

“The Church of God” and the Deity of Christ

by Eric Lyons, M.Min.

The church of which all Christians are to be a part is God’s church. Although many so-called Christians claim to be members of the church that God established nearly 2,000 years ago, they often wear names that indicate ownership by, or allegiance to, men (or offices of men). Some call themselves the “Lutheran Church” (after Martin Luther). Others call themselves after the designated local leaders of the church, e.g., Episcopalians (from the Greek word for bishop) and Presbyterians (from the Greek word for elder). The Scriptures, however, make clear that the church to which all of God’s children are to belong is not a church begun by man, owned by man, or called after man (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10-17). Christians must accept the fact that the church of the New Testament is God’s church, not man’s.



Several times in the New Testament, the term “church” (Greek *ekklesia*) is linked together with the Greek term *theos* (God), and thus one easily can ascertain the fact that the church to which obedient believers belong is the church begun and owned by God. Paul wrote “**to the church of God** which is at Corinth” (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1, emp. added), and later commanded the Corinthians to “[g]ive no offense...**to the church of God**” (1 Corinthians 10:32-33, emp. added). He confessed to the churches of Galatia that he had “persecuted **the church of God**” before becoming a Christian (Galatians 1:13, emp. added). Paul also wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica, reminding them how they “became imitators of **the churches of God** which are in Judea” (1 Thessalonians 2:14, emp. added), and even boasted of them “among **the churches of God**” for their endurance through persecution (2 Thessalonians 1:3-4, emp. added). One must not miss the point that the church of the New Testament is God’s church. It is of **divine** origin and established according to **Deity’s** “eternal purpose” (Ephesians 3:11).

Interestingly, Bible writers often refer to the “church of God” as the body or church of **Christ**. Near the end of his letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul wrote: “All the **churches of Christ** greet you” (Romans 16:16, NASB, emp. added). He taught the Corinthian Christians how they were “members individually” of “the body of **Christ**” (1 Corinthians 12:27, emp. added). Since Paul informed the churches at Ephesus and Colosse that “the church” is Christ’s “body” (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18,24), the body of Christ is equivalent to the church of Christ (cf. Ephesians 4:11-12). Simply put, it is Jesus’ church. He promised to build it (saying, “I will build **My church**”—Matthew 16:18, emp. added), and later purchased it “with His own blood” (Acts 20:28; cf. Ephesians 1:7,14; Hebrews 9:14).

These verses not only inform Christians of the names by which they should identify themselves, they also indicate something significant about the nature of Christ. Although some alleged Bible believers (e.g., Jehovah’s Witnesses) claim that Jesus is not divine, the very fact that Bible writers equated “the church of God” with “the body/church of Christ” is one of the many proofs that Jesus is Divine. Paul consistently used these phrases interchangeably throughout his epistles. Thus, to say the church is Christ’s is to say the church is God’s, because Christ is God (John 1:1-3; 20:28). He is the head, Savior, redeemer, and owner of the church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). May we thus put ourselves under the subjection of Christ as God (Ephesians 5:24), and wear only scriptural names such as “church of God” or “church of Christ.” In the words of the apostle Paul to the Ephesian elders: “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to 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**” (Acts 20:28, emp. added).

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