

Have You Heard?

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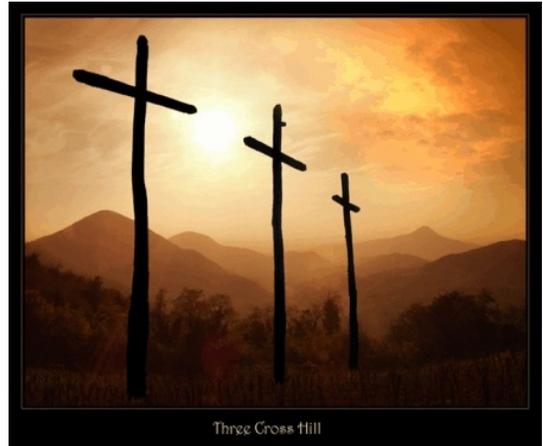
Have you heard about the group of Christians in this community that is not at all like the denominations so often encountered? Some have wondered about this difference and even remarked about it. This group is different in a number of ways but space permits us to consider only a few, and that but briefly.

1. Different, in attitude toward the Bible.

These Christians believe the Bible to be the inspired, infallible, complete, authoritative word of God, and that the New Testament is the final expression of that word. This faith is based upon such scriptures as **2 Tim. 3: 16; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4, 21; Rev. 22:18, 19; Jn. 10:35**. But, do not all Protestant denominations believe this? There was a time when they did, but now many of them will tell you unhesitatingly that they no longer do. Even those denominations which are known as "Fundamentalists" are guilty of dividing the commandments of Christ into "essential" and "non-essential" commands. This, in effect, nullifies the authority of the scriptures because it will let every man decide for himself what is essential and what is not. But not these Christians! They believe that man shall live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (**Matt. 4:4**). Is this what you believe?

2. Different, in attitude toward how to become a Christian. Since their faith in the scriptures is such that it will not allow them to divide the commandments of Christ into essential and non-essential commands, this group of Christians insists that because every man has sinned and separated himself from God (**Rom. 3:23; Isa. 59:1, 2**) man's only hope of benefiting from the blood of Christ is to do all that Christ has commanded men to do in order to reap these benefits. This, of course, involves faith in Christ as the Son of God (**Jn. 20:30, 31; Mk. 16:16**). But since the scripture says that our faith avails only when it works by love (**Gal. 5:6; Jas. 2:24**) they also repented of their sins (**Acts 17:30**), confessed with their mouth what they believed in their heart (**Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10**) and gladly obeyed the command of Christ to be baptized, i.e. immersed (**Rom. 6:3,4; Col. 2:12**), in water (**Acts 8:36**) for the remission of their sins (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**) or to be saved (**Mk. 16: 16; 1 Pet. 3:21**). When one has done all these things--and not until then--the Bible reveals that he is saved, a child of God by faith (**Gal. 3:27**), and a member of the Lord's church (**cf. Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:1, 2**). Is this what you did?

3. Different, in insisting on being simply a Christian -- nothing more, nothing



less, and nothing else. Every religious group teaches that a person can believe all the truth, obey every command of God, be a Christian while he lives, and go to heaven when he dies without ever belonging to any denomination whatsoever. Since this is true, this group of Christians sees the unimportance of every denomination and hence have not joined any denomination and are not a part of any denomination, but are simply Christians-- nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else! Furthermore, since the Bible reveals that it is wrong and sinful to divide the people of God into different categories, and be called by different religious names (**1 Cor. 1:10-13**) this group is satisfied with the name given in the New Testament, i.e., the name Christian (**Acts 11:26; 26:28 1 Pet 4:16**), and pleads for all believers to be one even as Christ prayed (**Jn. 17:20, 21**). They are satisfied to be simply members of the Lord's church and just Christians. Can this be dangerous? Can it be anything but safe? Is that what you are; or are you a "Christian plus another name"?

4. Different, in its attitude toward church worship and work. Since the New Testament commands Christians to assemble together (**Heb. 10:25**) these do so, but such does not make them a denomination in any sense of the word. Such is simply the congregation of the Lord's people; the congregation devoted to and belonging to the Lord; or the church that belongs to the Lord, hence the church of Christ or church of God (**Acts 20:28; Rom. 16:16**).

Since these Christians have the confidence in the scriptures already mentioned, they accept the New Testament as the divine, verbally inspired, and authoritative blueprint for the church throughout all ages. Whatever acts this blueprint reveals that Christians did when they thus assembled is the pattern for them and to it they cling tenaciously. Since the New Testament reveals that Christians are to assemble on the first day of the week to break bread or eat the Lord's supper, to give of their money, to sing, to teach the apostles' doctrine, and pray together (**Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; Eph. 5:19**), that is exactly what this group of Christians does. Since the Bible forbids adding anything to what is revealed (**Rev. 22:18, 19**) these Christians do not do anything else in church worship. Is this unreasonable? Can it be anything but right? Is this what you do?

The New Testament also tells that the church is to preach the gospel, edify itself, and care for its needy (**1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 4:16; Acts 6:1-6**). This group is glad to do just that.

5. Different, because it has no ecclesiastical or denominational hierarchy. Since this group accepts the New Testament as its blueprint for the church, it is happy to follow the pattern therein given for church organization. The New Testament reveals no ecclesiastical authority higher than the local congregation, except Christ the head of the church (**Eph. 1:22, 23**). The local congregation being overseen by elders (**Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3; Titus 1:5-9; 1Tim. 3:1-7**) with deacons to serve (**Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-10**) and is not governed by any conference, association, synod, pope, or council, but is simply free under God to do the will of Christ. It has no

denominational machinery or earthly headquarters but is a free, independent, and autonomous body of Christians. Is the church of which you are a member like this?

This group occupies a unique and enviable position, indeed! It is a position based upon and produced by the infallible word of God. This group does not occupy this position merely as their opinion but because the word of God tells them and all others to do so. Wouldn't you like to do the same? For more information about this group of Christians who insist on calling Bible things by Bible names and doing Bible things in Bible ways, you are cordially invited to attend with these Christians in your area. Why not check it out? You'll be glad you did.