

What Is An Undenominational Christian?

Introduction. If one takes a quick perusal through the phone book, one would be rather confused at all the different kinds of churches. Because of the confusion, it is not surprising that some sincere souls ask, “Can I be an undenominational Christian in the 21st century?”

Unfortunately, the terminology of “undenominational,” “nondenominational,” and “inter-denominational” still contain some erroneous concepts and teachings. We need to find out how to be Christians just like they were in Acts 11:26. How do we do this?

Some say this is not possible. Al Maxey, a member of the institutional church, writes, “If we must ‘restore’ something, then let’s restore spirituality and a love for the Lord. Let’s restore a spirit of honest inquiry and a sacrificial devotion to evangelism and benevolence. Let’s restore biblical principles, which can unite us if embraced, but not some elusive pattern, which can only lead to further fragmentation of the one body. I see nothing in Scripture that even remotely suggests God expects the universe to revolve around 1st century Palestine.” I would beg to differ with the assertion that we cannot find a pattern of an undenominational Christian in the Bible. Members with this interpretation of the scriptures have left the Lord and His church. Meanwhile, we must be undenominational Christians to please God and the Bible reveals what this specifically means.

I. It Means You Are Not A Member Of Any Sect Or Party

- A. The church is only used in two senses in the scriptures: either it refers to a local congregation (1 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1) or it comprises all Christians (Acts 11:26; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 2:21). A denomination is a religious organization larger than the local church and smaller than the universal church. Therefore, it falls in between the church of the Bible at both ends of the spectrum. A denomination stands between these two and is therefore unheard of and unknown in the Bible.
- B. Denominationalism illustrated:
 1. American currency — Our currency system is divided into various denominations. Each is necessary for a medium of exchange.
 2. Political system — Our political system is denominated into different groups. Each group is necessary for the proper functioning of government.
- C. Therefore, we can see from the foregoing that the word “denomination” signifies a part, a division or a segment; thus, in the religious sense, a sect or a party. Accordingly, to be an undenominational Christian means that one is not a member of any religious sect or party.

II. It Means That You Are Aligned With The Lord

- A. Our Lord did not align Himself with any party or division during His earthly ministry. There were four principle divisions among the Jews: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, the Zealots, the Sicarii, and the Essenes. Although each advocated some truth, our Lord did not identify Himself with any of them.
- B. Jesus was interested in religious unity.
 1. He prayed for unity (John 17:20-21).

2. He paid for unity (Ephesians 2:16).
 3. He plead for unity (1 Corinthians 1:10).
 4. He planned for unity (Ephesians 4:1-6).
- C. Unity is the antithesis of denominationalism. Our Lord is actually antidenominational and undenominational. His church and Christians must be the same. The terms “undenominational” and “nondenominational” are so overused that people have no idea what the concept really means anymore.

III. It Means That You Are Neither Catholic, Protestant, Or Jewish

- A. You are not a member of Catholicism.
1. The Roman Catholic Church did not come into existence in a full-grown state until A.D. 606, nearly 600 years after the Lord’s church was established on Pentecost (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:1-47).
 2. There is hardly a cardinal doctrine peculiar to the Catholic Church that does not contradict the scriptures (Mariolatry, primacy of Peter, transubstantiation, purgatory, etc.). None of these are advocated by the Lord’s church because these doctrines cannot be found in the New Testament.
- B. You are not a member of any Protestant denomination.
1. All of the Protestant denominations of our day were established by men hundreds of years after Pentecost (Acts 2:1).
 - a) Lutheran — A.D. 1530.
 - b) Episcopal — A.D. 1534.
 - c) Presbyterian — A.D. 1541.
 - d) Baptist — A.D. 1607.
 - e) Methodist — A.D. 1730.
 - f) Other Pentecostal and holiness groups came along in the 1800-1900s.
 2. Denominational earmarks are conspicuously absent in the church of the New Testament: Prayer altars, voting on baptismal candidates, mechanical instruments of music in worship, choirs, universal/territorial organizations, unscriptural designations, etc.
- C. You are not a member of a Jewish synagogue.
1. The Old Testament, the foundation of Judaism, has been done away (Romans 7:1-7; Ephesians 2:14-15; Colossians 2:14-17).
 2. We are now under the New Testament and are to hear Christ, not Moses (2 Corinthians 3:6; Acts 3:22-23; Matthew 17:5; Hebrews 1:1-4).
 3. In Christ, there is no Jew or Gentile (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11). Being a Jew spiritually, not literally, is what matters (Romans 2:28; Galatians 6:16).

IV. It Means That You Are A Member Of The Lord’s Church

- A. Being a member of the Lord’s church does not depend upon church succession.
1. If you have corn growing in state A and you want to grow corn in state B, you do not need an unbroken chain of corn plants between the two states.
 - a) If you take corn seed from state A and plant it in state B, you will have an identical crop growing between the two states.
 - b) The same will hold true for tomatoes, watermelons, potatoes, or any other crop (Galatians 6:7).

2. Likewise, we do not have to trace the “unbroken chain” all the way back to the first century to make sure that we are members of the right church. All we need to do is use the same seed in our day as was used in the first century (Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:21-25). When that same seed is sown today, it will produce only Christians. This is the beauty of an undenominational Christian.
- B. How do we find this church?
1. As the Lord’s church antedated denominationalism, we can be certain of the essential identifying features of the New Testament church.
 2. The Lord’s church:
 - a) Was guided solely by the apostles’ doctrine and not man-made creeds, disciplines, manuals, catechisms, confessions of faith, etc. (Acts 2:42; Philippians 1:27; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Galatians 1:6-9).
 - b) Worshiped on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). This worship was in spirit and in truth (John 4:24) and included singing a capella (Ephesians 5:19), giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), observing the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), praying (Acts 2:42), and studying God’s word (Acts 20:7).
 - c) Was organized on a local, autonomous level with the church having elders, deacons, evangelists, and members (Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1).
 - d) Was designated as “church” (Colossians 1:18), “church of Christ” (Romans 16:16), “church of the Lord” (Acts 20:28), “church of the firstborn” (Hebrews 12:23), and “church of God” (1 Corinthians 1:2).
 - e) Was entered as a result of people becoming saved upon their belief, repentance, confession, and submission to baptism (Acts 2:36-47).
- C. This is the church that existed in the first century — the church of which Peter, James, John, and Paul were members.

Conclusion. The Lord’s plea is for a pure, simple return to the New Testament teachings. His church, and we, cannot afford to do otherwise. There are many who have been attracted to the plain pattern (Ephesians 3:20-21). May their tribe increase.