

Bible Special 06-10-17a

This is Tuesday, the 17th of October, 2006. We continue tonight our study of the area of Christianity in terms of the religions of the world, and tonight in terms of divisions within Christianity. We'll look at the origin of denominations.

Why do we have so many? Where do they come from? What does it all mean? Are we in the right one or are we not in one and we should be, or we should be in one and we're not, how does that all work? Let's take a moment at the outset to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we are grateful for another opportunity to spend time in fellowship in the study of your word and placing our faith in context in our culture and in our world. We ask your blessing on us as we meditate and examine these things together.

May we find in your word the confidence to pursue a true understanding of your plan and purpose in this age. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, it's time for us now that we have looked at the major religions of the world, most recently secular humanism, which doesn't like to call itself a religion, but it is a faith system as any other. It requires just as much faith to believe that inorganic ooze cobbled itself together into ever more complex forms of life. The evolutionists like to talk about Christians believing in the God of the gaps and so on.

Well, they've got a goo of the gaps. The magic DNA goo just invents new programming for itself. Whenever there's a problem to solve, it figures out a great mutation that doesn't kill the organism.

What boggles my mind, and if I was not a Christian, I still could not wrap my mind around this whole evolutionary thing. I was sitting there staring into the fish tank, and I was watching. Well, I'm easily amused, easily entertained.

The girls have got these beautiful little fish. I don't know what they're called, but they're in there. And there's several different kinds.

There's black ones with these little mouths mounted up high on their heads, and they swim around. There's these others that have got a hump back and a beautiful pattern in their tail, and then there's kind of these run-of-the-mill little guppies or something in there. They're just all different kinds of fish.

You look at the creatures you see when you go for a walk. You look at the squirrels, and you look at the dogs and cats and birds. There were birds sitting out here this morning, and we have high wires.

There's high ones and low ones. These great big black crow-looking birds were sitting on the bottom wire. Beautiful doves were sitting up on the top wire, and there were several wires in

between.

And as though they were on cue, these three big crow birds on the bottom all looked straight up at the doves. And I thought, I wonder why they're looking up that way. That could be kind of dangerous.

You're looking straight up at birds directly overhead. But they looked up, and they flapped their wings and made this funny noise, and the doves looked down at them. But there was this whole intricate little conversation going on between the crabby black crows and the elegant gray doves up there, exchanging banter or insults or whatever they were doing.

But I remember seeing the crows yawn their heads way back, and all three of them did it as though they were in a little trio. But every single thing that you observe in living organisms, I mean everything. The pattern of spots on a fish, the length of the claws, the number of the claws, the number of toes, the length of the arm bones on squirrels, or I'm not saying there's claws on fish.

Let me finish my sentence. Boy, monosyllables, short sentences. It's all you're going to get from now on.

Every feature, the enzymes that are present in the saliva, the complex interaction of glands and every different kind of feature that you can think of, every single one of those that is different and unique had to come about via mutation. Every single one had to be a happy accident. There's not any of them that did not come about by accident, all of them.

Every one of them. And those accidents had to happen in the right order. Now, I said we were going to start denominations, but obviously my mind is still stuck in the past, it's stuck on the whole evolution thing.

But just hear me out on this, we'll get to the denominations, I think. But think about this. Now, there are mathematical arguments on both sides.

People say, what are the odds that life would form out of the soup? People like us would say, you can boil that organic stew until kingdom come, and you're never going to get something crawling out of there saying, hello. It's so improbable and unlikely. And somebody says, well, but billions of solar systems and millions of galaxies and billions of years, and even if the odds are astronomical, somewhere, someplace, it would happen.

And so others will calculate. There's a couple of good articles on the web. There's a website called nutters.org, you know, over in New Zealand.

I think it's down in Australia, New Zealand. And they call people that are crazy, they call them nutters. Well, this is nutters.org, but the guy has written an article called monkey math, where he calculates the odds of monkeys with the typewriters ever typing up to be or not to be.

