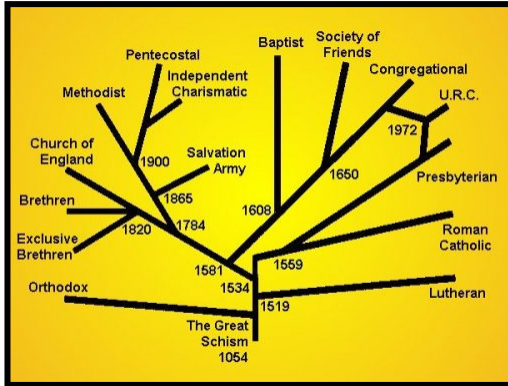




Why So Many Christian Denominations?

Acts 20:29-30: (NASB) ²⁹*I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;* ³⁰*and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.*



Christianity today is utterly splintered. With 2,000 or more denominations and lots of free thinking, some brands of Christianity are not even recognizable to others. Why would this be? Is there only one true brand of Christianity? If so, then why would God have permitted the unified body of Christian followers to be exposed to such contradictory and divisive corruptions of true Christianity?

Should the splintered state of Christianity be a surprise?

Here is where we started:

Ephesians 4:1-5: (NASB) ¹*Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,* ²*with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,* ³*being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* ⁴*There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5* *one Lord, one faith, one baptism...*



Introductory questions, Mysteries, Christian Denominations, Carolyn Morrison

- *No Christian would argue with the fact that there is only one God and only one message of salvation given to us by Jesus Christ. But over the centuries, both the Bible and Christ's message have been interpreted in many different ways and disagreement over the nature of the Scriptures has led to endless division and confusion among Jesus' followers. The early church fathers saw Christians as a tight knit group with a unified set of beliefs. So at what point did the church begin to fragment and how did various interpretations of the Bible lead to the dozens of Christian denominations which exist today?*

Here the Apostle Paul is parting from Ephesus. He knows he will not see them again and is giving final spiritual admonishment to the Elders there.

First, he establishes his own track record of conduct:

Acts 20:25-35: (NASB) ²⁵*And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.* ²⁶*Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.* ²⁷*For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.*

Second, he prepares them for the coming battle, specifically the inundation of false doctrine:

²⁸*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.* ²⁹*I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;* ³⁰*and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.* ³¹*Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.*



Here Paul was predicting a splintering that the church was to be on guard against. Notice the wolves are both outside the church and within.

Third, he hands them over to God, and out of his own personal care reminds them of the most important things:

³²And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. ³⁵In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Paul confirms that he was feeding them spiritual food, not taking their money. He gave the example of how to treat each other. This was just one foreshadowing of what would happen to Christianity. Satan wanted to squelch the movement as soon as possible. He failed! But the further away in time the true church got from the Master and original 12 Apostles, the more the original message became diluted.

Did Jesus give us any inkling of what was to come?

 **Early divisions, Why so many churches, World Video Bible School (Church of Christ)**

- *Why are there so many churches today? How did a basic Bible belief system with a unified group of people turn into literally thousands of denominations with different practices and different beliefs?*
- *History tells us that very early on, there came along splinter groups who had ideas and doctrines contrary to the 1st century church and contrary to the doctrine they had received and practiced. Some of these groups include: the Gnostics around 125AD, the Montanists around 156AD, the Manichaens around 244AD, and the Novatians around 251AD.*

There were difficulties even long before those existed. So is there one true Truth or is the Truth bendable to fit our own personality?

Jesus clearly prophesied that trouble would come to his followers and for a long period of time. His prophecy came by way of parables - one in particular for our purposes with this program.

This is one of the few parables he actually explained for us:

Matthew 13:24-30: (NASB) ²⁴Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. ²⁷The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares? ²⁸And he said to them, An enemy has done this! The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' ²⁹But he said, No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.



Some context observations regarding this parable:



- It immediately follows the parable of the sower, one that Jesus clearly explained.
- Jesus later explains this parable as well.
- Jesus followed this parable with two others that further tell the story of this parable.

Matthew 13:24: (NASB) *Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.*

Where is this *kingdom of heaven*? It actually means the context in which the true church is developed. For the reasoning on this, please see CQ Rewind Full Edition Bonus Material.

