

**IDENTIFYING THOSE WHO COMPOSE THE CHURCH
OR
TERM APPLIED TO THOSE WHO COMPOSE THE CHURCH
Ac.11:19-26**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In a previous study we noticed the various terms used in the N.T. to designate the church. It is sometimes called “the church of Christ,” “the church of the Lord,” “the church of God,” “the family of God,” “the body of Christ,” “the temple of God,” and “the kingdom of God’s dear Son.” Often times just “the church”.
2. Just as all of these terms are used to point out and identify that divine institution as to its character and nature which Jesus came into the world to establish, so we have a number of terms used to designate and identify the “individuals” who compose it.
3. As in the case of the terms used to designate the church, so it is with the terms applied to those who compose the church. Many misunderstand and misapply them and thus speak of “the Church of the Brethren,” “the Christian Church,” “the Disciples of Christ Church,” “the Holiness Church,” etc. The church is never so identified in the N.T.
4. Furthermore, as all the terms used to designate the church – when taken together – give a complete view of it as to its character and nature, just so with all the terms used to designate the “individuals” who compose the church.
5. Emphasize this: When they are all taken together, we have set forth the various **RELATIONSHIPS** which we sustain to God, to Jesus Christ, to one another, and to the world.
6. Now let us study: --

II. DISCUSSION

A. THE SCRIPTURAL DESIGNATIONS OF THOSE WHO COMPOSE THE CHURCH

1. If we think of the church as a **body**, then we are “**members**,” Rom.12:4,5; 1Cor.12:12-14,27.
2. If we think of the church as a **kingdom**, then we are “**citizens**,” Eph.2:19; Phil.3:20; Phil.1:27.

- a. Phil.1:27 may be correctly rendered “behave as citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ,” or “let your conduct as a citizen be as becometh the gospel.”
3. If we think of ourselves as **students**, then we are “**disciples**,” Jno.8:31; 13:35; 15:8; Mt.28:19 (R.V.); Ac.20:7; See Mk.2:18; Jno.9:28.
 - a. The term “disciple” signifies a “learner” or “follower” – in early times students literally followed their teachers about.
4. If we think of God as our **Father**, then we are “**children**,” Mt.6:9; Rom.8:14-17; Gal.3:26,27; Cf. Jno.8:44; 1Jno.3:8-10.
5. If we have in mind the **relationship** which we sustain **to one another in the family of God**, then we are “**brethren**,” 1Tim.4:6; 1Pet.122; 1Jno. 3:14; 1Cor.15:6; Col.1:2; Heb.2:11,12.
6. As regards our **relationship to Jesus Christ**, we are “**Christians**,” Isa. 62:2; Ac.11:26; 26:28; 1Pet.4:16; Cf. Ac.4:11,12; 9:15.
7. If we have in mind the **purity of God’s people**, having past sins remitted, sanctified or set apart by the gospel of Christ, then we are “**saints**,” 1Cor.1:1,2; Phil.1:1; Col.1:2; Rom.1:7.
8. If we have in mind the **priesthood**, then we are “**priests**,” 1Pet.2:5-9; Rev.1:6; Heb.13:15; Rom.12:12,
 - a. There is no human priest standing between us and God.
 - b. Each Christian can go directly to the Father through the Son, Jesus Christ, who is our high priest.
9. If we have in mind the **testament, covenant, or will of Christ**, then we are “**heirs**,” Rom.8:16,17; Gal.3:26-4:7; Heb.1:1,2; 9:15-17.

B. NOW LET US CONSIDER THE MATTER OF HYPHENATED CHRISTIANS.

1. By hyphenated Christians, of course, we mean, this kind of Christian or that kind of Christian; such as, a Baptist-Christian; Methodist-Christian.
2. For instance: When people ask, “What are you religiously?” and you reply, “I am a Christian.” It is not unusual for them to respond, “I know, but, I mean, are you a Baptist-Christian? Or a Methodist-Christian? Or some other kind?”
3. Let me further illustrate the absurdity of hyphenated Christians.
 - a. The Bible teaches that method and system should be used in the Lord’s work, but never calls God’s people Methodists.
 - b. That we should have bishops (the Greek word being episcopos) to oversee the work in each local church, but never identifies God’s people as Episcopalians.

