

What is the Church of Christ?

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Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be part of a church that does its best to be like the church you read about in the New Testament? Imagine a bible-based church that appeals to Scripture in all it does! Wouldn't it be exciting to find a church that is free from denominational creeds and traditions? These are the pleas of churches of Christ. We are congregations of Christians who have been *called out of darkness into His marvelous light*. (1 Peter 2:9-10) If you are looking for a church, the confusing and discouraging picture of today's religious world is not the answer! Since the New Testament knows of only one church; with one doctrine; and with one Head (Ephesians 4:4-6), the religious division we see so prevalent in today's world is not part of God's way of doing things. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-4) Churches of Christ *give heed* to Jesus. Acts 3:22 says, *Moses said, The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you.* Members of churches of Christ work hard in conforming their lives and religious practices to the Bible. We seek to follow God's pattern, just as Moses did. (Hebrews 8:5)

In churches of Christ, members seek to have a biblical name. Isaiah prophesied that God's people would be known by a new name (Isaiah 62:2). That name was first used in Acts 11:26 where disciples of Jesus were called *Christians*. This term is used to identify God's people – people "of Christ." Did you know this is the only name in the New Testament for the people of God? Peter spoke of it in 1 Peter 4:14-16 and specified that Christians are to *glorify God in this name*. When we wear this name the emphasis is on Christ – not some religious organization formed by man. The same is true when referring to Christians as a collective group. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for wearing names of men. Verse 12 reads, *Each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul", and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."* When we wear names of men – we open the door to religious division! The pattern in the Scriptures tell us God's people have been identified by several names. *Churches of Christ* is found in Romans 16:16. Paul speaks of the *body of Christ* in Ephesians 1:22-23, and Jesus spoke of the *kingdom of God* in Matthew 16:18-19. Members of churches of Christ make sure to wear no other name but Christ's. Names are important since they identify you and state your religious focus. Why would we want to wear anything but Christ's name?

Churches of Christ are organized like churches were in the first century. In Revelation 2-3, seven individual congregations are addressed by Jesus. Since He is Head over the church, these congregations answered to no one but Him. The same is true with this

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congregation because in the scriptures, there is no higher organization than the local church. Churches of Christ reject the hierarchy that makes up many present day denominations because there is no proof in Scripture that God would be pleased with such an arrangement. Remember, the way of doing things religiously has been handed down *once and for all*. (Jude 3)

Churches of Christ teach God's plan of salvation. When we obey God, He adds us to the church. (Acts 2:47) Hebrews 5:8-9 teaches us of the necessity of obeying God. When we obey God, we take advantage of His grace! Since we follow the pattern found within the Scriptures it is important to observe how first century Christians were saved. We find people believing in the power of Jesus to save them from their sins. (John 8:24) We see the need for repentance from sin because all have been commanded to do so. (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3) Salvation also involves confession by telling others about our belief in Him and making a commitment to take Jesus with us throughout life. (Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:36-39) Finally, the biblical pattern tells us baptism is required to wash away sin. See Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; and 1 Peter 3:21.

There are 21st century Christians practicing 1st century Christianity today! Members of churches of Christ are people who are doing their very best to conform to the pattern found within the pages of God's word. When you're looking for a church – look for a church that is truly bible-based! Hold up our practices to the Bible and then act on your responsibility to find God's kind of people. We would love to see you become a part of Christ's church – the church of Christ.

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