The phrase:	The meaning Jesus gives:
<i>The one who sows the good seed</i>	The Son of Man
<i>The field</i>	The world
<i>The good seed</i>	Children of the Kingdom

Remember this is a parable that is a prophecy about the future over a 2,000-year period of time. We are at the "harvest" part of this parable, so it is important for us to understand today. He gave his disciples the sense of being on guard.

Here is the fulfillment:

Matthew 24:14: (KJV) *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

The *end* described here coincides with the end time of this parable.

Matthew 13:25: (NRSV) *but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away.*

Now the explanation: Matthew 13:38-39: (NRSV) ³⁸*the weeds are the children of the evil one,* ³⁹*and the enemy who sowed them is the devil;*

The phrase:	The meaning Jesus gives:
<i>Weeds (tares)</i>	Children of the evil one
<i>The enemy</i>	The devil

So we have the classic battle of good and evil shown here. Jesus sows his good seed, the children of the kingdom or true followers of Christ throughout the



world; but the enemy, Satan, follows him and sows the bad seed - Satan's followers - to corrupt the good. The good and bad grow together.

Notice it said this happened *while everybody was asleep*. What does that mean?

Acts 20:27,30: (NASB) ²⁷*For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God...* ²⁹*I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;* ³⁰*and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.*

The Apostle Paul knew *that after my departure* - once the Apostles' time was over and they were off the scene, there would be a corrupted movement in Christianity with divisiveness and branches of Christianity that would not agree. It was expected and we are supposed to be prepared for it.

How do you know right now that you are where you really are supposed to be? What guidelines are you going to use to figure out if you are following the right path or one of the wrong paths that Jesus prophesied about?

The weeds or tares looked identical to the genuine wheat while they were growing. But at harvest time, the wheat is full of fruit and bent over. The tares are taller. Jesus shows the good and the bad grow together...but to what end?

So, if Jesus knew about Satan's plan to corrupt his church, why didn't he stop it?

 **Who is in charge, Mysteries, Christian Denominations, Carolyn Morrison**

- *Today, the Christian church is really divided on the issue of authority - who is in charge. The Catholic Church affirms the unified authority of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, as having a special authority to decide questions that are conflicted at other levels of the church. That authority is not fully accepted, obviously, by many Christians.*

Matthew 13:26-30: (NRSV) ²⁶*So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well.* ²⁷*And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?* ²⁸*He answered, An enemy has done this. The slaves said to him, Then do you want us to go and gather them?* ²⁹*But he replied, No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them.* ³⁰*Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.*

Now the explanation: Matthew 13:39-43: (NRSV) ³⁹*the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.* ⁴⁰*Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.* ⁴¹*The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers,* ⁴²*and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* ⁴³*Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!*

The phrase:

Harvest

The meaning Jesus gives:

End of the Age



<i>The reapers</i>	Angels
<i>Weeds collected and burned with fire</i>	All causes of sin and all evildoers in fire - weeping and gnashing of teeth

What is it that drives us to believe the way we do? Tradition? Family heritage? Personal Bible study? Do we believe something for the sake of following? Is it founded on our own sincere desire to know the truth and to understand the Scriptures? When you want to find the truth of the Gospel, there is one place to go - the Bible. Our thinking needs to be checked against the original teachings.

Observations so far:

- The evidence of the enemy sowing the pseudo-wheat, while revealed during the growth period, was not acted upon until a much later time. That is the time of the harvest, when the clarity of true vs. false would become far more evident.
- The development of these two classes beside one another does not hurt the true wheat. The true church cannot be corrupted because they are faithful regardless of what Satan throws at them. Satan has been trying to thwart the plan of God since the beginning, but Satan can't win!
- The pseudo-wheat will be gathered into bundles away from the true wheat. There is a separation work where the wrong plants are taken away.
- Each class will be given its just reward - destruction or proper harvest.

Corruption, like it or not, has crept steadily into the Christian teaching over generations. It began in the days of the Apostles.

