

## HUGH'S NEWS & VIEWS



### WHY DO PEOPLE LEAVE A DENOMINATION FOR THE CHURCH?

Last week we wrote about why people leave the church for a denomination. This week we write about why people leave a denomination for the church. Down through the ages of apostasy as reflected in Catholicism and Protestant denominationalism, many honest souls caught up in sectarian error have been taught and/or have read and studied their way out of denominationalism. Why does one leave a denomination founded by man to be a member of the church established by Christ?

**\* Because they learn that in joining a denomination they did not obey the gospel of Christ.** Many in the denominations (both Catholic and Protestant) have only been sprinkled, and thus have never received valid Bible baptism at all. Others have been immersed under the delusion that they had already been saved from their sins by faith only or by saying "the Sinner's Prayer." When they hear the simple gospel plan of salvation preached and begin to study the New Testament for themselves they discover that the preceding things to do not constitute obedience to the gospel of Christ, and they learn that in joining a denomination they have not complied with the Lord's conditions for being saved from sin. Those conditions are: 1) hear the gospel (Romans 10:17), 2) believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24), 3) repent of all sins (Acts 17:30), 4) confess faith in Christ as the Son of God (Romans 10:9-10), 5) be baptized (immersed) for (*eis* = in order to) the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). Realizing that they have not done these things, and knowing that eternal punishment awaits those who do not obey the gospel (II Thessalonians 1:7-9), they are anxious to leave the denomination, obey the gospel, and be added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47).

**\* Because they learn that a denomination is not the church of which one reads in the New Testament.** The New Testament church was established in the city of Jerusalem on the first day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ in c. A.D. 30, as we read in Acts 2. All denominations have come into existence far this side of that memorable event. The Catholic Church developed over a period of many years of departing from the original pattern of Christianity as set forth in the New Testament. The first protestant denomination (the Lutheran Church) came into existence in 1521. The Church of England (Episcopal) was established in 1534. The Presbyterian Church was founded in

1560. The Baptist Church was established in 1608. The Methodist Church began in 1739. Today, there are hundreds of denominational churches dotting the religious landscape, none of which are identical with the church of the New Testament. When people learn this, they leave their denomination in order to be a part of the New Testament church.

**\* Because they learn that a denomination does not worship according to the New Testament order.** In New Testament times Christians met on the first day of the week to worship the Lord. They observed the Lord's Supper every first day of the week (Acts 20:7). They sang without the use of instrumental music (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), studied/were taught the Scriptures (not catechisms and creeds), prayed, and gave of their monetary means as they had been prospered by the Lord (Acts 2:42; I Corinthians 16:1-2). The denominations of men do not honor this simple, New Testament pattern of worship. When honest souls learn better, they leave denominational worship forms for the simplicity of New Testament worship.

**\* Because they learn that a denomination is not organized according to the New Testament pattern.** The church in its universal sense has Christ as its only head (Colossians 1:18). The only biblically recognized organization of this one universal body is local congregations under a plurality of elders (also known as pastors and bishops) (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5; et al). In New Testament times there were no popes, cardinals, archbishops, etc. There were no dioceses, denominational districts, councils, or conferences. Each local church was autonomous and carried out its own work and worship under the oversight of its elders. When people see the difference between denominational machinery and trappings and the simple order of New Testament congregations, they leave denominationalism for the Lord's church.

**\* Because they learn that denominationalism is a violation of the Lord's plan for the unity of Christians.** Christ promised to build His church—not His churches (Matthew 16:18). Paul affirmed that the church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). He then declared that there is one body (Ephesians 4:4). Now think: One body! The church is the body! Therefore, there is but one true church! Christ prayed for the oneness of all who would believe in Him (John 17:20-21). Paul pled for all the saints in Corinth to be united (I Corinthians 1:10). He rebuked them for wearing the names of men (verses 11-13). I find it shocking today that some people are more tied to their denomination than they are to the Lord. They identify themselves as Carl the Catholic, Bill the Baptist, Martha the Methodist, Pete the Presbyterian, Edie the Episcopalian, etc. I would be ashamed to have such a sectarian spirit! When one learns the seriousness of religious division, he gladly gives up his religious party in order to be a member of the one spiritual body of Christ!

**\* Because they learn that they can be a Christian without being a member of any denomination. None of the Christians in New Testament times were members of any denomination. No denominations existed in those days. What was possible in New Testament times is possible today. The seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11). What that seed produced in New Testament times it will produce today—undenominational Christians! Christ's church exists today because the unmixed seed of the word of God has been heard, believed, and obeyed by good and honest souls. When one receives that seed today, unmixed by the doctrines, commandments, and traditions of men, that person will leave whatever human denomination he has been a part of to be a member of that very church of which we read in the New Testament!**

**Hugh Fulford**

**October 18, 2016**

**Speaking Schedule:**

**October 26: Nashville Road Church of Christ, Gallatin, TN**

**October 30: Jefferson Pike Church of Christ, LaVergne, TN**