

Name of the New Testament Church

Many have wondered, “What is the proper name for the Church?” Have you ever mused about this? You find all sorts of names on buildings as you drive through the various cities of the world.

As the Apostle Paul was speaking to the Church at Ephesus he said, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner *stone*; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-22).

We see the Church here is called “the household of God,” a “holy temple in the Lord,” and “a habitation of God.” The word “church” in Greek is *ekklēsia*. It means a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly. A church then is a group of called out ones; especially a religious congregation (such as a Jewish synagogue, or a Christian community of members). A church is not the building, but rather the people called out by God for His plan and purposes.

So it is this body of “called out ones” that form a habitation for God’s Spirit. What name is given in the New Testament for this group?

It is important that we first find the proper name for the Church Jesus came to establish. Twelve times in the New Testament we see a name given to this body of believers. The name is recorded in Acts 20:28; I Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 15:9; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:13; I Thess. 2:14; II Thess. 1:4; I Tim. 3:5, 15. In each of these verses, this body of “called out ones” is called the “Church of God.” Let’s check them out.

Acts 20:28 (NKJV), “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.”

I Corinthians 1:2 (NKJV), “To the **church of God** which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”

I Corinthians 10:32 (NKJV), “Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the **church of God**.”

I Corinthians 11:16 (NKJV), “But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor *do* the **churches of God**.”

I Corinthians 11:22 (NKJV), “What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the **church of God** and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you*.”

I Corinthians 15:9 (NKJV), “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the **church of God**.”

II Corinthians 1:1 (NKJV), “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, to the **church of God** which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia.”

Galatians 1:13 (NKJV), “For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the **church of God** beyond measure and *tried to* destroy it.”

I Thessalonians 2:14 (NKJV), “For you, brethren, became imitators of the **churches of God** which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans.”

II Thessalonians 1:4 (NKJV), “So that we ourselves boast of you among the **churches of God** for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure.”

I Timothy 3:5 (NKJV), “For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the **church of God**?”

I Timothy 3:15 (NKJV), “But if I am delayed, I *write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the **house of God, which is the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

So we see the body of Christ is called the “Church of God.” The Church is the spiritual body of believers not a building.

In all of our writings, we try to use a capital “C” to indicate the true body of Christ to distinguish it from the ordinary churches and man-made organizations or denominations. **The Church of God is a Spiritual Body that doesn’t conform to physical boundaries.** By that I mean there may be one or two people in a church that have God’s Holy Spirit. Then in another congregation, three or four more may be converted Christians with the Spirit of God and so forth around the world. Just because a church is named the Church of God doesn’t automatically mean all its members have the Holy Spirit. There are churches of God that Jesus said were spiritually dead. (See Rev. 3:1-6.)

To be part of the Church of God and the Body of Christ you must have the Spirit of God dwelling within you. (See I Cor. 3:16.)

If you were looking for a place to meet and to worship with other Spirit-led Christians, a good place to begin your search would be among other believers who have the Spirit of God, whether or not their group has the “Church of God” as part of its name. If the group is alive with the Holy Spirit and it teaches [*The Doctrine of Christ*](#), keeps the commandments of God, has the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 12:17), and follows the customs and traditions of the first century Church of God, then you will have found other true worshipers of God. Remember the Church of God is a SPIRIT-LED BODY OF BELIEVERS not a man-made organization!

When we baptize a person, we do not baptize him into a physical church or denomination but into the Spiritual Body of Jesus Christ—the Church of God.