

Its Namelessness

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The New Testament church is unique in that it has no proper name. Denominations have proper names. The Latin word denominate means to "name" something. But the New Testament church is nameless. Though it is called the house of the Lord, the family of God, the body of Christ, and the kingdom of Christ (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:15; Col. 3:13; Heb. 3:5-6; 1 Tim. 3:15), yet it has no proper name.

Individual members of the church do have a proper name. That name is not "disciple," though they are disciples (Acts 9:1). That name is not "brethren," though they are brethren (Acts 9:30). That name is not "saints," though church members are saints (Acts 9:32). Their proper and divinely given name is "Christian" (Acts 11:26), but to call the church the "Christian Church" is to give it a proper name, not known in the Bible.

To speak of the New Testament church as the "church of Christ" is right, as it is to speak of it as the "church of God" (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:2), but neither is a proper name. To speak of "Church of Christ" congregations and of "Church of Christ preachers" is to denominationalize the church which is unique in that it is not a denomination (a named society). (Firm Foundation, April 2004 pg. 6)