

What Are The Branches?

John 15:4-5 says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." The denominational world loves to use this passage as a proof-text for the existence of denominations. The theory is advanced that all the different denominations together form the "universal" church of Christ. They are merely branches off the same vine.

If this were true, then we must accept all the different denominations and cease preaching against them. However, the context of John 15:4-5 plainly says that the branches are the disciples of Christ. He was directly addressing those who followed Him. The entire discussion is in the first person (notice the "you" and "he"). So Jesus could not possibly be talking of churches. He was talking of individuals! Christians are the branches and are connected to the vine — Christ.

This point is further emphasized by Paul. He wrote, "There is one body" (Ephesians 4:4). Ephesians 1:22-23 identifies the body as the church. Therefore, Paul taught there is only one church. If there is only one, then denominations exist without any authority from God! Denominations did not exist in the first century and they do not need to exist today. Let's get back to worshipping God in spirit and truth strictly according to the pattern of the church given to us.

Kyle Campbell