



## WHO ARE THE CHRISTADELPHIANS?

**Reading:** John 15

### The Christadelphians

This course is about the Bible. However, you may want to know who the Christadelphians are, so we will tell you something about ourselves.

The Christadelphians are a worldwide community of people who read the whole of the Bible and accept it all as the Word of God. They believe in the Old and New Testament promises concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and the future of the world. They are waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus from heaven to set up God's kingdom on this earth.

The name 'Christadelphian' comes from two Greek words that mean 'Brothers in Christ' (Colossians 1:2). It is a phrase taken from the New Testament, which was originally written in Greek.

### Where do Christadelphians live?

There are Christadelphians in many parts of the world, for example in Britain and parts of Europe, many African countries, the Far East from India to Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, North and South America from Canada to Argentina, and in the islands of the Caribbean. The community includes people of many races and cultures.

### What do Christadelphians believe?

Christadelphians base their faith on the things which were believed and taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles about 2,000 years ago. The true message of Christianity has not changed and there have always been groups who have believed true Bible teaching. However, many 'Christian' churches have turned to man-made ideas. Christadelphians keep to the truth of God's Word by reading the whole Bible, not just their favourite passages. A reading plan helps them to read the whole of the Old Testament once each year and the New Testament twice.

### How did the Christadelphian community begin?

In 1832 an English doctor named John Thomas took a ship going to New York because his father wanted to settle in America. The ship ran aground in a violent storm and Dr. Thomas thought that he was going to die. He realised that he knew very little about the future and vowed that if he reached land he would not rest until he had found the truth about life after death. He did reach New York and spent the next fifteen years studying the Bible very carefully and examining the teachings of many 'Christian' groups. When he was sure that he understood the things written in the Old and New Testaments concerning Jesus Christ and the coming Kingdom of God on earth, he arranged to be baptized, by full immersion (going under water completely). He preached in America and Britain, and produced religious magazines and books.

Among those who believed the same Bible teachings and joined John Thomas in his work was a man called Robert Roberts. He helped to organise the growing number of fellow-believers into local groups or 'ecclesias'. 'Ecclesia' is the Greek word for 'church' in the Bible. It means 'an assembly (gathering) of people who have been called'. Christadelphians prefer to use 'ecclesia' instead of 'church' because people now think of a church as a building rather than a special group of people.

The name 'Christadelphian' was first used in 1864 when the believers in America asked their Government to be excused from joining the army at the time of the American Civil War. A name was needed to identify the believers as a community separate from other churches, and John Thomas chose 'Christadelphian'. These 19th Century Christadelphians preached in many parts of the world, so that by the end of the century there were groups of believers in many countries.





## How do Christadelphians organise themselves?

There are various committees for organising missionary work and the care of our sick, elderly and lonely members. We have offices in a few countries for publishing magazines and books. However, we have no paid ministers and no priests (the Lord Jesus, now in heaven, is the only priest – through him baptized believers confess their sins in prayer). Christadelphians have no central organisation, but members throughout the world share the same beliefs, hope and way of life, and this binds them together as a community. The work of the community is financed by money given voluntarily by members.

Each ecclesia chooses its own elders, usually by voting once a year. Those who are chosen serve the ecclesia in various duties, such as secretary, treasurer, steward or chairing meetings, and they are not paid for their work. Christadelphians do not build enormous, elaborate church buildings. Of course, some ecclesias do own their hall or room for meeting, but others meet in houses, or rent village halls or rooms in schools.

## The same beliefs

All Christadelphians read and study their Bibles and have come to the **same essential beliefs**. For over 100 years we have had a *Statement of Faith* (a summary of Bible teachings) which every member accepts as the basis of membership and worship together. Before anyone is baptized and becomes a Christadelphian, he (or she) must satisfy himself that he understands the important teachings of the Bible and that he is in full agreement with our Bible-based beliefs and practices. This is what binds Christadelphians together.

*“There is one body ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism”* (Ephesians 4:4,5).

This makes it possible for Christadelphians, wherever they live, to share a happy and rewarding fellowship with each other.

## The people we try to be

We all need God's help, and so we read the Bible every day. This is as important as having regular food. It is also very important to pray. Once a week we meet to eat a little piece of bread and drink a sip of wine to remind us of the death of Jesus. Christadelphians are very happy people because they have a sure and practical faith, but they are very serious about the way they live. Jesus Christ is coming back to the earth very soon and we wish to be ready for his coming. This means leading clean and honest lives. It means avoiding heavy drinking, gambling and other evil habits. It means having only one wife, and not having sex before or outside marriage. (We realise that some students taking this course may already have more than one wife, and this matter is discussed in Lesson 33.) Christadelphians are law-abiding citizens of their country. They try to do good, but they do not take part in politics, nor do they fight or take people to court.

## The Christadelphian Bible Mission

The aim of the Christadelphian Bible Mission (CBM) is to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God all over the world. The CBM produces Bible courses and booklets and organises missionary work. CBM workers are unpaid Christadelphian volunteers who do this work as well as their normal employment. They want to help people to learn the Gospel, to encourage them to repent, be baptized, and follow the example of the Lord Jesus and the apostles.

## We want to share right beliefs, hope and joy with you

Christadelphians sincerely believe that their faith represents the true Gospel as found in the whole of the Bible. We hope that you, too, will enjoy discovering 'The Truth'. It will satisfy you because it is right, and it will bring hope and joy to your life. May God bless you in your search for Bible truth.





## SOME IMPORTANT BIBLE TEACHINGS

The Bible is the only true message from God.

There is only One God, the Creator, who is in control of world affairs.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, born of the virgin Mary. He was a sinless man. He died on the cross to save those who believe in him. He was raised from the grave and given everlasting life. He is now in heaven with his Father.

Jesus Christ will soon return from heaven. He will set up the Kingdom of God on the earth. He will rule as King of the world. His capital city will be Jerusalem in the land of Israel.

The Jews are God's witnesses to His purpose, even though many of them do not realise it. God made promises to Abraham and David which will be fulfilled when the Lord Jesus returns to the earth.

Death is the punishment for sin and we all sin. The only hope of life after death is bodily resurrection from the grave at the return of Jesus Christ.

There will be a day of judgement. The faithful followers of the Lord Jesus will be given a place in God's kingdom and will live for ever.

We must believe the Gospel, repent from our sins and be baptized. If we try hard to obey God's commands, and pray for forgiveness when we fail, then by God's grace we shall be saved.

The Bible prophecies about past and present world events have all come true. The Bible shows that the return of Jesus Christ to the earth is **very near**. That is why you should study your Bible **now**.

### Verses to learn: John 15:13,14

*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.*

### Verses to read:

#### Psalm 119:130

*The unfolding of your (God's) words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.*

#### Mark 16:15,16

*And he (Jesus) said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."*

#### John 17:3

*And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*



