

These churches would be caused by leading men out of (and away from) Christ's church purchased with His blood. Men departed from Christ's church.

This is where we came on the scene. We were born into a world filled with different doctrines, gospels, and churches. We thought these different groups were Christianity. But the Bible shows that they are changes and corruptions of Christianity. We use the word "denomination" as if it were a good word, but "division" is one of the worst words in all the Bible. What can we do about the divided condition in which we find ourselves?

Jude 3 teaches us to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." The faith of original Christianity can and must be restored. We must restore the faith as it was before it was departed from, the gospel as it was before it was perverted, the truth as it was before it was turned away from, the doctrine as it was before it was corrupted, the unity as it was before it was divided, and the church as it was before men led others away from it. We must restore original Christianity.

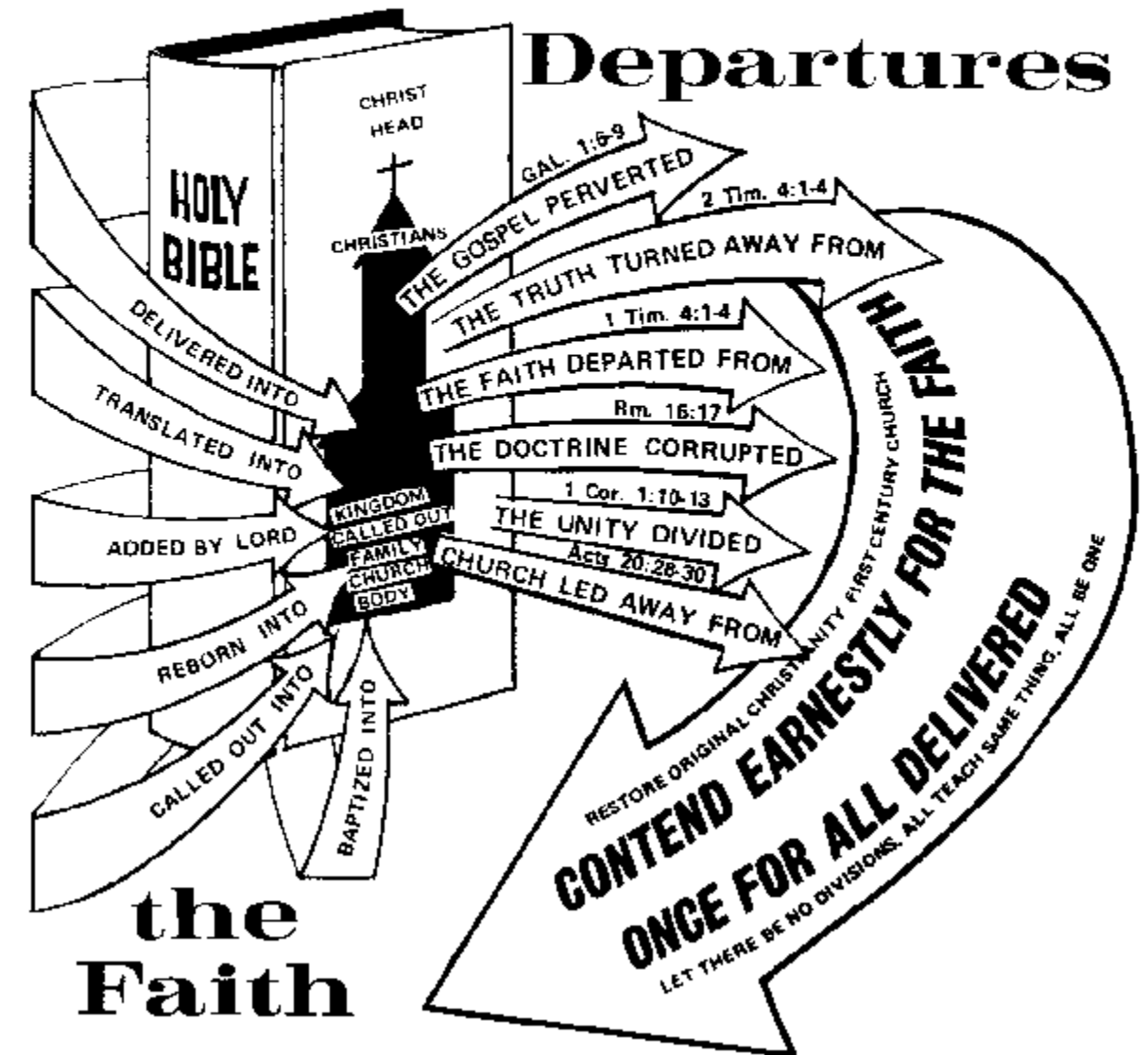
Just as keeping the unity of the Spirit in Ephesians 4:3-7 requires contending for one God, one Holy Spirit, and one Lord; it also requires that we reproduce one hope, one faith, one baptism, and one body (or church). I can call men back to the faith and the church of the Bible just as I can call them back to the God and Christ of the Bible. Since God commanded it, it is possible. I can and must contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

An honest Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-38) read in his Bible that his sins were laid upon God's suffering Lamb. A preacher taught him that this Lamb was Jesus. Because he wanted salvation by Jesus' death, he was baptized immediately into Christ's death to be united with Christ (verse 38 and Romans 6:3-5). He came up out of the water rejoicing in sins forgiven. But what church was he now in? What kind of Christian was he? He wasn't any kind of Christian—just a Christian. He was in Christ's church, the undenominational and non-denominational church of the New Testament.

