

## The Church of Christ Is Different

by John Isaac Edwards

The church that belongs to Christ (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:21-23) is different from a number of things.

***The Church of Christ Is Different from Atheism.*** Atheism is the denial of the existence of God. There isn't any reason for anyone to be an atheist. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God..." (Psalm 14:1). There is abundant evidence that God is! (Psalm 19:1-3; Romans 1:20; Acts 17:24). The humanist movement is alive and well in this country, and largely governs what goes on in our educational system. The humanist manifesto asserts there is no evidence for God and that man emerged from natural, evolutionary forces. We believe that God is, that God made the world and all things therein (Hebrews 11:6; Exodus 20:11; Acts 17:24), and that we are answerable to God (Acts 17:31; Romans 14:12).

***The Church of Christ Is Different from Paganism.*** Paganism suggests that there is more than one God. The New Testament world was full of pagan idolatry. There are a number of pagan religions in the U.S. The New Age Movement is paganism. It's the idea that God is all and God is in all; the sky is God, the trees are God, and you are God. We believe there is, "One God and Father of all..." (Ephesians 4:6).

As Paul wrote, "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him..." (1 Corinthians 8:5-6).

***The Church of Christ Is Different from Judaism.*** Judaism is the religion that is identified in the Old Testament. God singled out Israel from all other nations (Exodus 19:6; Leviticus 20:26). They were descendants of Abraham, and God promised to make a great nation out of Abraham (Genesis 12). Through that nation, one seed would come (Galatians 3). The Old Testament ends with expectations unrealized, and that is where Judaism is. It ignores the New Testament, the coming of the Messiah, the fulfillment of the prophecies and promises, and relegates Jesus to a noble teacher or wise philosopher. We believe that the Messiah came, that Jesus is not only a good man, but that He "...is the Son of God" (John 20:30-31) and "...the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42). We believe Christ is who He said He was, and that whatever He said we need to recognize (John 12:48).

***The Church of Christ Is Different from Catholicism.*** There are some who think the Catholic Church was the first church. It was the first apostate church. The Catholic Church is the result of a transgression of God's

law concerning oversight in the church that gradually developed over centuries. In New Testament times, there was a plurality of elders (bishops) in every church (Acts 14:23), but by 606 AD there was one man as universal bishop. This is an apostasy from the New Testament. The church of Christ is also different on the issue of authority. In Catholicism, authority is determined three ways: (1) By Scripture; (2) By tradition (the voice of the fathers, what has been handed down through the centuries); (3) By the Living Voice of the Living Church (through the pope and the councils the church is able to change law). The church is not the source of divine truth. The church of Christ recognizes Scripture as authority only (John 5:39; Galatians 4:30; 2 Peter 3:15-16; 2 Timothy 3:16).

***The Church of Christ Is Different from Protestantism.*** The Protestant Reformation began as a movement to reform the excesses and abuses that had come into Catholicism. Protestantism began to form various creeds. Followers of Martin Luther codified some of his teachings and formed the Lutheran Movement. Followers of John Calvin did the same. The Protestant Reformation spawned a number of churches different from one another. They can't all be right for they contradict each other, and their creeds change. One of the principle doctrines of Protestantism is justification by

faith only, and the Bible says, "...not by faith only" (James 2:24). The word of God is our only standard. We reject all the creeds of men, and seek to go back and do as the Bible teaches. We speak where the Bible speaks, and are silent where the Bible is silent (1 Peter 4:11).

***The Church of Christ Is Different from Some Churches of Christ.*** Just because a building has "Church of Christ" out in front does not mean that's what meets there. There are a number of local churches who call themselves churches of Christ who are teaching and practicing things you can't read in the word of God. Some use mechanical instrumental music, some teach premillennialism, some are involved in the practice of supporting human institutions from the treasury of the church to do the work of evangelism, benevolence or edification, some have entertainment and recreational activities, places to play and be entertained, and the list goes on. Churches of Christ that hold to what the Bible teaches are not involved in these kinds of activities.

We are different for the simple reason that our allegiance is to the Lord Jesus Christ. We look to Him for guidance and for authority, and the way that authority is expressed is in the Scriptures.

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Only Guide!***

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