

Why God's Church Has No Name

Text : **I Cor. 1: 10-17 ; Acts 11: 19-26**

S#1.

A. Today we're going to get down in the weeds so this will be a "wonky" lesson. S#2.

1. Some people make a big deal out of it and a few make it a fellowship issue.
2. Others ridicule those who place importance on the designation for the church.
3. We will look at a number of scriptures to establish the New Testament pattern.

B. The purpose of this lesson is purely to inform, it's NOT to :

1. Not to condemn those who disagree
2. Not to persuade anyone to change

C. Remember the purpose for this whole series of lessons has been :

1. To remind us of why we do the things we do.
2. To reinforce within us the importance of having biblical authority for all we do.

D. This lesson seeks to help us to understand that God didn't give His church a name

1. Even so, the errors of men have made it expedient for us to do what God did not do.
2. There are so many different churches man must be able to distinguish between them.
3. However, we are in error if we impose a name that God did not specify.

S#3.

I. There is a need to be able to distinguish ourselves from denominational churches.

A. In its very essence God's church is singular.

1. Jesus only built ONE church. (*singular*)

S#4.

Matt. 16: 18 – I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

2. Jesus purchased only one church. (*singular*)

Acts 20: 28 – Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

S#5.

3. Jesus is the head of the ONE church he built and purchased. (*singular*)

S#6.

Eph. 1: 22-23 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

4. The Apostles teaches that there is only one church.

S#7.

Eph. 4: 3-6 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were

called in one hope of your calling; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

B. Because God has only ONE church there is no need to name it. **S#8.**

1. Is "moon" the name of the moon ? **No.**
 - a. We have named all of the planets .. Mercury, Venus, earth, Mars, Jupiter, etc.
 - b. Why did we not name the moon ?
2. When there is only one of anything, there is no need for a distinguishing name.
 - a. If one, one would say "I'm going to take the truck."
 - b. If two, "I'm going to take the red truck, the new truck, the big truck, .etc."
3. In the references above is it simply referred to as "**The church**" or "**The assembly**."
 - a. The English word "**Church**" has become exclusively a religious word.
 - b. The original word "**ekklesia**" was a word used in common conversation.
 - c. "**ekklesia**" : **1** a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly.

C. Since there are people in the church and those outside, it was necessary for God to name those who are in the church in order to make a distinction. **S#9.**

1. Those inside the church are properly called "**Christians**."
2. **Acts 11: 26** – **And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.** **S#10.**
3. The name "Christian" was also endorsed by the Apostle Peter as a name.

I Pet. 4: 15-16 **Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; **16** but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.** **S#11.**

S#12.

II. Though it has no name the N.T. refer to the church with many metonymies.

- A. Kingdom ... "Transferred us to the kingdom of His dear son." **Col.1:13** **S#13.**
- B. Household ... "household of God, which is the church of the living God" **I Tim 3:15**
- C. Body ... "Now you are Christ's body and individually members" **I Cor. 12:27**
- D. Temple ... "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and ..." **I Cor. 3:16**
- E. Priesthood ... "You are a chosen race, a holy nation, a royal priesthood" **I Pet. 2:9**

F. Flock ... “Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight” **I Pet. 5:2**

G. Bride ... “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb” **Rev. 21:9**

H. A people ... “Purify a people for His own possession, zealous for good de” **Tit. 3:14**

III. The N.T. often refers to the church / assembly by its location. **S#14.**

A. Thus, such a designation locates rather than names. **S#15.**

B. We don't read “The Church of Christ” which is in Jerusalem or wherever.

1. Much like saying the moon or the truck.

2. **Acts 11: 22** – The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. **S#16.**

3. **Gal. 1: 1-2** Paul, an apostle 2 and all the brethren who are with me,
To the churches of Galatia:

4. **Acts 9: 31** – the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed **S#17.**
peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the
comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

C. Others could be sighted. I Cor. 16: 1, 19, II Cor. 8: 1, Gal. 1: 22, Col 4: 16

IV. The N.T. often refers to the assembly / church by its ownership. **S#18.**

A. Remember, “*ekklesia*” was a common word. There were many **S#19.**
assemblies for a variety of reasons other than religious.

