

## Religious Division Does Not Promote Faith In Christ

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by Bill Crews

### Neither Catholic Nor Protestant

In the recent past most Americans believed that the majority of our people could be classified religiously into three categories: Catholic, Protestant and Jew. All who regarded themselves Christians had to be either Catholic or Protestant, but there are those who insist that they are Christians and that they are neither Catholic nor Protestant. Neither Catholic nor Protestant? Is this possible? Can anyone be **just** a Christian? Can a congregation be non-denominational (neither a Catholic denomination nor a Protestant denomination — nor any kind of a denomination), just a collective of Christians working together for Christ according to His word?

### What Happened Among The Followers Of Christ?

Surely you are among the many who have wondered what happened among the followers of Christ from the time He walked the roads and streets of Palestine until now — a journey through time of more than 1987 years — to bring about the religious condition we now have among all who profess to be Christians.

### The Savior's Prayer For Unity

On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus, in the presence of His loyal apostles, poured out His heart in prayer unto the Father. He prayed first for Himself, then for those Galilean men, and then for all those who from that time on should be led to believe on Him through their preaching. Here is how He put it: *"Neither for these only (His apostles, John 17:6-19) do I pray, but for them also that believe on Me through their word; that they may all be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us: that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me"* (John 17:20-21). To believe that Jesus was sent by God, the Father, is to believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and such faith is possible only through one's learning and accepting the word given by the apostles. When those who are in the world and lost see those who profess to be the followers of Christ hopelessly divided, they are not encouraged or influenced to believe in Christ. They are rather strengthened in their rejection of Jesus, His claims, and His teaching. Unity among the followers of Christ is conducive of faith in Christ; division among the followers of Christ is conducive of unbelief.

### The Fruit Of The Gospel In The First Century

In the first century the word of Christ preached by the apostles led people to become disciples of Christ (Matthew 28:19; Acts 14:21), and those disciples were called "*Christians*" (Acts 11:26), and those Christians were united, one (Acts 4:32). They constituted congregations, churches; they met together, worshiped together, and worked together. Unity was enjoined (1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 2:1-4; Ephesians 4:1-6) and division was condemned (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Galatians 5:19-21). The word of Christ in the first century did not produce a Catholic denomination or a Protestant denomination. The preaching of the apostles never led anyone to become a Catholic, or a Baptist, or a Methodist, or a Presbyterian, or an Episcopalian, or a Lutheran, or a Nazarene, etc.

### New Testament Warnings

The New Testament sounds many warnings. Every thing taught and accepted was to be proved, tested (1 John 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:21). Another gospel was to be neither proclaimed nor received (Galatians 1:6-9). Everyone was to abide in and not

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