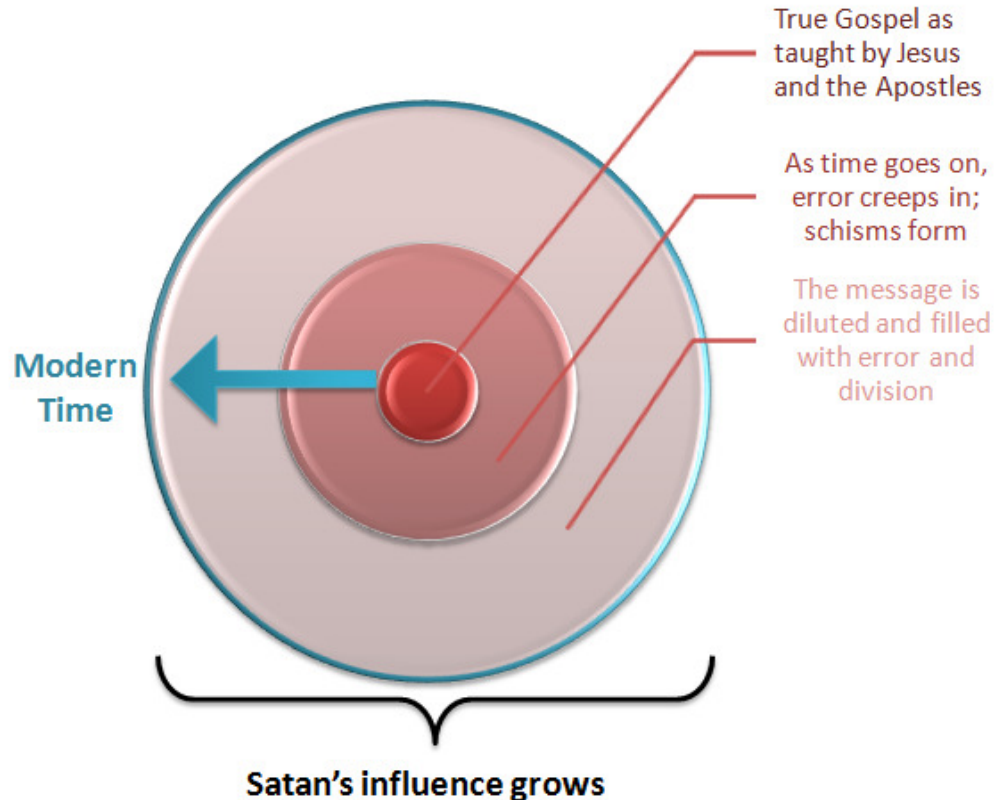
1 Corinthians 4:5: (NRSV) *Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive commendation from God.*

An important point: This parable is obviously talking about a very long period of time, as Jesus explains that a harvest time must come, meaning the end of the call of the church, as pictured by the wheat. Therefore, we CANNOT look at this parable as an illustration about singular individuals throughout the last 2,000 years; rather as classes, for no one lives for that long. The proper sense would be that the true wheat (the true church) was to develop within the context of the false wheat (the false church), until such time they - as classes or groups - would be separated. There are classes of false denominations that will be growing throughout this Gospel Age collectively. That would mean different groups would be bundled in the harvest.



Another prophecy regarding things to look for in this separation of true and false Christian classes: 1 Timothy 4:1-3: (NASB) ¹*But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,* ²*by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,* ³*men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.*

The Apostle Paul warned not to fall prey to the traditions of men that creep into Christian systems and corrupt them, pulling people away from the true Gospel.



So, how do we tell who is who?

Schism of 1054, Mysteries, Christian Denominations, Carolyn Morrison

- *The great schism of 1054 was really an expression of political and cultural differences, as much as or probably more than theological differences. The eastern church spoke Greek, the western spoke Latin, the eastern church had a different kind of relation between the emperor and the church than in the western church. The eastern church had a tendency toward more of a mystical, intuitive understanding of God; the western church had a more "rational," legalistic understanding of God.*

Although there were differences before, in 1054 there was a large split between the Western Latin Roman Catholic vs. Eastern Greek Orthodox. These two had previously worked in cooperation but then literally excommunicated each other simultaneously.



