

## THE UNDENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH

Many people today labor under the impression that the church of Christ is a denomination; they think it is only one of a great number of protestant sects. Many cannot separate the church from denominations because the only way they can think is in denominational terms. What these people need to learn is that in the beginning of this dispensation (Acts 11:15) the Lord established His church on the first Pentecost after His resurrection and ascension (Acts 2). Denominationalism did not come into existence until several centuries later.

Jesus did not promise to build denominations, He promised to build His church (Matt. 16: 18). He bought His church with His blood (Eph. 5:25; Acts 20: 28). He is the head of His church (Eph. 1: 22-23). On the day of Pentecost all the saved were added to His church (Acts 2: 47). He promised to save His church (Eph. 5:23).

The church that Jesus built **has no denominational name**. Jesus called it *õmy churchö* in Matthew 16:18; *õmy Kingdomö* in Luke 22:33 and *õthe kingdom of Godö* in John 3:5. The inspired apostles of Christ called it *õthe churchö* (Eph. 1:22), *õhis bodyö* (Eph. 1:23); *õthe church of Godö* ( I Tim. 3:15) and *õthe kingdom of Godö* (Acts 28: 23). Local churches were called *õchurches of Christö* (Rom. 16:16) and *õchurches of Godö* (I Thess. 2:14).

The church that Jesus built **has no denominational creed**. It is directed by the law of Christ, the New Testament (Matt. 28:18; James 4:12; Gal. 6:2; II Tim. 3: 16 ó 17).

The church that Jesus built **has no denominational worship**; it worships in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). There are five (5) authorized acts of worship in the New Testament ó the Lord's supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7); giving (I Cor. 16: 1- 2); congregational singing (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19); prayer (Acts 2:42) and teaching the word of God (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7).

The church that Jesus built **has no denominational organization**. Each congregation was independent of every other local congregation. Every church was self-governing under Christ (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1; I Pet. 5:2-3). Churches in apostolic days did **none** of their work through missionary societies, sponsoring churches or benevolent organizations (there was no such things in apostolic days).

The church that Jesus built **has no denominational work**. Each congregation *õsounded out the word of the Lordö* to the extent of its ability (I Thess. 1:8; II Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4: 14 ó 18). Each congregation provided for its own poor saints (benevolence, Acts 2: 44- 45; Acts 6: 1 ó 4; Acts 4:32; I Tim. 5: 16) and each congregation was self-edifying ( Eph. 4: 11 ó 16; Matt. 28: 20). No congregation in apostolic times engaged in social activities for the members, nor did they furnish entertainment. Entertainment and social activities were works of the home, not the church ( I Cor. 11:22, 34; Rom. 14:17).

The church that Jesus built **has no entangling alliances with the world**. The church must not lose its identity in any movement, and must remain free from political, economical and secular involvements (II Cor. 6: 14 ó 18).

The church that Jesus built **has no denominational requirements** for membership. In apostolic days one who had **faith in Christ** and the gospel (Mark 16: 16; Acts 8:37) **repented of his sins** (Acts 2:38), **confessed Christ as the Son of God** (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10) and **was buried in baptism for the remission of sins** (Rom. 6: 4; Acts 2:38). Then **the Lord added that person to the church** (Acts 2:47).

Is the church where you worship undenominational in character? Are you a member of a church that has departed from the faith in many of the characteristics of the New Testament church? If you are, won't you find one that strives to follow the New Testament pattern? We pray that you will.

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