

What Is the Church of Christ?

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Introduction: What church do you attend? How would you answer?

- A. One of the problems we face in explaining any Bible subject is that the current culture has taken Bible words and used them to describe something else!
 - 1. Take the word "baptism". Many think of sprinkling! What does the Bible say? (**Col 2:12; Rom 6:4**)
 - 2. When someone has the wrong definition of a word we then must explain what we mean when using a Bible word. (**1 Pet 4:11**)
- B. Another problem we face when dealing with churches is current state of division and confusion among those who call themselves Christians.
 - 1. This again is man's doing and not God's. (**1 John 2:19; Col 2:18-19**)
 - 2. We can know the truth on the matter from a careful handling of God's word. (**2 Tim 1:13; 3:16-17**)

I. The Church is People!

- A. The Greek word "ekklesia" from which we translate "church" has the root idea of "called out".
 - 1. You do not call out a building or an object, but the people of God are "called out". (**1 Pet 2:9-11**)
 - 2. This calling is by the gospel. (**2 Thess 2:13-15**)
 - 3. This calling is to Jesus as our head and to the standard revealed in His word. (**Lk 6:46; Jn 8:31-32**)
 - 4. Without this obedient connection to Jesus as our head we are not part of Christ's church even though we might attend somewhere. (**Mt 15:13**)
- B. There is a definite entrance into this relationship with Jesus.
 - 1. Jesus plainly stated that there would only be one church as there would only be one head. (**Mt 16:18; Eph 1:22-23; 4:4-6**)
 - 2. How did Jesus build His church? (**Acts 2:46; 36-41**)
 - 3. To be a Christian is to be in the church of Christ, or Christ's body. (**Rom 6:3; 1 Cor 12:13**)
 - 4. What do you mean by "the church of Christ?" Because of division and doctrines of men, one cannot determine God's way by the name on the sign alone.

II. What are the Characteristics of a Christian?

- A. There is a relationship based on the blood of Christ. (**Acts 20:28**)
 - 1. When that relationship has ended then one has turned their back on the blood of Christ. (**Heb 6:6; 10:26, 29**)
 - 2. There can be no forgiveness without a life of repentance.
 - 3. A Christian will then have a tender heart, willing to be taught and corrected. (**Heb 3:12-15**)
 - 4. It is a difficult thing to maintain this kind of faith over generations.
- B. There is a love based on the blood of Christ.
 - 1. How does Jesus tell us to find His people? (**Jn 13:34-35; 1 Jn 4:20-21**)

2. I no longer value people by their relationship to me but by their relationship to the blood of Christ. **(Rom 14:15; 1 Cor 8:11)**

III. What is a local church?

- A. While there is but one church, the Bible also describes "churches" **(Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:1)**. Is this a contradiction?
 1. The one church is the relationship of all Christians to Christ. Local churches are God's people in an organized body at a particular location.
 - a. What local church was the eunuch a member of? **(Acts 8:36-39)**
 - b. You can be a member of one without being a member of another.
 2. In time every Christian will be a part of a local church. This is not optional. **(1 Cor 16:1; 1 Cor 10:25-29)**
- B. These local churches are to be subject to Christ as their head. **(2 Cor 2:9; Rev 2:1, 5)**
 1. A local church can cease having Christ as their head!
 2. If you base your attendance only by what the church calls itself, then you will may remove yourself from Christ.

IV. Consequences of human concepts of the Lord's Church

- A. You allow human attitudes and actions to be attributed to God. **(Rom 3:4)**
 1. There is a new (old) breed of "holy warriors" that try to take any negative example and attribute it to the "legalism among the church of Christ."
 2. Do bad examples mean that there is no "church of Christ?"
- B. You begin to defend a human denomination rather than the Lord and His way.
 1. Some people are like the Pharisees and the Sadducees; they will defend anything found under the party name.
 2. This approach will create a closed minded people, afraid to open and study God's word. Creeds, written, and unwritten will then prevail.
 3. God's people will not shy away from applying the word. **(1 Jn 4:1, 6; 2 Jn 9)**
- C. False standards will be used to determine who the Lord's people are.
 1. What we practice will either show Jesus as our head or a desire to please men and their traditions. **(Mt 15:8-9; Jn 12:48)**
 2. The names we use tell much about whom we serve. **(1 Cor 1:10-13)**
 3. Our willingness to rebuke and correct sin also shows where our hearts are. **(2 Tim 4:1-4; 2 Thess 3:14-15)**
 4. How do they worship? **(1 Cor 16:1-2; Acts 20:7)**
- D. You refuse to examine your lives.
 1. It is possible to have the collective practices right while there are individuals who are separated from God within a local church. **(Rev 3:4)**
 2. Jesus pointed out there are two kinds of people! **(Jn 3:19-21)**
 3. What if there are consequences? Those who trust God will not be afraid to change! **(Phil 3:8)**
 4. Men may stir your emotions and talk a good fight, but in the end they may destroy you. **(2 Pt 2:18-19)**

Conclusion: Are you part of the people of God?