When the Apostles had difficulties within the Christian church, there were Jewish Christians on one side and Christians previously from Pagan religions on the other. They could not agree on a lot of things, but they came together to discuss how it would work as one group working together.

Compare these next two texts:

2 Corinthians 11:12-15: (NASB) ¹²*But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting.* ¹³*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.* ¹⁴*No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.* ¹⁵*Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.*

In the Apostles' day, there was already deceit and disguise to appear Godly, but with a false, Satanic origin!

Acts 20:25-29: (NASB) ²⁵*And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.* ²⁶*Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.* ²⁷*For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.* ²⁸*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood.* ²⁹*I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;*

★★★★★★★★★★
What do we see here? The Apostle Paul teaching the teachers personal responsibility, zeal, declaration of the whole purpose of God, being on guard to protect the original integrity of the Gospel message!
★★★★★★★★★★

A caller shared with us some excellent advice by quoting this scripture:

1 Thessalonians 5:21: *Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.*

Jesus dealt with false leadership in his own time:

John 8:41-44: (NASB) ⁴¹*You are doing the deeds of your father. They said to him, We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.* ⁴²*Jesus said to them, If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on my own initiative, but He sent me.* ⁴³*Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear my word.* ⁴⁴*You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

The Pharisees had their own agenda. This is a picture of what happened to Christianity in our day. It has its own agenda that is *not* the Gospel of Christ. We need to be careful that whatever "brand" of Christianity we are following, the only agenda is the pure teaching of Christ.

Jesus distills our responsibility down to a simple observation:


Matthew 7:15-20: (NASB) ¹⁵*Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.* ¹⁶**You will know them by their fruits.** *Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?* ¹⁷*So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.* ¹⁸*A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.* ¹⁹*Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* ²⁰*So then, you will know them by their fruits.*

Now what we must do is figure out what constitutes "good fruit!" Do we need a scriptural definition and not just our own opinion?



What should we look for in our Christian Leaders?

Because we have so many denominations and because we all will tend to stand by the interpretation that we adhere to as correct, this next audio clip will likely press us to take sides - our purpose in its use is to discuss the core values of what we each look for in our leadership:

 **Martin Luther's error, catholicguestspeaker.com**

- *Every dogma and doctrine that we have in the Catholic church is founded in the teachings of Jesus Christ. It's very easy to misunderstand scripture and that's why we need the church to guide us. This is also how so many people have gotten off track. They get an idea from reading scripture, they think they're correct, and then they break away and start their own denomination. Many people follow. See, it's been a drifting process over time and we've lost sight of the foundation of it all. The foundation (of the Reformation) is the "faith alone, scripture alone" dogma or doctrine that Martin Luther started. Martin Luther started that - that's not Jesus Christ. A lot of Protestant theology is founded on these two points. So they're founded on a lie, on something that is not authentic.*

From our perspective, we believe by faith in the Scriptures we are saved and not in the traditions of men that have been corrupted along the way. Are we looking for leadership that will answer all the questions for us, or for leadership that will show us how to answer the questions for ourselves?

Here is the way Jesus described the Christian walk:

Matthew 7:13-16: (NASB) ¹³Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. ¹⁵Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?

This stresses the difficulty of the Christian walk. We should look for leaders who understand this and who live this in their everyday life.

Philippians 3:17: (KJV) Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

What kind of example did Paul give us? He really practiced what he preached. He didn't covet anyone's gold, he supported himself, and he worked tirelessly promoting the Gospel.

Seeds of discord in the early church:

1 Corinthians 3:5-9: (NASB) ⁵What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? **Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.** ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. ⁸Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

Notice there is no pecking order here! The Apostle Paul, arguably one of the greatest Christian leaders in all of history, does not separate himself - rather he stresses he is just one of many fellow workers. Humbly, he always pointed to God.



Here is what Christian leadership is supposed to look like - let's put this in a list format:

Titus 1:7-9: (NASB) ⁷For the overseer must be:

- above reproach as God's steward,
- not self-willed,
- not quick-tempered,
- not addicted to wine,
- not pugnacious,
- not fond of sordid gain,
- ⁸but hospitable,
- loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled,
- ⁹holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

If our Christian leaders aren't striving to reflect this, are we really in the right place to get to the true Gospel of Christ?

