

What Is the Church of Christ?

By Jason Jackson | [Christian Courier](#)

The New Testament is the only place to which we can turn to learn about the church of Christ. We recall that the church is described as the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3:9-11). It is obviously very important. It is necessary, therefore, that we are educated by the New Testament and not by the ideas of men.

The New Testament teaches us what the church is, and what the church should be today, according to the plan of God.

First, the church was built and purchased by Christ (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). No one has the right to start a church as a divinely approved institution (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-13). Christ, the Son of God, is the only one qualified, and he has established his church (cf. Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23).

After religious division arose within the church at Corinth, Paul asked some probing questions. “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:13). The church belongs to Christ on the basis of these gospel truths. He died for it. He built it. He lays down requirements through which we can belong to him. The church belongs to Christ. He is the head of the church (Col. 1:18).

Second, the church that belongs to Christ began on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. Religious bodies that have their origin in Rome, Zurich, London, or any other place but Jerusalem, are ones that started in the wrong places. The Lord’s church was founded by Christ through the preaching of the apostles in Jerusalem, corresponding to Old Testament prophecy (Is. 2:2-4).

When the gospel was preached by Paul, and others, throughout the ancient world, different denominations were not set up. Whenever the pure gospel of Christ was taught, just as it was preached for the first time in Jerusalem, the result was simply Christians who belonged to Christ — collectively the church of Christ — when people obeyed the gospel.

If there was no congregation of the Lord’s church in your hometown, and you started teaching others about the death of Jesus, the benefits of his redemptive blood, and the requirements of the New Testament to have the forgiveness of sins — you would not be setting up a denomination. Rather, you would be following the New Testament pattern, and those who obey the gospel would be a part of the Lord’s church. The church of Christ would then exist in your hometown, and the New Testament alone would be its guide for work and worship.

Third, only divinely appointed names were worn by the church. Such designations like church of Christ (Rom. 16:16) and church of God (1 Cor. 1:2) are scriptural names that describe the church as belonging to Christ and God.

“The church of Christ” is not a denominational title that describes a religious institution established by men. Rather, it is the collective reference to the people of God in the world — people who follow the New Testament teaching regarding the church.

Fourth, being saved is the way to membership in the Lord’s church (Acts 2:47). There should be no mistake as to the method by which salvation may be realized. A person must have faith in

Jesus as the Son of God (Jn 20:30-31; Jn. 8:24), repent of sin (Acts 17:30), confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead (Rom. 10:9,10), and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

When a person is saved according to the Lord's instructions that are in the New Testament, when he is "baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27), he is at that time a member of his church (Eph. 5:23). "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

Fifth, the Lord's church honors the authority of Christ. From the start, the church respected the Lord as the head of the church, for "... they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

The church has a divinely appointed mission (Matt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16). In submitting to the Lord's authority, Christians ought to worship according to the New Testament (Jn. 4:24; Col. 3:16-17). In subjecting themselves to the headship of Jesus, congregations of the Lord's church must govern themselves according to the New Testament teaching.

If Christ is the head of the church, we can not implement our own worship styles or leadership preferences. Christ is mindful of what goes on within his congregations. He will discipline them, and he will consider them apostate if they persist in unscriptural practices (cf. Rev. 2:5; 2 Jn. 9).

The New Testament gives a clear picture of what the church was under the leadership of the Lord's apostles. The church's origin was divine; it continues to be subject to the authority of Christ. Should it not be the same today — simply, the church of Christ?