- c. That we should have elders (the Greek word being presbuteros) who are bishops or elders or pastors in each local church, to rule and or oversee or feed the congregation, but there is no Bible authority to call oneself a Presbyterian.
 - d. That each congregation or local church is independent, but not a Congregationalist.
 - e. That it takes immersion to constitute the act of baptism, but that doesn't make the baptized Baptists.
 - f. That Christians should be holy, but they are not Holiness.
 - g. That the Lord's church began on the first Pentecost after his resurrection from the dead, but never calls the Pentecostians.
 - h. That Christ will come again, but does not teach one is an Adventist.
 - i. That the church is universal or catholic, but it is never identified as the Catholic church, nor are the individual members ever identified as Catholics.
 - (1) Such terms, even when found in the Bible, are not used to refer to those who compose the N.T. church, not to the church itself.
2. According to some good fold, since we believer in the above facts, the Bible would authorize us to call our selves Methodist-Episcopalian-Congregationalist-Baptist-Holiness-Pentecostian-Adventist-Catholic-Christians.
 3. We find in the Bible that the disciples of Jesus Christ were called Christians, but we never read of any person being called some hyphenated Christian. They were Christian, and Christian only. No man-made names were worn.
 4. Christianity is neither Protestant nor Catholic nor Jew; but it is universal, and it protests all false doctrines.
 5. Furthermore, it is Spiritual Israel, and we are Jews inwardly (Rom.2:28,29; Gal.6:16), the Israel of God.

C. FURTHERMORE, THE TESTIMONY OF THE FOREMOST DENOMINATIONAL SCHOLARS ACCORDS WITH THE TRUTHS WE HAVE TAUGHT IN THIS LESSON.

1. Martin Luther, a man in whose name many people glory, "I pray you leave my name alone, and call not yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for anyone. Paul would not let any call themselves after Paul, or Peter, but of Christ. How then, does it befit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes,

to give my name to the children of God? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions: away with all; and let us call ourselves only Christians after him from whom our doctrine comes.” – The Life of Luther, Stork, pg.289.

2. Charles Spurgeon, one of the most recognized and talented Baptist preachers that ever lived, “I say of the Baptist name, let it perish, but let Christ’s name last forever. I look forward with pleasure, to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. I hope the Baptist name will soon perish; but let Christ’s name endure forever.” -- Spurgeon Memorial Library, Vol. I, p.168.
3. Henry Ward Beecher: “Let us speak to you in the language of heaven and call you Christians.”
4. Albert Barnes, a great Presbyterian scholar, “These divisions should be merged into the holy name, Christian.”
5. John Wesley: “Would to God that all party names were forgot...And again, I wish that the name Methodist might never be mentioned more but lost in eternal oblivion.”
6. P.S. Henson: “I sometimes feel sorry that the word ‘Baptist’ which was flung at us by our enemies should be our name. Perhaps yet we will go back to the name Christian.”

D. MOREOVER, RELIGIOUS TITLE ARE CONDEMNED BY GOD’S WORD.

1. No preacher, or any other Christian, in the N.T. ever wore, nor were ever authorized by the Lord to wear, such titles as: Reverend; Rt. Reverend; Very Rt. Reverend; Most Reverend; Cardinal; Pope, or Father, or Brother, as a religious title.
2. See Mt.23:8-12; Job 32:21,22.

III. CONCLUSION

1. Remember what the Bible says; what the Bible authorizes concerning his church and the identify of those who compose.
2. Compare that with what men say; with what men do; with the religious names men wear; with the religious titles men wear, etc.
3. Surely you can see the difference.
4. Where do men get the authority to set their own standard in religion? Do their own thing in religion? Say and do what they want to say and do in religion?