Here is the attitude of true Christian leadership:

1 Peter 5:1-3: (NASB) ¹Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ²shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.



Quick reminder: Jesus predicted these divisions would happen, but he allowed it to happen because the true followers would be tried and tested but not adversely affected.

What should we look for in ourselves?



Time machine, *Why so many churches, World Video Bible School*

- *In the Bible we read about only one church. Imagine there is such a thing as a time machine and you can travel back to the first century on the day the Lord first established his church. ...You see about 3,000 converts to Christianity. You walk up and ask him, "Sir, I would like to know what denomination did you just become a part of?" What would he say? He would probably say, "I don't know what you are talking about. All I know is that I became a part of the church of Jesus Christ." And that would be exactly right because there was only one.*

How do we get back to that original thinking?

In the time of the Apostles, divisions were already starting:

1 Corinthians 1:10-14: (NASB) ¹⁰Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. ¹²Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." ¹³Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius...



Observations:

- This exhortation is important - it is by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ only! Anyone in between is only a tool used by the Lord.
- Do not be divided!
- All origin of our Christianity goes back to Jesus and only Jesus!



Built upon the foundation of unity, there is diversity:

Ephesians 4:11-16: (NASB) ¹¹And he gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

So our *diversity* is for the purpose of equipping all to serve and to feed the unity of the faith!

Is the body of Christ for socializing? We would maintain it is instead for a place to put aside your own will and build others up in Christ by living sacrificially with them and for them.

¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

Because we are equipped and unified, we can withstand the winds and waves of false doctrine. Ideas and beliefs come and can be pretty convincing like a strong wind or wave. We need to be strong and wise enough to fight it in the right way. We can't be tossed about. Our foundation to remain strong is the Gospel of Jesus. We are to live a life of sacrifice like Jesus did. If you are following Christ to "get stuff," you are not following Christ.

¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

We are to be a well-oiled machine of mutual up-building, individual sacrifice and collective witness to the glory of the Gospel. Each individual part must be a part of the whole. Being mature in Christ is being humble.

1 Corinthians 14:33: (NASB) *for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.*

We have become so diversified and splintered because there have been perversions of the original Gospel. What are we personally going to do about that?

Let us constantly check to see if our personal compass is set to true spiritual north!

John 10:27-28: (NASB) *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; ²⁸and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*



Jesus allowed the tares to grow up around the wheat. The true Christ-follower class was surrounded by falseness and perversions, but they were able to follow after Jesus because they knew his voice. Is that where we are? Do we listen for Jesus' voice and none other?

*So why so many Christian denominations?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*

Often we think of "The Kingdom of Heaven" also translated "The Kingdom of God" as a future, perfect environment that is filled with peace and harmony. Here are reasons why this idea is NOT what Jesus was talking about:

1. His explanation of the parable sets "The Kingdom of Heaven" in a very tumultuous time:

Matthew 13:37-39: (NRSV) ³⁷He answered, The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.

2. Jesus pointed to "The Kingdom" as being with them back then:

Mark 1:14-18: (NRSV) ¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news. ¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, Follow me and I will make you fish for people. ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

3. "The Kingdom" is described as a present experience of those who are begotten by the spirit:

Romans 14:17-19: (ASV) ¹⁷for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸For he that herein serveth Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men. ¹⁹So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.

4. All of the above are describing God's own people:

1 Peter 2:9-10: (NRSV) ⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Therefore, we can see "The Kingdom of Heaven/God" as being the context in which the true church is developed...

