WELCOME
to the 6th and Meredith church of Christ

Thanks for being here, let us honor God with hearts desiring to worship in "Spirit" and "Truth."
Why Are There So Many Different Churches?
1. Does it really matter *WHICH* church one attends?

2. Did *Jesus* intend for there to be so many different churches?

3. If not, then *Who* is responsible for all the different churches?

4. If Jesus does not intend for there to be so many, then *How* can a person know which one is right?

5. A close look at both the *Bible* and *History* will reveal the answer...
The Bible teaches that Jesus promised to establish just **ONE CHURCH**, and it was **HIS CHURCH** ...

**MATTHEW 16:18**

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build My church**, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

**EPHESIANS 1:22-23**

"And He put all things under His feet, and gave **Him to be head over all things to the church**, which is **His body**, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

**EPHESIANS 4:4**

"There is **one body**"
Jesus BOUGHT His church with His own BLOOD when He DIED on the cross.

Paul told the elders from the church at Ephesus ...

(Acts 20:28) ... "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."
The church that Jesus promised was established in (Acts 2) when the first people were SAVED and ADDED to the CHURCH by the Lord.

These people were IDENTIFIABLE ...

"believers were increasingly added to the Lord" ... (Acts 5:14).

"the church" ... (Acts 5:11).

"Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying" ... (Acts 6:1).

"And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" ... (Acts 11:26).
The MESSAGE of Jesus and the Apostles is one of UNITY among Christians...

"that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" ... (John 17:21).

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you," ... (1 Corinthians 1:10).

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." ... (Jude 3).
First problems the church encountered was from EXTERNAL SOURCES in the form of Persecutions ...

Acts 4:1-22

"Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them," ... (Verse 1).

"And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening" ... (Verse 3).

"And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" ... (Verse 18).

"So when they had further threatened them, they let them go," ... (Verse 18).
Next came Moral problems from WITHIN the Church ...

"But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?" ... (Acts 5:3).
When the DIVISION Came
(34-35 A.D.)

Persecutions from the JEWS became even more severe ...

Apostles Jailed and Beaten
Acts 5:17-42

"and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison" ... (Verse 17).
"called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus," ... (Verse 40).

Steven Stoned to Death
Acts 7:1-60

"And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" ... (Verse 58).

Others Suffer Persecution
Acts 8:1-4

"At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem;" ... (Verse 1).
Then a third kind of problem arose to threaten the church. It was **INTERNAL** and it was of a **DOCTRINAL NATURE** ...

GENTILES must be taught to keep the Law of Moses!

(Acts 15:1) ... "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."
Paul warns that the church will fall into ERROR, because of LEADERS GOING ASTRAY!

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" ... (Verses 28-30)."
Later both Peter and John write warnings about the FALLING AWAY ...

II PETER 2:1-22

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed" ... (Verses 1-2).
Later both Peter and John write warnings about the FALLING AWAY...

II JOHN 1:1-13

"For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist"...

(Verse 7)
Early 2nd Century a slow evolutionary change begin in the ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE of the LOCAL CHURCH ...

Churches begin to have **ONE MAN** as **Chief Elder** or **Bishop**.

Scripture teaches each church is to be overseen by a **PLURALITY** of Elders ...
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(Acts 14:23) ... "So when they had appointed elders in every church,"

(Titus 1:5) ... "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city"

(I Peter 5:1) ... "The elders who are among you I exhort,"

Major step toward **DENOMINATIONALISM**!
When the DIVISION Came
(155-186 A.D.)

Late 2nd Century the PRESIDING ELDER over a large city Church assumed authority over smaller rural Churches.

THIS ELDER came to be known as the BISHOP or PATRIARCH.

Large Church EXTENDS OVERSIGHT Beyond Itself!
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Further Departure from DIVINE PATTERN!

1 Peter 5:1-2
When the DIVISION Came
(100-300 A.D.)

The 2nd. and 3rd. Centuries the PATRIARCHS of the capital cities of the Roman districts, became the '5' most important BISHOPS!

- Rome
- Constantinople
- Antioch
- Jerusalem
- Alexandria
When the Division Came
(100-300 A.D.)

The 2nd. and 3rd. Centuries the PATRIARCHS of the capital cities of the Roman districts, became the '5' most important BISHOPS!

In about (600 A.D.) one became known as the UNIVERSAL BISHOP!
During the 2nd & 3rd Centuries there were NEW DOCTRINES continually being introduced that were NEITHER PRACTICED nor TAUGHT in the New Testament!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>False Doctrine</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASCETICISM</strong></td>
<td>The idea that SUFFERING leads to or equals a higher form of enlightenment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GNOSTICISM</strong></td>
<td>Which includes the teaching that Jesus could not have come in the flesh.</td>
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<td><strong>PREMILLENNIALISM</strong></td>
<td>Which teaches some future earthly reign of Christ for a Thousand Years.</td>
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</table>
This year Emperor Constantine, ordered a COUNCIL of the CHURCH LEADERS to settle Theological Differences.

