

Pleasant Valley
Church of Christ

3317 Amidon
Wichita KS 67204
(316) 838-4195
www.letjesusleadus.org

Schedule of Services

Sunday

Classes 9:30 am
Worship 10:30 am
Evening 6:00 pm

Wednesday

Classes 7:30 pm

The Pleasant Valley Church of Christ is a non-denominational group of believers who are committed to following Jesus in our attitudes, our relationships, and our worship. If you want the same thing in your life, please contact us. We'd like to help.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the New King James Version Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Wings



*"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31)*

March 22, 2009

Is the Church of Christ a denomination?

by David King

Like any other loaded question, the answer depends on how we define the key terms.

First, what do we mean by "the Church of Christ"? The phrase can have two entirely different meanings. The first definition — and by far the more popular one, even among my brethren — is a loose confederation of local congregations that wear a common moniker, "Church of Christ." Using this definition, "faithfulness" is generally measured by how closely one aligns with the doctrines and practices of this group (for more information, subscribe to one of the leading brotherhood journals). The membership of this Church of Christ can be approximated by adding up the membership rolls of all the local congregations that belong to this metagroup.

The second, and more biblical, definition is quite different. The entity that Jesus called "My church" (Matt. 16:18) is nothing more or less than the sum of all those individuals who have been saved by His blood and remain faithful to Him in their lives. Membership in this church is determined by Christ, not men ("The Lord added to the church," Ac. 2:47). Consequently, the census of this group is tracked in heaven (Heb. 12:23), so it is impossible for men to know its true number. Certainly the New Testament speaks of "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16), referring to local congregations of believers. But one's membership in the true "church of Christ" and a local church of Christ is not necessarily the same thing.

The second key term that we must define is "denomination." The root word comes from

the Latin *nomen*, meaning "name." So the simple dictionary definition is "a general name for a category." Applied to religion, the word then describes a religious organization comprised of congregations united in their adherence to its beliefs and practices, and identified by a common name.

So with these definitions before us, let's try to answer the question, "is the Church of Christ a denomination?"

Look again at the two definitions of "the Church of Christ." If your conception of the church is a loose confederation of local churches, each one of which wears the name "Church of Christ" and adheres to a commonly recognized standard of "truth"; and if you believe that that name and group membership identifies you as "faithful"; then, by definition, the Church of Christ that exists in your mental model is indeed a denomination. It certainly fits the dictionary definition.

If, on the other hand, your conception of the Church of Christ follows the second definition, and you view the phrase as merely descriptive of the sum of all the saved; and you think of the church in terms of individuals, not local congregations; and that those who belong to this church are first and foremost faithful to the Lord, not to men; then the church of Christ that exists in your mental model does not fit the definition of a denomination. It transcends denominationalism.

Which of these definitions best fits **your** religious affiliation? Do you belong to the Lord's church — or to a denomination?