

Is the Church of Christ a Denomination? By Trey Sullins

When thinking about the question “is the church of Christ a denomination,” there might be many different things which come to mind. After consideration, are church of Christ members able to answer this question? After understanding the meaning of the word “denomination,” there are five points which clearly show that the church of Christ is not a denomination. Proper Christians need to understand the answer to this question so that they can give an answer when asked “is the church of Christ a denomination?”

In order to properly answer this question, the Christian must first understand what the term “denomination” means. The basic definition of the word itself is a renamed part of a whole. When referencing churches, the word is defined as “a recognized branch of a church or religion” (Oxford Press). A more practical definition is any religious group which has separated themselves from the one true church. Denominations start as divisions in the church which turn to splits.

The first point in answering is the church of Christ a denomination is it does not have a denominational name. Names are much more than just identifying marks. They give insight to the characteristics of the church and its beliefs. Therefore, the name of the church must be based on the Bible. The term “church” simply means a group or assembly of people. Next, in its name is Christ’s name. Since Jesus is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23), He is the only one whose name can be rightfully used in the naming of the church. Many denominations use the names of men, yet this is clearly condemned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:12. The churches of Christ get their name straight from the Bible in Romans 16:16.

The second point is the church of Christ uses the Bible. Many denominations today use various different books which were created by men to base their beliefs on. These man-made creeds clearly have no power, because they are simply the words of men. The church of Christ, however, uses only the Bible. The Bible is the only appropriate source of authority for all people. The Bible is the only God-inspired book which we can base our lives on today (2 Timothy 3:16-17). To use any other creed than the Bible for instruction is wrong and cannot lead to the proper following of God. Furthermore, as 2 Peter 1:3 states the Bible gives everything anyone could ever need in life. Why should people turn to or write anything else?

The third point is the church of Christ is organized like the pattern given in the Bible. The true church is organized with Christ as its head. Ephesians 5:23 states that Christ is the head of the church, and therefore, He is the only true head. Denominations today place men as the head of their “church,” and therefore, ignore Christ as the head. Under Christ, elders shepherd the church in their local congregations (1 Timothy 3:1-2). After elders, deacons also serve their local congregations (1 Timothy 3:8). Finally, members, which is the largest group, are watched over by the other groups. Individual churches do not lead other churches, but all churches are self-governed with the Bible as their standard.

The fourth point is the church of Christ has Biblical worship. When observing many denominations today, you will find numerous examples of incorrect worship. Denominations have strayed from the Bible in many areas of worship such as instrumental music, women leading, lack of partaking

of the Lord's supper, and so on. As time goes on, each individual denomination grows further from proper worship. However, the church of Christ conducts its worship based on what the Bible teaches. This creates much simpler worship where God is clearly given the glory.

The fifth point is the church of Christ makes no denominational alliances. In Ephesians 5:11 the Bible explains that Christians are not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. It is not enough just to avoid them, but the text states that they should be exposed. This is exactly how the Lord's church operates today. Rather than fellowshiping with churches known to be incorrect, the church of Christ points them out for their wrong and stays away from them. In the denominational world, you will hear of many "joint fellowships." In these fellowships, denominations of different beliefs will come together and commune with one another. This is clearly against the Bible's teaching on those following false doctrines.

After understanding all these things, Christians can easily conclude that the church of Christ is not a denomination. The church of Christ can trace its history back to the first century when it was established, and therefore, has never denominationalized from any other group. All Christians need to understand that the church has no denominational name, the church uses the Bible, the church is organized by the Bible, the church has Biblical worship, and the church makes no denominational alliances, so that they can give a proper defense of Christ's church when the world attempts to call her a denomination.