

The Christadelphians

Any review of a group of Christians must start with the question: "What does God want from a group of Christians?" The answer must be "What the Bible tells us". We read in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

The Bible must be the basis for Christian teaching and practice. Only the Bible can help us become a complete spiritual person. Any group of Christians must be measured against the Bible.

The Christadelphians aim to follow the Bible and nothing else. We are not a break-away from any other group. We are completely separate. Our community is based on careful reading and research to discover the original truth of Bible teaching and practice.

When this investigation was undertaken, it was discovered that there were big differences between the Bible and what was found in other Christian groups. The differences are so large that the Bible itself guides us not to fellowship with them. This is regrettable, but necessary. We may admire faith and commitment where we see it, but we do need to follow what is true. As 1 Timothy 2:3-4 says:

"This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

One of the biggest differences between Christadelphians and other groups is the teaching about God and Jesus. The Bible teaches that there is one God, not a Trinity of three Gods. Jesus is the son of this one God, not 'God the Son'.

We believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. He is currently in heaven and will return to set up the kingdom of God on earth.

When a believer dies, he or she dies in hope of the resurrection from the dead followed by eternal life in the kingdom of God.

This is not the place for us to go through all the teachings. You can learn what the Bible says about these in other talks. Bible proofs are given in the talks and you must make your own decision on whether we teach what the Bible says or not.

Bible teaching is basically simple. Man has complicated it over the years and lost sight of the original simplicity. The Christadelphians follow the original first century teachings and practice of Jesus and the apostles.

The practice of New Testament times was for believers to be taught before immersion. An example of this is in Acts 8:12:

"But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were immersed, both men and women."

A person needs to know about the faith into which they are being immersed.

In Acts 2:42, we are told what the Christians did following immersion:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

This passage defines what Christian groups should do. They continue in the apostles' teaching. The immersed believers become part of a fellowship. They now have a new spiritual family. In this new family, we are all brothers and sisters and we have a duty to love each another.

The believers meet to break bread and to drink wine as a way of remembering the death and resurrection of Jesus. All believers participate in this, usually on a weekly basis.

Believers have an active prayer life.

The Christadelphians are a lay movement. We have no priests or leaders. Jesus made this clear in Matthew 23:8-9:

“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.”

There were priests under the Law of Moses. But Christ and the apostles do not teach that Christians should have priests.

For the same reasons, we have no hierarchy or central governing organisation. The highest unit of organisation is our local church. We call our churches “ecclesias”, which is the actual word used in the New Testament. This word emphasises that the church is really about the people not the building.

Each ecclesia runs its own affairs. For example, each ecclesia decides what to do with its own money. We do not tithe. All contributions are voluntary and (where possible) anonymous.

There are times where it makes sense for ecclesias to work together. An example of this is the production of these talks which have been produced by the Christadelphian Bible Mission. This is a group of lay people working together to take God’s message around the world. This work is voluntary and unpaid.

We have no other holy books. Our faith is based on the Bible and that is our only authority. We encourage Bible ownership, daily Bible reading and Bible study. Many of us follow a systematic Bible reading planner which means that the whole of the Bible is read each year. In this way, the Bible becomes the centre of our lives.

Christadelphians realise that they must be separate from the things in the world which are not acceptable to God. This is what it means to be holy or godly. This affects our lifestyle!

Christians must not fight and kill others. This is not compatible with the command to ‘love your enemies.’

Christians must not get involved in politics. We are looking for a new and different kingdom – one set up by God. The need for separation from the things of this world is given in James 4:4:

“don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”

These words do not change our duty to love our neighbour, to pay taxes and to obey the laws of the land. However, if there is a conflict between the laws of God and the laws of the land, then we must obey those of God. Christadelphians are good neighbours and support many charitable activities.

You can find Christadelphians in many countries of the world. We are not a large group, so you may have to look to find us. We welcome people to contact us, visit us and find out about us.

If you went to a Christadelphian meeting, what would you expect to find?

We meet in a variety of places, from personal homes to meeting halls. Where there are many believers in one place, we meet in a hall. We do not have ornate and elaborate churches or temples.

We have simple services, typically with Bible reading, prayers, a Bible talk and hymns. These are run by ecclesial members. There are separate services for remembering Jesus in bread and wine, for teaching and for preaching. We do not have elaborate ceremonies.

It may help you to know the origins of the Christadelphians. The starting point was when an English doctor, John Thomas, emigrated from Britain to the United States. On his journey he was shipwrecked. As the ship was going down, he realised that he did not know what happened after death. He vowed that, if God allowed him to live, he would read the Bible and do what God wanted. This journey led him to discover the original Bible message. In 1864, those with this understanding adopted the name 'Christadelphians'. It means 'brothers (and sisters) in Christ'.

We do not say that only Christadelphians will be saved. That is not for us to say. There were people before us who must have pleased God and there may be others around the world of whom we do not know. We do come across people who have discovered the same Bible message through their own reading and study of the Bible. When this occurs, we are delighted to unite.

The name Christadelphians is not what is important. It is our understanding and way of life that shows whether we are really followers of Jesus.

How do you know what is right? After all, there are many different churches in the world!

We should apply the same test as did the townspeople of Berea when the apostle Paul visited them. In Acts 17:11 we read of them checking if what Paul said was true: *"Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if these words were true"*

We should check everything against the Bible. Whatever teachings or ideas we hear, we should still check these with the Bible. We should apply this test to everything.

Let us summarise.

Christadelphians aim to get as close as possible to the original Bible teaching and practice. We do not claim to be a group of perfect people but we do aim to follow Christ as best we can. We must give glory to our heavenly Father and honour to the name of Jesus Christ, who together provide us with such a gracious offer of salvation.

We hope that you also share these aims.

If we base our lives on the Bible, then we can be saved from death. Paul makes this clear when writing to Timothy: *"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you have learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."* (2 Timothy 3:14,15)

We hope that these talks will help you on your spiritual journey so that you also can be saved from death. If we can help you further, then please be in touch with us.