It's a beautiful piece of mathematical reasoning. The guy is a mathematician by trade, he knows what he's talking about. And it's astronomical.

You couldn't keep enough monkeys typing long enough to ever get the simple phrase to be or not to be, much less the Oxford English Dictionary or any of the other things that are claimed. But here's the problem with that. I'll tell you another anecdote, another story.

I remember distinctly one time I was stationed at Fort Sill. I had a five-hour drive to get to my parents' house at the opposite end of Oklahoma. Drove through the night, drove for four and a half hours.

I was going down this country road, and out of nowhere, this bug went splat on my windshield. Right smack in the middle of my field of vision. Big, fat, juicy bug, absolutely splattered.

I could see the contents of whatever pollen he'd been collecting for the day. And I thought, now, what are the odds that I would leave at just the right time, traffic conditions would be such, this bug, which has been alive for weeks on end, would be flying around in some sort of random pattern, and the confluence of circumstances where me, having left four and a half hours ago from across the state of Oklahoma, would be in just the right place, just the right time, for that bug to hit exactly in the middle of my field of view. And splat, there he is.

The odds are astronomically against that, and yet it happened. This is the kind of reply that you get from the evolutionist side. Of course, if you calculated the odds of that particular bug hitting that particular windshield, on that particular night, in that particular place, it's astronomical, and yet things like that happen all the time.

We had rain a couple of days ago. You walk outside, there's a raindrop that's been falling a mile and a half through the air, and it lands right on your head. What are the odds? Well, it's astronomical that that particular drop would hit your particular head at that particular time, and yet it happens.

So this is the mathematical comeback that you will hear from the evolutionary side. Granted, that's a true point. That's a valid observation.

But, the bug that hit my windshield, astronomical odds against it, but it happened. But now, what are the odds that that same bug is, on my return trip, going to fall off my windshield at a certain spot in the road, and that five days later, my parents, driving down to visit me the following weekend, are going to run over that bug, and it's going to stick to their left front tire. They're going to pull up in my driveway, and that same bug is going to fall off next to my car.

I'm going to go out there and mow the lawn, and his carcass is going to fly up and hit the very same windshield that it hit two weeks earlier when I was driving up to Oklahoma. Do you see what I'm saying? One event may have a lot of astronomical odds against it, but for evolution, you need a chain of equally unlikely events that have to take place in an order. It's not just a single unlikelihood.

It is a chain of unlikelyhoods that have to happen in that sequence, in that time. Do you see what I'm saying? So don't get tripped up on either side of the mathematical argument. Mathematics is totally against evolution, and science will never tell you that because it's the big, ugly, dark secret.

Mathematicians start talking about the odds of DNA forming and all that, and the biologists say, be quiet, stick to your math. You don't know anything about science. You don't know anything about biology.

Well, the mathematicians go over and be quiet, and then the biologists say, let's try not to think about how absurdly unlikely this is. If you wanted to actually calculate the mathematical odds, there's a much greater mathematical likelihood that God exists than there is that this chain of unlikelyhoods would happen to produce every single unique feature of biological life. How many distinct features dictated by DNA do you think there are in all the life forms on the planet? All of the plants, all of the fish, all of the birds, all of the mammals, all of the invertebrates, all of the insects, every phylum, every genus, every species, every variation.

How many different variations do you think there are for different kinds of eyes? The eyes of a bumblebee and so forth. How many hairs on the legs of a grasshopper? How come crickets can chirp? I mean, on and on and on and on. The different beaks of birds.

Every single one of those is a genetic variation. Every single one of those had to come about accidentally as the next step in a long chain of highly unlikely accidents. It boggles the mind.

Common sense tells you things don't happen that way. The wind doesn't blow and sand doesn't travel across the desert and form itself into the shape of a mermaid on a sand dune with eyelashes and a big smile. It just doesn't happen.

