

# In the Next Five Minutes . . .

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Leonard Johnson, one founder of Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, once preached a sermon in a gospel meeting in a small Alabama town. In it he said, “In the next five minutes, I am going to tell you everything the New Testament says about the name of the church.”

For the next five minutes, brother Johnson did not utter a word. Then he said, “There you have it—everything the New Testament says about the name of the church.”

Johnson was right—the church, the body of people redeemed to God by Christ’s blood, does not have a proper, formal, exclusive, and patented name. It was not and is not a denomination and does not wear a denominational designation. Instead, the New Testament gives numerous descriptors for the church. The church (the aggregate of all who have been saved by obedience to the gospel) is the spiritual body of Christ, of which there is but one (Ephesians 1:22–23; 4:4). It is the spiritual temple of God, being composed of living stones (Ephesians 2:19–22). It is the house (-hold, family) of God, with every child of God a member of it (1 Timothy 3:15). It is the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Colossians 1:13; cf. Acts 2:47).

Christ called it “My church” (Matthew 16:18). A plurality of local congregations are “churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16).

At the same time, they also are “churches of God” (1 Corinthians 11:16), and the universal body of redeemed people is called the “church of God” (11:22).

Geographically, God’s people are spoken of as the church at Jerusalem, the church of God which is at Corinth, the churches of Judea, the churches of Galatia, and the seven churches of Asia. Modern Catholic and Protestant names are noticeably absent and came to be applied to religious groups arising since the New Testament.

Churches of Christ today strive to be the church of the New Testament order. We do not profess to be a denomination. The use of the biblical descriptor “church of Christ” is not intended as our official name. Any biblical descriptor is acceptable. However, in our divided religious world, it is practical to consistently use the same descriptor. –Hugh Fulford