

### What is the Church of Christ?

The word "*church*" is from the Greek word "*ekklesia*" which literally means, "The called out." Contrary to modern thinking, the church we read about in the New Testament had no proper name. It is most often referred to as simply "*the church.*"

Sometimes it is called, "*the church of God*" (1 Corinthians 1:2). Other times, "*the church of the Lord*" (Acts 20:28) or "*church of the firstborn*" (Hebrews 12:23). Local congregations were referred to as "*churches of God*" (1 Thessalonians 2:14) or "*churches of Christ*" (Romans 16:16). Not one of these, however, is a proper name. All of them are descriptive phrases that tell us that the church belongs to the Lord.

We refrain from wearing the name of any man. Use of human names gives honor to some person rather than to God. As individuals we are simply "*Christians,*" which is what members of the first century church were called.

Luke tells us that, "*The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*" (Acts 11:26).

King Agrippa told Paul "*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*" (Acts 26:28).

Peter wrote, "*If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed*" (1 Pet. 4:16).

If asked "*What are you?*" I simply say, "*I am a Christian.*"

### So what is the church of Christ?

It is a called out people who have been cleansed of their sins and belong to God.

### When did your church begin?

We get the date for the beginning of the Lord's church from the Scriptures. Jesus told his disciples, "*I will build my church*" (Matthew 16:18). He told them to go into Jerusalem and wait until they were "*clothed with power from on high*" (Luke 24:49). He further said, "*Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you*" (Acts 1:8).

They did as he commanded. Ten days later in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (a Jewish feast day), Luke tells us that suddenly "*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance*" (Acts 2:4.)

Peter began to preach about Christ – his death, burial and resurrection. Peter's sermon was so powerful that at the conclusion they asked, "*What shall we do?*"

Peter told them to *"Repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"*(Acts 2:38).

About three thousand responded to his command and were added to the church that Jesus had promised earlier to build. This continued daily as we read that *"the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"*(Acts 2:47). Thus on that day the church became a reality. This was approximately around 33 A.D. This is the only church Jesus ever established.

Paul tells us that Christ *"purchased the church with his own blood"*(Acts 20:28) and that He is the Savior and head of that body (Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:18). So the church began around 33 A.D. with around 3000 Christians.

### Why do you emphasize baptism so much?

We emphasize baptism because the Bible emphasizes it. Unfortunately many Denominations de-emphasize it. Peter emphasized it on the day the church was established. The result was that about 3000 were baptized. *Why?* Because Peter said it was *"for the remission of sins."* Later Peter wrote, *"baptism doth also now save us"*(1 Peter 3:21).

### What does one do to become a part of the church?

It is interesting to note that when people put Christ on in baptism (Galatians 3:27), the Lord adds them to His church (Note again Acts 2:41, 47). Thus it is His church, not my church or our church but the Lord's church (Matthew 16:18). The same thing that makes a person a Christian also makes that person a member of the Lord's church.

But isn't the Church of Christ a denomination? No, the church of Christ – the church which Jesus promised and then established on the day of Pentecost around 33 A.D. is not a denomination. The Lord never established a denomination, nor did He ever authorize anyone to establish one.

As we read through the New Testament we do not find any reference to a denomination. For example if you went to the city of Jerusalem you did not find a street intersection with a different denomination located on each corner of the intersection.

If you were visiting Jerusalem, Ephesus, Antioch, Philippi, or any other city you would find where "the church" met and worship with them. Denominations did not come into existence until 1500 years later.

**What is the name of your creed?**

We do not have a church creed or manual as the term is commonly used. We have no set of rules that have been compiled by men, nor any "statement of faith" which man has set forth.

The only compilation of doctrine that we have is the Bible. Thus we have no doctrine but "the doctrine of Christ." John writes, *"Whosoever goeth onward, and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son"*(2 John 9).

The creeds that men have written contain many errors because men are incapable of producing a perfect spiritual document. Jeremiah said, *"I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. (Jeremiah 10:23).*

On the other hand the word of God contains no errors. We can trust it with full confidence knowing that it contains the mind (will) of God. No other book can make this claim. Jesus said, *"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). God's word is the one place I can go knowing I can find truth.

Paul was not a member of one denomination; Peter a member of another and Timothy still another. They were all members of the Lord's church. The Lord never intended for his people to be divided up into different denominations.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, *"Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that here are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of sayeth, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"*

Notice closely that the situation in Corinth was very much like it is in most cities today. We see various religious groups, each claiming to be Christians, but separating themselves into different groups – denominations!

**If it was wrong in Corinth then, it is wrong today?**

**Why not have just the Lord's church without all the denominational division that we see all around us?**

### Where is the headquarters for your church?

Christ being the only founder of the church, no one else has a right to found one. Not only did Christ found the church but he governs the church by His word which He has given to us. Paul tells us plainly *"And he is the head of the body the church: who is the beginning the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence"*(Colossians 1:18).

He is now at the right hand of God ruling as *"King of kings"* over his church (Acts 2:33). Jesus told his disciples before ascending back to heaven, *"All authority has been given unto me in heaven and on earth"*(Matthew 28:18, 1 Timothy 6:15).

Since the Lord is ruling from heaven, if there is anything such as a headquarters, it has to be in heaven where He is now ruling over His kingdom, and not somewhere here on earth. Christ is our only head.

### How should I address your Clergy-men?

The Lord's church never had a clergy and laity as in denominations today. We are all simply brothers and sisters in God's family, the church. Peter wrote. *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people"*(1 Peter 2:9). All Christians are priests. All Christians also are saints.

Paul writes, *"To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints"*(Romans 1:7). Every Christian is a minister also.

The Hebrews writer wrote. *"God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister"*(Hebrews 6:10).

Religious titles such as *"Reverend," "Father," "Pastor," "Doctor,"* etc. violate the teaching of Jesus in **Matthew 23:5-11**, of elevating some above others. We do have elders, deacons, evangelists, ministers and teachers, but these are descriptive terms, describing their service and work and not their titles.