So, what materialists and secular humanists do is try to use science as a, instead of a flag and a banner to wave, they roll it up and use it as a blindfold and tie it around human common sense to say, well, because there is no God, this has to have happened. However unlikely you think it is, here's the proof because here's life. Well, it's a circular argument.

I could say, look, there has to be a God because here's life, and they say there has to be evolution because here's life. Which argument carries more weight? Which argument requires more faith? It's a lot easier for me to believe in an all-powerful God who exists outside the universe, much, much smarter than me, much, much more powerful than anything I can imagine, who programmed the universe just like I would program a PC, who wrote the program for history just the way programmers write video games. Much more common sensical.

Things that evidence design and complexity come from intelligence. That's the observation you make in the universe. You don't find highly complex things anywhere that don't come from intelligence.

I watched them digging up Pompeii. They've done even more excavations there to figure out why and how people died. And it's fascinating because when they unearth the structures and the temples and so on, they don't say, oh, look, the lava formed this building.

Oh, look, the chemicals in the soil formed these frescoes and these paintings. I mean, it's intuitively obvious to the casual observer that somebody lived here and somebody made this stuff. They have found amongst the remains of woolly mammoths, frozen woolly mammoths.

Just saw them lift this giant woolly mammoth out of the Siberian permafrost the other night. Those things ostensibly, according to them, lived something like 10,000 years ago. Well, they find tools and worked ends of sticks and things, and they say, well, humans coexisted with these woolly mammoths.

How do you know? Any of them leave a diary? Any of them take a picture? How do you know humans existed with the woolly mammoths? Well, we found these tools. Well, how do you know those tools didn't just get formed by a volcano or drop out of the sky from some typhoon or some tornado? You look at it and you say, well, duh, look at it. It's designed.

It's made by some intelligent person. Well, duh, look at creation. It's designed by a vast intelligence, a vast power far beyond us.

Well, I could wax eloquent on that, but we do want to talk about denominations. But there is actually a connection between these two ideas. There can be an obvious truth.

There can be something that is plain if you are willing to see it. There is a truth that is observable and understandable if you and I are teachable. If we're humble, if we come with an open mind, and we're receptive.

This doesn't mean to be gullible. It doesn't mean to be naive, but approach a subject with an open mind and say, well, let me see the evidence. Give me your best shot.

Show me the case. You and I as believers don't need to be afraid of any subject. Don't be afraid to look into the claims of science and the theories of evolution.

You ought to devour that stuff. You ought to eat it up. Look at all of it.

Look at it closely. Discern. Is this in fact a piece of evidence? What does it say? Maybe we need to use the revelation of God in nature to refine our understanding of the revelation of God in the Bible.

Just as we use the revelation of God in the Bible to refine our understanding of what we see in nature. We never need to be afraid of the truth. Nothing wrong with the truth.

I'll tell you something about science. Science is often afraid of the truth. There's a fascinating story.

If you ever want to look at a skull, there's a skull called ER 1470, I believe. ER something. It was found by Richard Leakey's team back in the early 1970s.

They found it under a volcanic flow called the KBS Tuff. T-U-F-F. It's an ash layer.

This ash layer had been studied before because they had found some stuff around there that made them think it was interesting. They wanted to figure out when did this ash layer form. So they did their usual dating method.

They said, oh, this thing is 10 million years old. This volcano erupted 10 million years ago. They said, well, that's only one method of dating.

Let's do a different method of dating. Well, they did a different method of dating. They said, well, now, wait a minute.

This says 3 million years ago. Then they did a third method of dating, and it said 3 million years ago. Then they did a fourth method of dating, and it said 3 million years ago.

They said, ah, well, let's go back and redo that first one and make sure we did it right. The one that initially came out 10 million years came back at, guess what, 3 million years. So the Tuff was dated five times by four different dating methods, and they all scientifically agreed, radiometric and carbon and all these different things, all agreed at 3 million years.