B. Most often it is referred to as the assembly or church of God. (9X) **S#20.**

1. **Acts 20: 28** – Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which
the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd
the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

2. **I Cor. 1: 2** – To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have **S#21.**
been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, ...

4. **I Thes. 2: 14** – For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God
in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings
at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews,

5. **I Tim. 3: 15** – but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one **S#22.**
ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the
church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

6. See also : I Tim. 3:5, I Thes 1: 4 , Gal. 1: 3 , II Cor. 1: 1 , I Cor. 10: 32 , 11: 16, 22

C. In the N.T. the church is referred to as the “church of Christ” only once. S#23.

1. **Rom. 16: 16** – Greet one another with a holy kiss.
All the churches of Christ greet you.
2. **Heb. 12: 23** – But you have come to Mount Zion ... to the general assembly **S#24.**
and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God,
the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

D. The church (assembly) is referred to as belonging to the congregants. S#25.

1. Church of the gentiles
Rom. 16: 3-4 – Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
4 who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only
do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;
2. Church of the saints
I Cor. 14: 33 – for God is not a God of confusion but of peace,
as in all the churches of the saints.

S#26.**V. Nowhere in the N.T. do we read of the church being referred to in other ways. S#27.****A. Over the centuries some have tried to call the church by man-made names.**

1. Some called the church “the way.”
Acts 19: 9 – But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, **S#28.**
speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them
and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.
2. This appears only three or four times and disappears so it's obviously not approved.

B. Some today actually use the name of their founder. S#29.

1. Martin Luther (*contrary to his wishes*)
2. John Wesley
3. In the 1800s some in this country pejoratively called Christians “Campbellites.”
4. The New Testament specifically forbids this practice : **S#30.**
I Cor. 1:12-13 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul,"
and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." ¹³ Has Christ
been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you
baptized in the name of Paul?

C. Some have adapted the name of their government. This is unbiblical. S#31.

1. Presbyterian .. (*presbuteros*) ruled by elders
2. Episcopalian .. (*episkopos*) ruled by overseers

D. Some are known by their main doctrinal issue. This is unbiblical.**S#32.**

1. Methodist
2. Baptist
3. Pentecostal
4. Seventh Day Adventist

VI. There is no name given to God's Church but with all the different religions we must have a way to distinguish ourselves.**S#33.****S#34.****A. There would have to be one world government to enforce one world designation.**

1. Each congregation is governed autonomous of all others.
2. We've seen in the N.T. that the church is referred to in different ways.
3. The church of God or the church in a location is most common designations.
4. How did we settle on using the Church of Christ which is mentioned only once ?

B. It was the designation commonly used by the early church fathers.**1. In 100 A.D. an elder of the church named Ignatius wrote to the Ephesians : #35.**

And if those that corrupt mere human families are condemned to death, how much more shall those suffer everlasting punishment who endeavor to corrupt the Church of Christ, for which the Lord Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, endured the cross, and submitted to death!

2. AD 250: Of the Apostolic Constitutions: written in Syria.**S#36.**

But this peace and haven of tranquility is the Church of Christ, into which do thou, when thou hast loosed them from their sins, restore them, as being now sound and unblamable, of good hope, diligent, laborious in good works.

Moreover, do not leave the church of Christ, but go thither in the morning before all thy work, and again meet there in the evening, to return thanks to God that He has preserved thy life.

3. 354-430 Augustine of Hippo**S#37.**

When we have to do with Pagans, and show this coming to pass in the Church of Christ, which before was predicted of the **Name of Christ**, of the Head and **Body of Christ**, lest they think that we have forged these predictions,

C. We could choose from many biblical designations, but we use one in common with others with whom we wish to associate and share fellowship.**S#38.****S#39.**

INVITATION : God called us "Christians" which means disciples. Cf—**Luke 19:10**

S#40. ... Communion Slide

Lesson Text :**I Corinthians 1: 10-17**

10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. **11** For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. **12** Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." **13** Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? **14** I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, **15** so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. **16** Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. **17** For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

Acts 11: 19-26

19 So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. **20** But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. **21** And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. **22** The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. **23** Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; **24** for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. **25** And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; **26** and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.