THE NICAEEAN CREED

This COUNCIL composed the first HUMAN CREED that was to be imposed upon all believers.

Another step into Error!
When the **DIVISION** Came  
(588-606 A.D.)  

**A.D. 588**  
John the Faster of Constantinople 'Assumed' the title of **UNIVERSAL BISHOP.**

**A.D. 606**  
Boniface III was 'Declared' to be the **UNIVERSAL BISHOP** and the **ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH** comes into existence.

**MATTHEW 23:8**  
"But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren."

The 1st. **Denomination** is Identified!
The **EAST - WEST SCHISM** was the result of political and religious differences going back to about (330 A.D.), when Constantine moved the Capital of Rome to Constantinople.

The **POPE** in Rome (Leo IX) sent messengers to the **BISHOP** of Constantinople (Michael I Coerularius) with charges of heresy, which lead to excommunication.

**PATRIARCHS** of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem aligned with Constantinople, thus forming the **EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH**.

Another **Denomination** is Identified!
During this time NEW DOCTRINES were continually being introduced that were neither Practiced or Taught in the New Testament.

- 3rd. Century ... Beginning of Infant Baptism
- 394 A.D. ... Latin Mass
- 600 A.D. ... Prayers to Mary
- 6th. Century ... Instrumental Music
- 1079 A.D. ... Priestly Celibacy
- 1190 A.D. ... Indulgences
- 1311 A.D. ... Sprinkling
- 1439 A.D. ... Purgatory

Denominationalism promotes Error!
When the Division Came (1520 A.D.)

Martin Luther, rejecting indulgences, posts his 95 thesis on the church door, desiring to bring about reform in the Roman Catholic Church.

He was excommunicated by the Pope.

After his death, his followers, contrary to Luther’s wishes, begin to call themselves Lutherans.

Lutheran Church is Established!
KING HENRY VIII, of England wanted to divorce Catherine, and marry Anne Boleyn.

The POPE refused to grant the divorce, so King Henry broke away and established the Church of England, the ANGLICAN CHURCH.

The EPISCOPAL CHURCH in the United States developed from the ANGLICAN CHURCH.

Two more DENOMINATIONS!
JOHN CALVIN began his movement in protest of Catholicism in Switzerland in (1534). In (1541) Calvin’s teaching was made the official religion of Geneva.

The Doctrine of the TULIP was born ...

In (1568) JOHN KNOX, one of Calvin’s disciples, successfully established the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH in Scotland.

Again, another DENOMINATION!
JOHN SMYTHE, a Congregational Separatist from the Church of England, was forced to flee England because of the persecutions of King James I.

Smythe Baptized himself in (1608) by pouring water on himself.

THOMAS HELWYS, holding many of Smythe’s beliefs, returned to England and established the ARMINIAN BAPTIST CHURCH.

Again, another DENOMINATION!
At Oxford University (England), John and Charles Wesley started a Bible study group which eventually became the Methodist Church.

Later the "Wesleyan Holiness Movement" gave rise to the various Pentecostal Churches.

John Wesley once said, "Would to God that all party names, and phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world, were forgot ...", - (Universal Knowledge, Vol. IX, p540).

Where is unity in denominations?
JOSEPH SMITH, claiming special revelations from Visions, Angels, and Golden Tablets, started the MORMON CHURCH.

PAUL said, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" ... (Galatians 1:6-8).

Another DENOMINATION is formed!
During the late (1800’s) to early (1900’s) ... the Jehovah’s Witnesses were gradually formed mainly through the efforts of Charles Taze Russell and Judge Joseph Rutherford.

Each new denomination taught things not found in the Bible!
Many groups have formed, claiming to offer man special powers. The term, New Age describes them all. It’s nothing new, but philosophy’s based on mystical experience and rooted in ancient traditions. ERROR works to blind men from TRUTH!
Parable of the Sower ... (Luke 8:4-18), Jesus said, “The seed is the word of God” ... (Verse 11). When the Word is preached, people become CHRISTIANS, and not members of a DENOMINATION.

Churches established in this way are the LORD’S CHURCH, not DENOMINATIONS!

DENOMINATIONALISM came into being through the teachings and doctrines of men, and are not the LORD’S CHURCH!
Follow GOD, and NOT MEN, just become a CHRISTIAN like those in the "Book of Acts" did!

1. HEAR the Gospel of Christ ... (Romans 10:17).
2. BELIEVE in Jesus and what it says about Him in the Bible ... (John 20:30-31).
3. REPENT of your sins ... (Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19).
4. CONFESS CHRIST as God's Son ... (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10).
5. BAPTIZED (IMMERSED) into Christ for the remission of sins ... (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16).

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