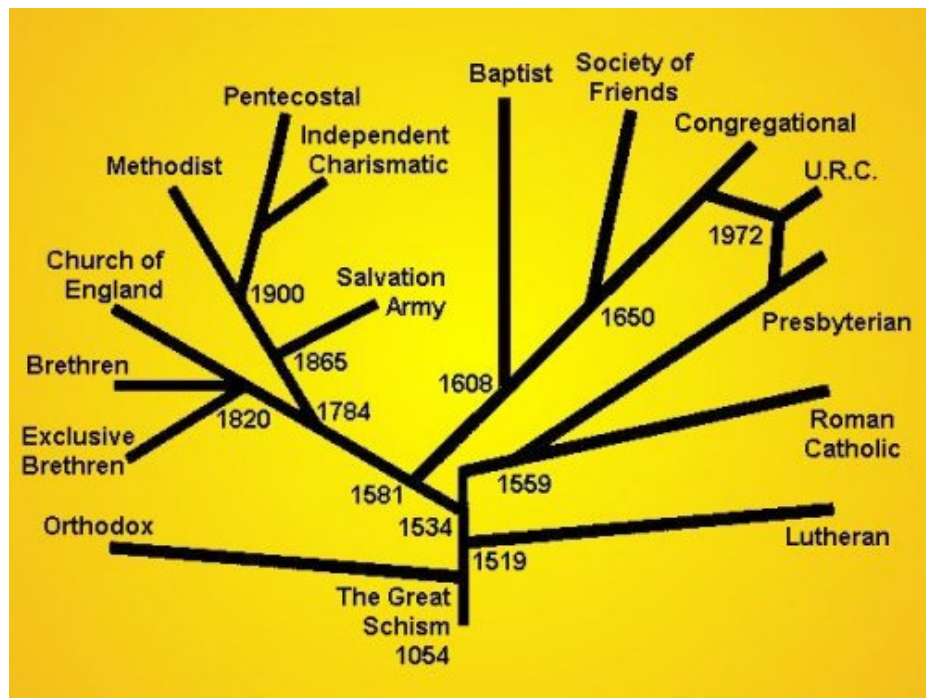


The following is an interesting compilation of Christian denominational history:

The History of Christian Denominations

(Source: groveonline.wordpress.com/2010/07/30/the-history-of-christian-denominations/, July 30, 2010)

After a discussion with my wife about how many denominations there are and how it seems that the body of Christ has been sliced in to tiny pieces I decided to study where the main Christian groups got their roots from. To me this is a very interesting study looking at the reasons behind groups splitting but it's also very sad to consider how 12 apostles of the first century church have become over 1,200 official denominations most of which have more problems with the others than they do unity and love.



The Great Schism 1054

The division of Christianity in to two groups: Western (Latin or Roman Catholics) and Eastern (Greek or Orthodox). Pope Leo IX and the patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius excommunicated each other simultaneously which initiated the schism. However there were many long lasting aspects that lead up to the split such as political, theological, and geographical reasons. Theological issues not agreed upon:

- Whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only or from the Father *and* the Son.
- Whether leavened or unleavened bread should be used in the Eucharist.
- The definition of original sin
- Free will vs. predestination
- Purgatory and hell



- If celibacy should be enforced on clergy

Eastern Orthodox

The Eastern Orthodox Church claims to be the original Apostolic church established by Jesus Christ which began with the first church under the Apostles of Christ. The Eastern Orthodox followers strive to become more like Christ in their spiritual journey of life.

Theological beliefs/Church practices include:

- Use of 10 extra books not included in the typical 66-book Canon of the Bible
- Trinity
- Original sin
- Christ was fully God and Man
- Obedience to tradition in Biblical interpretation
- Reverence to Virgin Mary as the "God-bearer" or fulfillment of the Ark of the Covenant
- All believers known or unknown are saints but there are certain saints of good example
- No purgatory
- Baptism joins one with The Body of Christ and initiates membership to the church
- Regards Revelation as a mystery but some take a millennialist view

Lutheran

Branched off of Catholicism under Martin Luther, a German reformer. The split officially happened in 1521 at the Edict of Worms where adherents to Luther's teachings were excommunicated from the Roman Catholic church. The split was mainly over theological issues concerning grace and forgiveness. Martin Luther believed the Bible to be the true Word of God and to be the end authority on doctrine rather than one's own reasoning or personal interpretation.

