

Man-Made Churches

David Lipe

Introduction

1. Presently, there are millions of people who profess to follow Christ.
2. Most of these are members of man-made churches.
3. For the purposes of this lesson attention will be given to “denominations.”

I. Some Definitions

- A. A “denomination” according to Webster is “a class, or society of individuals called by the same name: a sect.”
- B. A “sect” is “a party dissenting from an establishment or parent church—one of the organized bodies of Christians: a denomination.”

II. Origin and Development of Denominationalism

- A. The logical place to begin a study of the origin of denominationalism is with Martin Luther (monk, preacher, later professor at Wittenberg).
- B. As the Reformation Movement gained momentum, it soon became evident that the work of each reformer (Tyndale, Zwingli, Calvin, etc.) would result in the beginning of a new religious group.
- C. The Bible had made great gains in circulation, thus, increasing accessibility of God’s Word. The more people knew of the Bible, the less they thought of creedal statements. So, “Why not go back to Bible?”

III. Some Causes of Man-Made Churches:

In short, a rejection of the authority of Christ, but more specifically—

- A. Conviction that doctrine is not that important. Because of this, false doctrine is preached.
- B. Higher regard for views of ancestors than for the doctrine of Christ.
- C. Exaltation of men.
- D. Higher regard for traditions of men (Matt. 15:1-14).
- E. Exaltation of the views of the multitude (cf. Ex. 23:2; Matt. 7:13-14).
- F. Higher regard for one’s own view.
- G. Conviction that feelings constitute a proper standard.
- H. Higher regard for creeds of men.

IV. Man-Made Churches Are Unacceptable

- A. The Bible teaches that there is one church.
- B. No man has been given authority (by the Lord) to start his own church (Matt. 15:13; Psa. 127:1).
- C. Division is condemned (1 Cor. 1:10; Gal. 5:20; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 John 9-11; Prov. 6:16-19).

V. False Doctrine Is Condemned and False Teachers Are Rebuked

- A. The Bible warns against false teachers.
- B. God’s people are admonished to contend for the faith.

VI. Unity Is Upheld

- A. By precept
 1. All who learn and obey the truth will be united (John 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:22-23).
 2. Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:20-21) and promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18).
 3. Paul said, “There is one body” (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:12; Rom. 12:4-5).
 4. All who hear, believe and obey the gospel are baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13).
- B. By figure
 1. “House” (1 Tim. 3:14-15)
 2. “Flock” (John 10:16)

3. "Body" (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Rom. 12:4-5)