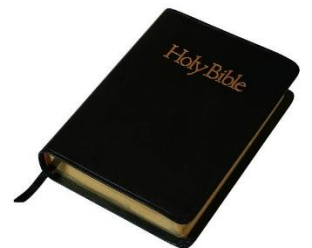


Some Surprising Things About the Church

By: Bobby Witherington

1. You may find it surprising that the entire assembly is invited to participate in the singing portion of the worship service. The church of Christ has no choirs, special groups, or solo performances. We do not use pianos, drums, organs, guitars, etc. All music is acapella (vocal) as the New Testament indicates it was in the days of the apostles (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Contrary to what you may have heard, the singing is good, soul-stirring, and encouraging.
2. You may find it surprising that visitors are NOT asked to contribute money. On the first day of each and every week, members of local churches give as they have been prospered. This is not demanded; there are no "dues" or "assessments." Based on other New Testament principles, freewill giving is the accepted plan for scriptural giving. The church does not raise money by having pie suppers, crab feeds, raffles, or other schemes to increase revenue. We do not bum or beg from those outside the Lord's own family. The church members, if the Lord's will is respected, freely give all contributions.
3. If you visit with us on any Lord's Day (the first day of the week), you may find it surprising that we commemorate Christ's death by partaking of the Lord's Supper, which Christ instituted and the Apostle Paul commanded and taught (*Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26*). In the first century, as recorded in *Acts 20:7*, "*Upon the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread.*" Therefore, since every week has a first day, it follows that we must commemorate the Lord's death every week--not once every six months, or only on "Easter Sunday."
4. You may find it surprising that no hyperemotional appeals are made. You will not be urged to act or move in response to the Lord's invitation until your knowledge of the truth is sufficient to serve as a basis for your faith (*John 20:30-31; Acts 16:32*).
5. You may find it surprising that most Christians attend every assembly of the church. They do so because they want to, they enjoy it, they know it is commanded, and because they realize that assembling to worship is vital to their spiritual growth and service to God (*Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:25*).
6. You may find it surprising to know that we have no man-made prayer book; no church-authorized discipline, manual, or creed; and no ritualistic worship (*2 Timothy 3:16-17; 4:1-4*).
7. You may find the manner of our services surprising. You will not hear shouting and screaming, or observe any other manifestation of unbridled emotions. No one will fall out in a faint, roll around on the floor, or speak in an "unknown" tongue. You will see that the apostle Paul's admonition to do all things "*decently and in order,*" is sincerely observed (*1 Corinthians 14:40*).
8. You may be surprised that a man claiming to be a part of a special priesthood does NOT conduct the service. Since the Lord Jesus Christ is our High Priest, and all Christians now make up a general priesthood and can themselves approach God and offer their prayers and sacrifices, it should be evident that no special earthly priesthood is necessary (*1 Peter 2:5,9; Hebrews 4:14-16*).



9. With virtually all denominations having earthly headquarters, it may surprise you that the church of Christ has neither earthly headquarters, nor an earthly head. Christ alone is head of His body, and the church's headquarters are in heaven, where Christ now sits and rules with ALL authority (*Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; Philippians 3:20-21*).

10. Contrary to what you may have heard, you may be surprised to know that the church of Christ is not intent on condemning others to Hell. Rather, it invites you to come to our Lord in obedient faith, in faithful service and worship, and in Godly living, that you may enjoy the benefits of His grace and strive for the hope of eternal life (*Titus 2:11-12; 1 John 2:25*).

11. Finally, you may be surprised to learn that the Lord's church is not Catholic, Protestant, sectarian, or denominational. In the first century, the Lord's church was obviously none of these. If we are correct in our claim that we follow only His word (admitting that not all "churches of Christ" can honestly make this claim) and in every way seek to be simple New Testament Christians, then the church of Christ is the same as it was during the first century. Being under the same head and following the same doctrine and practice results in being the same body the Lord purchased, or built. Therefore, the church of Christ antedates both Catholicism and all Protestant denominations (*Acts 20:28; Matthew 16:18*).

We greatly desire the unity for which Jesus prayed, but we believe that scriptural unity can be found only in Christ. *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."* (*John 17:20,21*) Both Catholicism and denominational sectarianism stand opposed to unity. If we are "all one" in Christ, as He fervently prayed (*Matthew 28:18; 1 Peter 4:11*), we stand only upon the Lord's word, respecting His authority in everything, and speaking only as He directed.

Please open your Bibles, search the Scriptures, and see if we are the church Jesus promised to build. "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (*Acts 17:11*).

