

# **CHURCHES OF CHRIST**

## **IS THE COC A DENOMINATION**



**SUMMARY:** The goal of the Churches of Christ is to learn what the Bible instructs for Christ's church or kingdom to do and do it, not some divisible part of it or some personal additions to it. If we follow that goal, we are not a denomination of the church, we are the church. If we fail at that goal, we are a denomination.

We have been told repeatedly that the church of Christ is not a reformation of the apostasies of some other church group, but rather an attempt to restore simple New Testament truths. It has been understood that thru this approach, the first century church has been established and provides uniquely a submission to the word of God thru this approach. The church of Christ is thereby the church on earth, not a subdivision of it.

The subject is whether we would give comfort to another group as being sufficiently in compliance with the word of God that their members would have a degree of assurance of passing into Heaven on judgment day. The question is not whether some of their sincere but misguided members would actually go to Heaven on judgment day, in spite of teachings.

The problem with the question is that it is a semantical one as well as a religious one.

### **SEMANTICAL QUESTIONS:**

1. Common understanding of the word denomination is a "subdivision", and the church of Christ is certainly a subdivision of several groups. Some might be 501(c)3 non-profit groups, religious groups, "Christian" groups, etc.
2. Webster does not agree with the common understanding of the word:

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary:

De•nom•i•na•tion: 1: an act of denominating 2: a value or size of a series of values or sizes (as of money) 3: NAME, DESIGNATION; esp: a general name for a category 4: a religious organization uniting in a single legal and administrative body several local congregations.

The structure of the church does not comply with Webster's requirement that the church be united into a single legal or administrative body, so the church of Christ would not be a denomination according to the definition in Webster's.

### **RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS:**

As the object of this study is not word games, let us use the wording "Is the church of Christ a subdivision of the church?" or is the "Church of Christ" a subdivision of the "church of Christ" to address our subject.

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Definition: The church is the grouping of the saved on earth. It does not necessarily include all who will be judged as saved on judgment day (Romans 2:14).

Basic questions are:

1. **IS IT POSSIBLE TO DRAW A LINE:** Is it possible to differentiate between the New Testament church today and a number of groups which claim to be a part of the church, but have actually departed from the teachings of the Bible sufficiently to understand that they are not a part of the church? (I Cor. 1: 11-17, Gal. 5:4).

I suggest that we are all prepared to draw lines, the question to be addressed is “where”. If anyone would not draw a line short of the Church of Satan or the Church of the Black Madonna, let me know.

2. **WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE:** When a person says “I know Acts 2:38 says ‘repent and be baptized for the remission of sins’, but I believe your sins are already forgiven before baptism”, he is believing and teaching in rebellion to one part of the scriptures. How many points do you have to be in rebellion to God on to be in full rebellion. James 2:10 says “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.”. It is my understanding that you would draw the line at one knowing rebellion.
3. **INNOVATIONS IN THE CHURCHES:** I am aware of no denominations or the Catholic church that are not in rebellion to the word of God in some selected area(s). See lesson 5.2 and specifically page 5.2.4 for a listing of the rebellious innovations which various groups have brought into their churches. If you can suggest no other grouping which is not rebellious to the word of God, then the question of whether the church of Christ is a subdivision of acceptable groups is answered before it is asked.
4. **AUTONOMOUS CONGREGATIONS:** Would it be unreasonable to say that if someone found a Bible and established a church in full submission to the Bible and called it the Church of God, it would not be acceptable to God. The term “churches of Christ” is only used in the Bible one time (Romans 16:16). “Church(es) of God” is used 12 times.
5. **MANY ACCEPTABLE WAYS:** To say that the church of Christ is just another denomination is to say that being a denominational group is an acceptable way to get to Heaven? The implication is that there are many acceptable ways. If you draw the conclusion that the submission to the word is unique to the Churches of Christ, then the Church of Christ is synonymous with the church. We would then have no business giving comfort to members of rebellious groups by saying they are in a similar group.

6. IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST ACCEPTABLE?

A better question to be asked may be whether the Church of Christ is a part of the church or if we have drifted far enough in teachings and tolerance to become what we have criticized. We must constantly be on guard.

Is there any point where you would say “I know the Bible says this, but I believe that?”

The following are listed to assist in developing a set of advising guidelines for members of the church who live at the current time. Your answers will be substantially impacted by your answer to the question in the title of this lesson.

1. Should your son participate in little league with children who attend denominations?
2. Should your son participate in little league with children who are members of denominations?
3. Should your son participate in little league at a facility owned by a denominational group?
4. Should your son participate on a little league team with a denominational name, i.e. the “First Denominational Cowboys”?
5. Should your son participate on a little league team that requires attendance at denominational services?
  
10. Should you participate in worship services with members of denominations?
11. Should you attend worship services in which denominational members are speakers?
12. Should you attend denominational worship services infrequently?
13. Should you attend denominational worship services regularly?
14. Should you attend denominational worship services regularly if there are no church of Christ worship services in your area?
  
20. Should you bow your head at football games when a prayer is lead by a denominational member?
21. Should you bow your head at football games when a prayer is lead by a member of denominational clergy?
22. Should you bow your head at football games when a prayer is lead by a non-Christian clergy member (i.e. Buddhist)?

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30. Should you attend parachurch worship services (i.e. Promise Keepers) in which speakers, leaders, or prayers are selected because of position in a denomination?
31. Should you attend parachurch worship services (i.e. Promise Keepers) in which speakers, leaders, or prayers are selected because of position in a denomination if Church of Christ members are on the stage also?
32. Should you attend denominational revival worship services (i.e. Billy Graham Crusades) in which speakers, leaders, or prayers are selected because of position in a denomination if Church of Christ members are on the stage also?
  
40. Should you attend the Lion's Club meetings which is not a religious group, but solicits denominational clergy to do opening prayers on the basis that they are denominational clergy members?
41. Would the Lion's Club make a difference if denominational members of the Lion's Club were selected for the opening prayer because they appeared to be good Christians and not because they were official representatives of a denomination?

Now: what are the guidelines you would offer to a young member to determine the appropriate decisions to make?

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Guidelines for consideration:

1. It would be appropriate to avoid situations in which your participation in an event would give comfort to others that you consider to be “denominational”. Being equally yoked or subservient to “denominationalist” in religious situations would be to give comfort.
2. To identify something with the name of a denominationalist group gives it a religious context even if the event is not religious.
3. A prayer to Jehovah at the start of a football game or Lion’s Club meeting would be incidental to the event.
4. Bowing your head to Jehovah during a prayer lead by a denominationalist would not be the same thing as bowing your head in reverence to Buddha during a prayer lead by a Buddhist. It is unlikely that Jehovah would be happy with us paying reverence to Buddha in any shape, form, or fashion; even quietly bowing our head in prayer.