

The Bulletin of
The Golden Isles
CHURCH OF CHRIST

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A Study of John 15:1-8

By Dick Ward

Did you know John 15:1-8 does not authorize Denominationalism? Often, we hear preachers seek justification for the 250 to 300 different religious bodies (Denominations) by quoting John 15. We are told, "Christ is the Vine and all the churches (Denominations) are the branches".

WHO ARE THE BRANCHES?

We encourage you to get your Bible and read John 15:1-8. Indeed, Jesus is the vine, but who are the branches? We read in verse 5, "ye are the branches..." in verse 6, "If a MAN (not a church – D.W.) abide not in me, he (a man, not a church – D.W.) is cast forth as a branch..."; in verse 8, "that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my DISCIPLES (not churches – D.W.)." Well, for a religious teacher to argue John 15:1-8 authorizes many churches is to pervert and wrest God's word. Without fear of contradiction, we see Jesus is speaking of INDIVIDUALS and not CHURCHES abiding in Him and being fruitful.

HOW MANY CHURCHES?

Just how many churches were in existence in the Apostolic Age? The scriptures speak of only ONE! "There is ONE body..." (Eph. 4:4). "For as the body is ONE...we are all baptized into ONE body..." (I Corinthians 12:12,13). "But now are they many members, yet but ONE body." (I Corinthians 12:20). Not only does the Bible plainly teach there is ONE BODY – it identifies that body as the church. Christ is "the head over all things to the CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS BODY..." (Ephesians 1:22,23). In Colossians 1:18 we read, "And He is the head of the BODY, THE CHURCH." In verse 24 of this same chapter, "for His body's sake, WHICH IS THE CHURCH." Friends, Jesus said He would build "His CHURCH" not churches! (Matthew 16:18). Paul said Jesus "purchased the church (not churches) with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

DATES OF DENOMINATIONS

While the Lord's church was established in about 30 A.D., THE CHURCHES OF MEN (Denominations) came many hundreds of years later. Historical evidence shows the CATHOLIC church began in about 606 A.D. Martin Luther, with a few others, started the movement which resulted in many other different churches. History dates the LUTHERAN and PRESBYTERIAN churches in the 1500's; BAPTIST in the early 1600's; METHODIST in the 1700's; ADVENTIST, MORMON, JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES and HOLINESS MOVEMENTS in the 1800's. All of these man made churches began centuries AFTER Jesus built His church.

- by Dick Ward, taken from The Religious Instructor, May 1998 issue

Times of Services

Sundays - 2:00 pm Bible class, 3:00 pm Assembly Wednesdays - 6:30 pm Bible class

“Is Debating Scriptural?”

By Dick Ward

Bible Answer:

Did you know Stephen, Barnabas, Paul and Jesus engaged in open debate over religious matters? Paul said, "I am set for the defense of the gospel" (Philippians 1:17). The scriptures show the boldness of Stephen (Acts 7) and Barnabas (Acts 13) as they stood up for what they believed and practiced. The life of Jesus is replete with examples of open, religious discussion (Matthew 21:23ff; John 8:1-11; Matthew 22; Mark 2:23-28; etc.). When a man claims to preach the gospel he immediately obligates himself to defend his teachings and practices (I Corinthians 11:1). Peter said, "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you..." (I Peter 3:15).

WHAT IS A DEBATE?

Is debating sinful? Some people have gotten the mistaken idea the Bible condemns religious discussions. Much of the problem is found in the misapplication of the word "debate" as found in Romans 1:29 and 2 Corinthians 12:20. This word (eris) is also translated "contention (2ts), strife (4ts), and variance (1t)". This word is defined as "contention, strife, wrangling" by Thayer in his Greek Lexicon. Obviously, wrangling is wrong. On the other hand, open discussion over religious differences exemplified in the scriptures with Divine approval.

In a good debate both sides of the question at hand are presented. Each man has equal opportunity and time to present what he believes on the subject and the audience is given the opportunity to examine the evidence offered. It is evident a false teacher would not like to have his doctrine openly examined. We should have no respect for a man who privately presents his destructive heresies and then sanctimoniously opposes a public test of his teaching.

DO DEBATES DO GOOD?

Debates do good! The preacher of the gospel is required to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3) and debating is certainly one way to meet this command. When men have honest hearts, truth is learned and error is exposed. Problems dividing children of God can be solved and unity and trust restored (Acts 15). It is a way to "stop the mouths" of false teachers (Titus 1:11). Yes, debates do good! The problem is finding religious men who have the courage to stand up and honorably defend their teachings and practices.

- by Dick Ward, taken from The Religious Instructor, May 1998 issue

Upcoming Lessons....

“TULIP - An Overview of Calvinism”

September 16th

“BAPTISM - A Word Study”

September 23th

“Lessons from Jericho”

September 30th

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