

WHAT IF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS A DENOMINATION?

Many in the world and in the church are crying long and loud that churches of Christ are nothing more than a denomination among denominations. We are constantly being pressured to give up the notion that the church of Christ is the church of the New Testament, and admit that we are just a man-made church. This assertion is to be expected from those in the denominational world. The “the-church-of-Christ-is-just-another-denomination” argument has been leveled against us for years, yea even centuries by those who are steeped in the doctrines and commandments of men (Matt.15:8-9). The charge will continue to be made by those who have no desire to leave man-made religion.

I suppose the most troubling aspect of what we are hearing today is that much of it is coming from those within our own ranks. Part of the reason many in the church are decrying that the church of Christ is a denomination is that some have not been convinced by the Scriptures that those in man-made churches will be lost (Matt.15:13). Another reason that many in the church wish to think of the church as a denomination is that in so doing, we somehow have no responsibility to go out and convert those in denominationalism. After all, if we are in the same boat, why put forth the effort to persuade them to leave man-made churches? Our aversion to evangelism might explain why so many are pushing for us to swallow this idea that the church of Christ is nothing but a denomination.

Having said all of this, what if the church of Christ is a denomination? Have we ever stopped to consider the repercussions of this line of thinking? If the church of Christ is nothing but a denomination among denominations, then every member of the churches of Christ has an obligation to get out of it and to find the New Testament church, and become members of the church that one can read about in his Bible! Some seem to think that simply by saying that the church of Christ is a denomination, then we should just feel happy to be counted among all other religious people. You have your religious traditions, we will have ours. I’m okay; you’re okay. That is what this sort of philosophy teaches. But brethren and friends, this is not Biblical! Can you imagine standing before Jesus in the Day of Judgment, and trying to explain to him that you thought it better to remain in a man-made church rather than seek out that precious body for which he gave his life’s blood (Acts 20:28)? Every accountable person on earth is obligated to become a member of the family of God, which is the church (1 Tim.3:15). To be outside of the body of Christ—his church (Eph.1:22-23)—is to be without hope and alienated from every spiritual blessing (Eph.1:3; 2:12). Where did we ever get the idea that the doctrines and commandments and innovations of men are superior to or are in any way pleasing to God (see Isa.55:8-9; 1 Cor.1:18-25)?

If the church of Christ is nothing but a “big, sick denomination” (as brother Lynn Anderson stated in the 1970’s), then I am in the wrong place, and so are you. When I find a church that teaches what the first century taught about salvation and daily living, that worships like they did, that is organized as they

were organized, that strives to love and fellowship as they did, then I have found the New Testament church. I believe that the church of Christ today is the church of Christ of the first century, not a denomination. If it is not, someone kindly show me so I can find the church I am supposed to be in.

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