Well, Richard Leakey and his guys went out there, and they were digging around, and they found a skull. It was a hominid skull. It looked very modern.

It had a big brain case. The number of cc's in the brain is how they, one of the ways they tell, is this human or is this a chimp or an ape or a monkey of some sort. They said, well, look, this is, I forget, 270 cc's or something.

It's on the low end, but this could have been a juvenile female, modern human. They said, oh, well, where'd you find that? He said, well, I found it under the KBS Tuff, and guess what? That makes it the oldest modern type human skull we've ever found, because that Tuff's been dated five times four different ways at 3 million years. Well, this absolutely exploded the paleontological world, because you're not supposed to have modern humans with skulls shaped like that 3 million years ago.

It screws up the whole theory. They're supposed to be like maybe 2 million years ago. So you've got to leave room for your missing links that they think they've found.

Back then there was all these thick-browed, small-brained, big teeth, pointy canine incisors, apes, at the 3 million mark, and you're supposed to not have your nice round, globe-shaped heads for another million years. They said, whoa, no, I'm sorry, but this won't work. They said, well, you know, KBS Tuff, dated five times four different methods, 3 million years.

Live with it. No, no, no, no. They went back and they said, let's go back and look at these dating

things again.

To cut a long story short, they picked out all the rocks that made the samples of the KBS Tuff seem old, and they said, now let's test this dust that's remaining. Oh, look, it tests to 2.2 million years. So now let's date the leaky skull, ER 1470 or whatever it is, let's date it now at 2.2 million years.

Now that fits the theory. And they threw out all of the earlier dates. The theory determines what the dates should be.

The dates don't determine the theory. They have an idea of what they want to believe, and they make the evidence fit. Now, what does that sound like? This, by the way, is my introduction to denominations.

We, as Christians, should not go to the Bible with a preconceived notion and say, I'm going to get this biblical evidence to fit my theory. I am going to impose my view and my idea on whatever I find in Scripture, and I'm going to emphasize, I'm going to pick out the parts that match the date that I want, and I'm going to throw out the parts that don't match my theory. How do you think we ended up with so many denominations, so many different kinds of Christianity in the world today? It is because, as believers, historically, Christians have not been willing to let the Bible speak and to be guided by what it says.

Compare Scripture with Scripture. Be a good student. Be teachable.

Be open-minded. Oh, no. I already know what the Bible says before I ever get to it, because my daddy and my granddaddy and my great granddaddy and my church tradition going back umpteen years says this is what it means, and I take that without question.

This is why the Jews did not recognize Jesus Christ when He came. Teaching as truth the traditions of men. Traditions are not truth.

Tradition is man's attempt to can or bottle or vacuum pack what someone thinks is the truth of God's word and try to immobilize it and package it in such a way that it can be passed on to someone else without change. And as soon as you try to do that, it's like vacuum packing a goldfish. Oh, this goldfish is so beautiful, I don't ever want him to change.

Put him in a vacuum sealed bag. Well, you've just killed him. That's what happens when you try to can the truth of God's word.

You can't package it better than God has packaged it. You can't suck the air out of it, freeze dry it, and hand it to the next generation and say, here you go, don't mess with this. Leave it just the way I've got it here.

Each generation, you, you younger ones here, you can't just believe what your parents believe. Now, I'm not saying go repudiate everything your parents believe and run out and be some

kind of ne'er-do-wells, but ultimately you have to determine for yourself what you believe. You have to.

You can't believe it because I say it or because some other respected person says it. You can't believe it because you saw it on TV or read it in a book. Each of us is a son or daughter in God's family.

God is the Heavenly Father. You are a spiritual child of God. You have to go to the Father by means of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He said, I'm the way. Nobody comes to the Father but by me. He doesn't say nobody comes to the Father but by his parents.

Nobody comes to the Father but by the pastor. Nobody comes to the Father but by our fancy program that for \$149.95 you can get through the mail, complete with cassettes, CDs, and a little booklet to fill in. Nobody comes to the Father but by the Lord Jesus Christ.

