

What is the Church of Christ?

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In Matthew 16, when Jesus asked his apostles, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." "On this rock I will build My church," Jesus declared (Matt. 16:15-18). What is the church of Christ? To answer that question requires us to begin at the beginning. The first time the word church is uttered in the New Testament is when Jesus tells the apostles "I will build My church." The foundation of Christ's church is the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The word translated church in the New Testament come from the Greek word *ekklesia* meaning literally "to call out." Christians are called out because Christ suffered for us (1 Pet. 2:21). Christians are called "out of darkness" into the marvelous light of Jesus (1 Pet. 2:9). Christians are called through the gospel to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:13-14). The church is people called out of darkness of sin through the gospel made possible by His sacrifice on the cross.

What the church of Christ is can also be illuminated in the other ways the scripture describes the church and its members.

The church is the household of God (1 Tim. 3:15). "The household of God is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19,20). Christ is faithful over God's house as a Son (Heb. 3:6). All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. We are children of God, heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:14-16). God's children are obedient, holy with their hope set on Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:13-14). The Church of Christ is the God's family.

The church is the kingdom of God. In Matthew 16, Jesus tells the apostles "I will build my church" and that He would give the apostles "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:18-19). After Pentecost the kingdom of God is spoken of as being in existence. They believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12). The Father has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:13,14). The church is a group of forgiven sinners redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. God has delivered His church from the darkness of sin into His kingdom.

The church is the body of Christ. Christ is the head over the body (Eph. 2:22-23, Col. 1:18). There is one body in Christ, but many members. The members do not have the same function (Rom. 12:4-5). In one Spirit Christians are baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13). Just like the physical body, the various members of the body of Christ work

together and doing so have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, then all members suffer together. Christians are individual members of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:25-27). For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands (Eph. 5:22-23). Christ is the head and savior of the church, His body. The body depends on the head for life and direction.

The church is the temple of God (Eph. 2:19-22). The members of the household of God built on the foundation of the prophets, apostles and Christ Jesus are joined together in a holy temple, a dwelling place of God. Christians are like living stones being built up as a spiritual house acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5). Paul tells the church in Corinth that they are God's fellow workers, God's building built upon a foundation, which is Jesus Christ. "You are God's temple and God's Spirit dwells in you" (1 Cor. 3:8,9,11,16).

What is the church of Christ? The church of Christ was built by Christ. The church of Christ is made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God. The church of Christ is people called by the gospel to the forgiveness of sin made possible by the blood of Christ. It is the household of God, the kingdom of God, the body of Christ and the temple of God. The church of Christ is an assembly of forgiven sinners united in the purpose of going to heaven.