What he did, you can do, and must do. What he became, you can become. If he wasn't in a denomination, you won't be either. You can become and be a Christian like Peter and Paul, together with millions whose aim is to restore undenominational Christianity exactly as it was in the beginning. They have come out of denominationalism and taken Jesus as their only Head, the Bible as their only creed, New Testament worship and living as their only practice. They wear all names found in the Bible but do not add to nor subtract from Scripture. Will you also be just a Christian?

Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18,19 that He would build His church. He also promised that nothing would ever prevail against that church which He would build. He has kept both promises. He built His church, and His church is still in the world today. You can be added by the Lord to His church today.

CHRISTIANITY IS **non-** DENOMINATIONAL



CHRISTIANITY IS NON-DENOMINATIONAL

By
Jim Massey

"What kind of car is that?" "Not any kind, just a car!"

Would this answer make sense to you? No. You cannot imagine a car that is not some kind of car. You would say that every car must be some kind. This is because all cars are kinds of cars.

But this has not always been true. The original car was not any kind—just a car. The very first car was the only car at the time, and it had no name. In the beginning there were no kinds of cars.

This is true of the church. In the Bible there were not kinds of churches—just the church. Christianity in its beginning had no kinds—just Christianity. Original Christianity in the Bible was not divided. There were no denominations.

We have all been born into a world of many churches. We did not cause these denominations, we did not want them, we just inherited them. They were here when we got here.

For this reason it is very hard to imagine the church as it was in the Bible. We naturally think that there have always been many churches because there are now. It is as hard to imagine a church that is no kind of church as it is to think of a car that is no kind of car.

But read Acts 2:47: "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." What church was this? Listen to Acts 8:3: "Saul made havoc of the church." Which church was this? It was like the original car, it wasn't any kind of church, it was just—the church.

Jesus had promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18). This meant that He would establish Christianity. He gave Himself to die for the church (Ephesians 5:25). This just means that He died for Christians—the church.

Always in the Bible the word "church" means a called-out group of people. The Israelites in the wilderness were called a "church" because they were people "called out" of Egypt (Acts 7:38). When Saul persecuted the "church," he persecuted "men and women" (Acts 8:1-3), because Christians were the church. Instead of a material building, the church is a spiritual temple of God made up of "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5). The church is Christians.

Men in the Bible became members of the church by becoming Christians. Those who were saved were added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:47), meaning that all Christians were added to the "called out" group—the church. Paul says that the church was purchased with Christ's blood (Acts 20:28), showing that anyone bought by the blood of Christ was in the church—those blood-bought, called-out, saved people who were Christians.

God delivered these "called-out" people into Christ's "kingdom," another word that refers to the church (Colossians 1:13). When men were born again of water and the Spirit, they entered the kingdom (or church) exactly as a child enters his father's family the moment he is born physically (John 3:3, 5). The church is also called Christ's "body" (Colossians 1:18), and by the Spirit's teachings (in the Scripture) men were baptized into the body or the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). To become a Christian in Bible times was to be added to the body, family, kingdom, or church. The church was simply all God's saved people. There were no kinds.

But what happened? How did our world get so many different churches today? What changed original Christianity into the denominations which we see everywhere? The Bible explains what happened. It says that men departed from the faith.

Paul warned that in latter times "some shall depart from the faith" (1 Timothy 4:1). "The faith" is another clear description of Christianity as it was before divisions came (Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; Galatians 1:23). There were not many "faiths," but there was "one faith" (Ephesians 4:5). There were no different "faiths," only "the faith." Men departed from the faith.

Men perverted the gospel, the "good news" message of salvation in Christ. Paul warned of men who were trying to "pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7). Because the gospel message is the heart of Christianity, to change the gospel was to corrupt the church. Even angels and apostles who made such changes would be accursed (Galatians 1:8, 9). God wanted Christianity to remain pure.

Men turned away from God's truth (2 Timothy 4:4). Because men's desires run contrary to God's will, it is natural that human opinions would depart from "the truth." Because men do not love "the truth," God sends them a strong delusion that they might believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). Men corrupted original Christianity by departing from the truth.

Men changed Christ's doctrine. Paul warned Christians in Rome: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). Doctrine means "teaching." Changing the teaching of Christianity changed Christianity. 2 John 9 and 10 warns that anyone going beyond the doctrine of Christ has not God. But men departed from the pure doctrine of Christ.

Men corrupted the unity of the original church. Paul commanded Christians in Corinth to all teach the same thing and to have no divisions among them (1 Corinthians 1:10). He then said that already some in Corinth were wearing the names of Cephas, Apollos, and Paul—preachers who had baptized them (verses 11-15). This is the beginning of "denominations"—named divisions.

Denominating Christians into different named groups was sinful in Corinth. Jesus had prayed that all believers be one as He and God were one (John 17:20, 21). Paul commanded Christians to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3-7). This was to strive for one body (the church), one Holy Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God. Denominating or dividing Christians is sinful today just as it was in the Bible.

Men departed from the church, just as they departed from the faith, the gospel, the truth, the doctrine, and the unity of original Christianity. In Acts 20:28-30 elders (or overseers) over the church in Ephesus are warned to take heed to themselves and to the flock (or church) over which they had been made overseers. This church (or flock) had been purchased by the blood of Christ (verse 28). These men were to oversee the Christians in Ephesus as shepherds watch over a flock.

Paul explains why: "Grievous wolves shall enter in among you not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them" (verses 29, 30). The church would be scattered by false teachers like a flock would be scattered by wolves. Perverters would lead men away from the church which had been purchased with Christ's blood. This would cause the beginning of other flocks or churches.