

“What Is the Biblical Name of the Universal Church?”

Dub McClish

The title above is one of several questions a visitor to my Website, *TheScripturecache.com*, submitted on December 28, 2017. His reading my MS, “The Church of Christ Is Not a Denomination,” provoked the questions (obviously disagreeing with my MS). I have not revealed his name since it is not relevant either to his question or to my response (I will identify him to individual inquirers). Below is the querist’s full response to my MS:

Isn't it true that the phrase "church of Christ" isn't in the Bible? How can the one and only church be called something that even God never called it? Isn't it true that "churches of Christ" refers to LOCAL churches just as in the same context of churches of the Gentiles? What is the Biblical name of the universal church?

I responded to his questions as follows:

Dear _____,

Thanks for visiting *TheScripturecache*, and for reading at least one of my MSS. There is no single Biblical “name” for the church that Jesus built upon the fact of His Deity and bought with His blood (Mat. 16:16–19; Acts 20:28). Contrary to your denial, *church of Christ* is in the New Testament—in the very terminology you quoted from Romans 16:16 (i.e., *churches of Christ*). There could hardly be a plurality of “churches of Christ” without the existence of an individual “church of Christ.” Further, of what were the several “churches of Christ” from which Paul sent greetings to the “church of Christ” in Rome, if not the “universal” “church of Christ”? While the NT prescribes no exclusive “name” for the church in the sense that you are asking for one, the NT employs descriptive terms or designations for it, the most common of which is simply “the church.”

Paul employed *church of God* in the “universal” sense repeatedly (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 3:5). Were Christ and His Father one in all matters, as the Lord declared (John 17:21)? This being so, they had/have only one church. Thus we may Scripturally—and logically—substitute *the church of Christ* each time Scripture uses *the church of God*. Further, the KJV reads in Acts 20:28, “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” God the Father never had any blood, so the obvious reference is to Christ—and, using the KJV verbiage—referring to Him as “God” is a powerful testimony to His Deity. However, it is quite likely that the ASV is the correct rendering here: “the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.” Note that Paul does not here refer to a single congregation, but to the church in the aggregate, embracing all the individual assemblies. Clearly, *church of the Lord* is but another way of saying *church of Christ*. However, all one need do to understand that *church of Christ* is a Scriptural term for the “universal” church is to remember who built it, bought it, and to Whom it belongs.

_____, from my knowledge of you over the years, I am sad to see that you are still bogged down in an apparent cynical denial of some of the most basic and simple teachings of God’s Word. I pray that you will one day repent of your liberalism and help us “fight the good fight of the faith” that you may “lay hold on the life eternal” (1 Tim. 6:12).

Yours in the Cause,

Dub McClish

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