You have to appropriate that for yourself. I cannot can it and hand it to you. I can't put it in a nice vacuum sealed bottle and leave it so that you can pick it up later and imbibe the contents.

There is a God in Heaven. There is a Holy Spirit resident in your soul if you're a Christian. And God's Word is right here in front of us.

That's the method by which we learn. That's the method by which you get the stuff to believe. Does that make sense? Anytime we depart from that understanding and that procedure, we're going to start to use man-made constructs.

Denominations are man-made constructs. It's man's attempt to build a tower to Heaven. Well, let's write up some rules.

Let's form a club and we'll let some people in our club and others we won't. There are many denominations that won't let you join their church unless they dunk you in the baptism or unless they pour water over your head or unless they dip their fingers in the water and sprinkle you or if they scoop the water and effuse it on the back of your head. There's like four different ways to get water baptized.

I've had two of them. I've been sprinkled and dunked. So, unlike some of you, I'm guaranteed to get into Heaven.

This is a man-made rule. Does it say anywhere in the Bible that you can't study the Word of God? That you can't assemble with believers? That you can't learn and grow unless somebody does something to you in, by, or with water? Not at all. The baptism that the New Testament speaks of is baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told the disciples, immerse people who want to be followers in the Name. He didn't say immerse them in the water. He said immerse them in the Name of the Father and the Son and

the Spirit.

The Name is the reputation, the knowledge of. If you want to be baptized, you need to know something about the Father and know something about the Son and know something about the Holy Spirit. That's baptism.

Do you think it matters? Can you tell if I was baptized other than me telling you? Can you look at me and say, Oh, look at him. His hair all points straight up. He must have been baptized.

Oh, look. He's pale. It must have been chlorinated water they baptized him in.

His hair is all bleached out. Dunking in water does nothing. Paul the Apostle said, I'm glad I didn't baptize any of you.

Jesus Christ did not baptize at all. It was a temporary, physical representation of the spiritual reality. Baptism for us is a matter of the Spirit.

Now, what about water baptism? I think it's great. It's a wonderful teaching tool. It was given in the first century.

It was practiced by John the Baptist. It was practiced by Jesus' disciples. It was practiced in the early days of the church.

It's a wonderful teaching tool. Not a thing in the world wrong with it. It does not determine salvation.

And it should not determine fellowship in a church. That's not the basis. Does the Apostle Paul or Peter or John or James ever write to somebody and say, post a deacon at the door and have people show their baptism card before you let them in? What does the Scripture say? Be no respecter of persons.

Don't look at the person and try to evaluate them and decide where they ought to sit in the congregation or whether or not they ought to be let in. It should never be a criteria. What is the criteria? If people are interested, if they're seeking, they ought to come and they ought to listen.

Jesus fellowshiped with the tax collectors, the publicans, the sinners, the prostitutes, the people who were the castaways and the rejects of his society. He didn't turn people away, did he? People that were ostracized and belittled and mocked and derided and were the offscourings of society in his day, he treated them just like he did anyone else. Just as willing to speak to them, just as willing to heal them, just as willing to teach them God's Word.

He was no respecter of persons. A lot of denominational distinctives that say, well, you can't have communion with us or you can't join our group unless you get dunked or you can't do this or do that until you meet our criteria. Where is it in the Bible? Are these people drawing their faith and their practice from the Bible or are they imposing it upon the Bible? Well, it's a

principle of life.

If you want to be a good student, you have to be open to the material. You have to be willing to give it a hearing. Let it make an impression.

Weigh it. Evaluate it. Use your God-given brains.

Don't have a preconception and just push things away out of hand. What does the Scripture say? Test all things. It doesn't say test the things you like and the rest of them push away.

Test all things. Test them against the standard of God's Word. Well, that's our rambling introduction to the subject of denominations.

We'll pause and take our break. When we come back, we'll see how we got the denominations that we have today.