

Can We Agree On This?

The Bible teaches believers in Christ are to be unified. Jesus prayed for it (Jn. 17:20-23). The Spirit commanded it (1 Cor. 1:10). The disciples practiced it (Acts 4:32). Some believe this is not possible today. However, the gospel was and is for all the world until the end of time; it is that by which we will be judged (Mk. 16:15; Jn. 12:48; cf. 1 Pet. 1:23-25). God made it understandable (Jn. 8:32; Eph. 3:3-4; 5:17). Therefore, agreement can be achieved.

Unity breaks down when men depart from the New Testament of Jesus Christ. For instance, when some insisted that the Gentiles be circumcised or shunned, unity was broken and a split occurred (Gal. 2:11-14). The same thing happens today when men do not abide in the doctrine of Christ; when they lack a "thus saith the Lord" (1 Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17).

A lack of authority is readily seen in the adoption of a name that is not from the New Testament. The name may be applied to a group or to individuals. The name "Seventh Day Adventist" is not found in the gospel. Thus, when it is used, it drives a wedge between those who embrace it and those who do not. The same can be said for other names applied to religious groups or individuals: Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist, Pentecostal. None of these are applied to followers of Christ in the New Testament. The use of such names brings about division, not unity.

Why not just use the name "Christian"? It is used in the Bible to describe the individual followers of Christ (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). Can anyone object to "Christian" being used? Is it offensive to anyone who believes Jesus is the Christ? Can we all concur it is proper and acceptable? Also, why not use the New Testament terms for the church: church of Christ (Rom. 16:16); church of God (1 Cor. 1:2); house of God (1 Tim. 3:15); body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23)?

Ask your preacher why he insist on using a name not found in the New Testament.

Steven F. Deaton