

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God
Lesson 3

No Greater Name Under Heaven Given Among Men
(A Study Of Unity Based On The Name Of Christ)

Introduction

While we will not take the time to study specific denominational doctrines and how to refute them from the Scripture, we believe it is beneficial to spend some time at least mentioning the history of some of the more mainstream human denominations. We contend that one ought to study truth instead of studying volumes upon volumes of religious error. If one studies and knows truth, he will be able to spot error so as to avoid it himself and teach others to avoid the errors of religion that is not the way of Jesus Christ.

Believers in God and followers of Jesus Christ, by necessity, are going to have to be called something for purposes of identification. Therefore this lesson will, in a very broad sense, contrast the notions that men have created through the centuries with the simple truths revealed in the Bible.

NOTE: On the next couple of pages, you will see we have listed the church of Christ among other churches. Please do not take this to indicate that we believe the Lord's church is "just another church" or equivalent with man-made churches. We simply are comparing the church of Christ (having a *Divine* design) with religious organizations made by men (*human* design).

What name do His followers wear? _____



The church of Christ
Est. 30 A.D. in Jerusalem
Founder: Jesus Christ (Mt. 16:18)

Where is this first found in the New Testament? _____

Do you think it is significant that we do not read of this name earlier in the history of the church, especially prior to **Acts 10**? Why or why not?

Why is this name so meaningful? (cp. Acts 4:12) _____



The Catholic Church
Est. 606 A.D. in Rome
Founder: Boniface III

"Catholic" means universal. Eventually, church elders began extending their authority beyond "the flock among them" (cp. 1 Pet. 5:2). In the 6th century, 5 "patriarchs" (head bishops of Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople, and Rome) were overseeing all the apostate churches. Boniface III (patriarch of Rome) declared himself "Universal Bishop."

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 3



The Lutheran Church
Est. 1530 A.D. in Germany
Founder: Martin Luther & followers

Oldest of "Protestant" churches (*those who protested Catholicism*). Luther was a Catholic priest who grew weary of corrupt practices such as the selling of indulgences and the wicked lifestyles of priests. He sought to reform the Catholic Church, not start another one. However, after the Catholic Church excommunicated him, his followers used his published catechisms to eventually begin the church that now bears his name.



The Presbyterian Church
Est. 1540 A.D. in Switzerland
Founder: John Calvin

Calvin became influenced by Luther's writings, as well as those of an ancient 4th century theologian name Augustine. Given Calvin's desire for strict governance in the churches, his followers eventually adopted the name "Presbyterian" most likely because of **1 Tim. 4:14**, a reference to the presbytery (*eldership*). Entire identity of the church centers around its government. Each "presbytery" contains several churches.



The Protestant Episcopal Church
Est. 1578 A.D. in California
Founder: Francis Drake

This is the American version of the the Church of England, founded by King Henry VIII in 1534. He revolted against the Catholic Church when the pope refused to let him divorce his wife and marry someone else. This began the "state church" of England. The first Anglican service conducted on this continent was led by Francis Drake in 1578. Eventually, this church immigrated through the colonies, almost being destroyed in the American Revolution (*her priests were still loyal to the British crown*). In 1783, it began using its present-day name.



The Baptist Church
Est. 1607 A.D. in England
Founder: John Smyth

Smyth was in the clergy of the Church of England and a member of the English Separatists (*believers in the separation of church and state*). He opposed the Church of England with the King as head of the church. He rejected infant baptism and believed, among other things, solely in immersion; thus, the name "Baptists" began being used by his followers.



The Methodist Church
Est. 1729 A.D. in England
Founders: John & Charles Wesley

Sons of a Church of England clergyman, the Wesleys opposed the rigid, cold, and indifferent conditions of the Church of England. They began meeting with small groups which became increasingly popular. They held to strict methods of study, diet, exercise, etc. Outsiders eventually began calling them the "Methodists."

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 3



The Mormon Church
Est. 1830 A.D. in Utah
Founder: Joseph Smith

In the 1820's, Smith claimed to have received a vision from God, in which he saw Christ along with a prophet named Moroni. Supposedly, he was shown golden plates on which were written God's revelation now known as the Book of Mormon (translated in 1829). All churches were corrupt and the Dark Ages had perverted the gospel. He was to re-establish the true church (comprised of "Latter Day" saints) on the earth.



Jehovah's Witnesses
Est. 1884 A.D. in Pittsburgh
Founder: Charles T. Russell

Russell was an avid reader and preacher who firmly believed in Christ's second coming. This group has made various vain predictions of the Lord's coming through the years. Their organization, *The Watchtower Bible & Tract Society*, controls all their churches and distributes millions of tracts and periodicals annually. They reject Christ as the Son of God and believe in only 1 personage of God - Jehovah the Father.

Other churches and branches off these could be cited, but we have enough to see the basic "religious landscape" in our country. Despite the professed intentions of these man-made churches in their claims of following the Lord, consider this brief history and answer this very important question:

Upon what are all these churches united?

In his epic play *Romeo & Juliet*, William Shakepeare writes in Act 2, Scene 2...

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet;..."

This might make for good literature, but it does not harmonize with what the Scripture teaches. The Bible says there is something in a name. When people decide to simply call themselves "Christians" they are refusing to wear any other name. No other name under heaven has been given men that is as good as the name of Christ. This is why we should refuse to wear a deonominal name. That is the thrust of **Acts 4:12**. When men wear any other names, they glorify men or doctrines; they do not honor the Son of God who died for them. When men choose to wear man-made names, they will not achieve the unity prayed for by Jesus and encouraged upon all through His word.

Questions

1. Read **Eph. 4:1-6**. Consider along with it **Eph. 1:22-23**, and write below how the man-made churches listed in this lesson fail to properly carry out what these verses teach.

First Principles Of The Oracles Of God

Lesson 3

2. Read **Eph. 3:10-11**. What is the church supposed to do? Those who belong to man-made churches state that all churches make up the “universal” church spoken of in **v. 10**. If, for the sake of argument, we grant that notion, what obvious problem exists in complying with this passage?

3. Read **Eph. 4:11-16**. What did God hope to accomplish through what He gave? (**vv. 12-13, 16**) What did He hope to prevent? (**v. 14**) How do the multiplicity of churches (*the ones listed in this lesson*) affect what this passage teaches?

4. Read the Lord's prayer in **Jn. 17:20-21**. Beginning in **v. 20**, for whom is He praying and what is His request? Again, thinking about the man-made churches discussed in this lesson, how do they correspond to the desires Jesus states in this section of His prayer?

5. Read **1 Cor. 1:10-13**. How might we use this passage in thinking about and discussing the existence of so many man-made churches?

6. Read **Gal. 1:6-9, 11-12**. What do these verses say about teaching a “different gospel” other than what Paul received from God and taught? How serious does the apostle say teaching something different would be?