

THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

Reading the New Testament, we find there was no “official name” given to the church. This does not mean the name is unimportant or that the Lord’s church today can be identified by just any name. To be Scriptural (according to the Scriptures, the Bible), we must call the church today what it was called in the first century. According to Colossians 3:17, everything we **say** and everything we **do** is to be in the “name of the Lord.” That means we act by the “authority of” and in “accordance to” the Lord’s will.

The church in the New Testament was referred to by several different terms or phrases. The most common designation was simply “**the church**” (Acts 2:47; 5:11). The church in the New Testament was not just any “kind” of church. It did not wear denominational names, nor did it wear men’s names. The apostles, evangelists, elders, deacons or members never had to explain which church or what kind of church it was. It was simply “the church.” Only one church existed in the days of the apostles. It was the Lord’s church, the one He promised to build (Matt. 16:18), the one for which He died

(Acts 20:28), the one He is coming again to save (Eph. 5:23).

The church in the New Testament was also called the “**church of God**” (Acts 20:28). It was “**the church of the living God**” (1 Tim. 3:15) or the “**church of the first-born**” (Heb. 12:23). In the plural form, all the congregations grouped together were called “**churches of Christ**” (Rom. 16:16). Since the church belongs to Christ, it is only fitting that it wear His name. Since a man did not start the church, why wear a man’s name? Or, why use any designation that is not found in the New Testament? To do so is to rely on man’s authority and not the Lord’s authority.

Jesus is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23). The church is His body (Col. 1:18). To refer to it by a name not given by the Lord is to degrade it. It means we are speaking where the Lord has not spoken. It is both taking away from the Word (by not calling it what the Lord called it) and adding to it as well (by calling it by a name of our own choosing). Both are condemned (Rev. 22:18-19).

What’s the name of the church you attend?

—Garland M. Robinson