Theological beliefs/Church practices include:

- Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion
- Predestination
- Divine providence
- Good works are from God and a result of faith/salvation
- No millennial reign of Christ

Roman Catholic

The Roman Catholic church, like the Eastern Orthodox, believes themselves to be the original church started by Jesus, that their bishops are successors to the original Apostles, and that the Pope is the successor to Peter. Their goals include spreading the Gospel, administering the sacraments, and engaging in charity. The source of doctrine is the Holy Bible and Sacred Tradition which is spelled out in the Catechism, a collection of statements and answers on the universal beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church. Ecumenical councils were held to



resolve doctrinal issues, these counsels were ran by theological teachers called "Church Fathers" and were believed to be infallible in theological decisions.

Theological beliefs/Church practices include:

- Believes that Mary was born miraculously, without sin, ever virgin and the mother of God,
- Pope is the head of all bishops and Catholic churches
- Believes Jesus instituted 7 sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Holy Matrimony.
- One receives the Holy Spirit during Confirmation
- For forgiveness of sins one must confess to a priest and follow their assigned penance
- For those who are saved but not free from sin and die they enter Purgatory to finish the process of purification
- Beliefs are summarized in the Nicene Creed and detailed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Church of England

The church of England is the official denomination that has existed in England since the Gospel first came to the Britons between the 1st and 2nd century. They consider themselves Catholic in that they are part of the universal body of Christ, and stemmed from the early apostolic church. They also call themselves "Reformed" because of the influence of the Protestant Reformation upon it's beliefs and it's "Thirty-Nine Articles" established in 1563. The doctrine of the Church of England continued to be checked and reformed by many following authorities of the country. In 1986 women were first allowed to be ordained as deacons, in 1992 as priests and in 2006 as bishops.

Theological beliefs/Church practices include:

- Teach the writings of early church Fathers such as Origen when they lined up with the scripture
- Acceptance of the Nicene Creed
- Sacraments include Baptism and Communion
- Spelled out their beliefs in the 39 Articles of Religion
- Accepts 14 apocryphal books and 14 "other books" for instruction and example but not for doctrine
- Believe Christ was both man and God and the only mediator between man and God
- Believe we have no power in ourselves to do anything good or pleasing to God

Methodist

John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield are held to be the formers of this branch which separated from the Church of England in the 18th century because of revival that broke out of a desire for reform. The Evangelical Revival Movement among the Anglican Communion began with the Wesley's bible study group and grew to be a group of people separate from the Church of England. John Wesley eventually adopted Armenian theology and Whitefield adopted



Calvinistic theology which make up the two main branches of Methodism. Charles Wesley wrote approximately 6,000 hymns which expressed the beliefs and faith of the Methodists.

Theological beliefs/Church practices include:

- Believes that God is Triune
- Affirms the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed
- Reads from the Church Fathers but believe they are not infallible like the scriptures
- The United Methodist Church was formed in 1968 as a result of a merger between the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist Church.
- We are free to accept salvation just as we are free to reject it

Baptist

A protestant denomination that is known for their believe in what is called "believers baptism" as opposed to infant baptism. An English Separatist John Smyth is expected to be the first Baptism preacher in 1609. During the Great Awakening of the 1700's the Baptism group grew greatly.

Theological beliefs/Church practices include:

- John Smyth believed that a scriptural church should consist only of regenerate believers who have been baptized on a personal confession of faith
- John Smyth was convinced on the basis of his interpretation of Scripture that infants would not be damned should they die in infancy
- The Southern Baptist Convention is not the only organization of Baptist churches but it is the largest
- Qualification for church membership is baptism as defined as immersion in water based on the greek word baptizo
- Baptists do not believe that the act of Baptism through immersion imparts any saving grace thus it is not necessary for salvation
- Baptist church authority is comprised of the pastor, elder, and deacon but no bishop

Presbyterian

The Presbyterian church was founded upon John Calvin's Reformed teachings and ideas for church governance. It is believed that the origin of Presbyterianism is Scotland. The Presbyterian method of church government centers around elders and a presbyter as was believed the 1st century church was. After John Knox's exile he returned to Scotland and helped create the new church government in the The Book of Discipline.

Theological beliefs/Church practices include:

- Select allegiance Westminster Confession of Faith as their doctrinal standard
- Infant baptism, adult baptism, through sprinkling or pouring but not immersion
- Presbyterian churches or "meeting houses" were traditionally bare of decor, statues, images, and stained glass so as to not detract from ones focus on God and worship.