

10. Names as Used by Jesus and the Apostles for the 21st Century

Jesus and/or the apostles used the names *Christian, my church, Church of Christ, bride of Christ, and new name* to designate the church and the believers in the 1st century. It was abundantly clear in the New Testament that the name of the Lord Jesus, and no other, carried all the power and authority of heaven in heaven and on earth. The great commission attests to the power and authority of his name in Matt 28:18-20:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the **name** of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Peter also recognized the all powerful nature of this name in Acts 4:12, assigning to it the power of salvation itself: "12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is **no other name** under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." In Col 3:17, Paul concluded, "17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the **name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Emphasis added in this paragraph).

Yet in the 21st century, men take unto themselves names that are of sectarian and denominational origin. The list is too endless to repeat, but one need only to read the signs on the various meetinghouses to see that almost no one uses the names, Christ or Christians, in their religious designations in the 21st century. How far they remove themselves from Christ and the command of Peter in 1 Peter 4:11:

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

The New Name—Christian—and the Body of Faithful—the Church of Christ

From the Old Testament, the followers of the Christ were to have a new name. In Isa 62:2, Isaiah prophesied:

2 The nations will see your righteousness,
and all kings your glory;
you will be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will bestow.

Near the end of the first century Tacitus wrote, "The vulgar call them Christians. The author or origin of this denomination, Christus, had, in the reign of Tiberius, been executed by the procurator, Pontius Pilate" (Annals xv. 44). W.E. Vine concluded, "From the second century onward the term was accepted by believers as a title of honor." (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

The revelation itself concluded that the faithful would wear the new name in Rev 2:17:

To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

In Rev 3:12-13, the Lord promised:

"12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of **the city of my God, the new Jerusalem**, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name." (Emp. added).

The *city of my God* and the *New Jerusalem* are the Church of Christ. Paul taught in Heb 12:22-23:

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the **heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God**. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to **the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.**" (Emp. added).

The *church of the firstborn*, Christ, can only be the Church of Christ and *my (Christ's) new name* can only be Christian.

The New Testament chronicles the advent of the new name, Christian. In Acts 11:26, "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." *Christian* means slaves or servants of Christ. In Acts 26:28-29, the narrative of the almost conversion of Agrippa, Agrippa and Paul use the name *Christian* in such a way as to make certain that it is the name by which followers of Christ should go. The passage begins, "28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" It is clear that Agrippa knew exactly what he would become if he were to succumb to the teaching and persuasion of Paul—a Christian! To this Paul responded, "29 Paul replied, "Short time or long — I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." Paul confirmed that should Agrippa obey the gospel, he would be what Paul was—a Christian. Paul did not say, "Oh, no, Agrippa, you will not be a Christian. You will be of this sect or of that denomination."

In 1 Peter 4:16-18, Peter similarly closed the door to calling Christians any other sectarian and denominational names:

16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And,

"If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

The teaching is clear. Praise God that you bear that name—Christian. We (us), Christians, are the family of God. The others are those who do not obey the gospel. The Christians are the righteous to be saved. The others are the ungodly and the sinners.

The Name of the Body of the Faithful is the Church of Christ

The word translated church is *assembly*. W. E. Vine explains:

1. ekklesia . . . , was used among the Greeks of a body of citizens "gathered" to discuss the affairs of state, Acts 19:39. In the Sept. it is used to designate the "gathering" of Israel, summoned for any definite purpose, or a "gathering" regarded as representative of the whole nation. . . . It has two applications to companies of Christians, (a) to the whole company of the redeemed throughout the present era, the company of which Christ said, "I will build My Church," Matt 16:18, and which is further described as "the Church which is His Body," Eph 1:22; 5:23, (b) in the singular number (e. g., Matt 18:17, RV marg., "congregation"), to a company consisting of professed believers, e. g., Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:13; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Tim 3:5, and in the plural, with reference to churches in a district.

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This study has shown that the church of the firstborn, Christ, can only be the Church of Christ,

as in Heb 12:22-23:

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the **heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God**. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to **the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.**" (Emp. added).

Jesus named this church his church in Matt 16:17-18, "17 Jesus replied . . . '18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.'" From this point forward, men can never give the church any other name except his name to which the church belongs. The apostles recognized this truth in their common greetings as in Rom 16:16, "All the churches of Christ send greetings." Paul taught that Christ is the head of the church, his body, and taught that the church was his wife. In Eph 5:23-30, Paul wrote: "23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior." The analogy of the church as the bride and wife of Christ continues throughout the New Testament, becoming a thread woven throughout the last book, the Revelation. How can one call a bride or wife by a name other than her husband's name?

In Rev 19:7-8, John recorded the great multitude of heaven shouting like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder:

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.

8 Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

The Lamb, the son of God, is the groom, and the called out, the church, clothed in righteous acts, is the bride. The husband and bride analogy continues in Rev 21:2, "I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." Keep in mind that the church of the firstborn is the Church of Christ, the Holy city, the new Jerusalem (Heb 12:22-23). The bride of Christ can only take the name the Church of Christ. Finally, the Revelation concludes with a vision of this bride of Christ in Rev 21:9-11:

"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. 11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

For the church to wear some other name than Christ's is blatant infidelity. Paul wrote in 2 Cor 11:2, "2 I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him." The name of the body of the faithful can only be the name, Church of Christ

The Oneness of the Church, the Bride of Christ in the 1st Century

In the light of the evidence that the Church of Christ is the bride of Christ, and that Christ is the husband of the church, it becomes clear that there can be only one church, the Church of Christ. Paul made it clear that there is only one body in Eph 4:4-6:

There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

He also taught clearly that the one body is the church in Eph 1:22-23,:

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

There is only one head, Christ, and only one body, the church. By the 21st century, sectarianism and denominationalism have proliferated names to designate the myriad of groups of their own followers. Yet, in the 21st century, there is only one church, the Church of Christ just as there was only the Church of Christ in the 1st century.

Conclusion

Nothing shows how much man has digressed from the teaching of Christ and the apostles than the use of non-scriptural names to designate their groups and the individuals of their groups. The 1st century teaching is clear:

- We are to do all things in the name of Christ.
- The church is the Church of Christ.
- Members of his church are called by the new name, Christian.
- There is only **one** church of which the Lord is the savior – the Church of Christ.
- There is only **one** name for the saved who are also added to the Church of Christ – Christian.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Matt 28:18-20: In whose names are disciples made? Who has all authority?
2. Acts 4:12: In whose name must we be saved? Where do we find salvation?
3. Col 3:17: What are we to do in the name of the Lord Jesus?
4. 1 Peter 4:11: What should we speak?
5. Isa 62:2: By what are we called? Who will bestow that name?
6. Rev 2:17: What will the Lord give those who overcome? What will be written on it?
7. Rev 3:12-13: What is the name of the city of God?
8. Heb 12:22-23: When we come to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, to what church do we also come?
9. Acts 11:26: What were the disciples called first in Antioch?
10. Acts 26:28-29: What was Paul trying to persuade Agrippa to become?
11. 1 Peter 4:16-18: For what are we not to be ashamed? For what are we to praise God?
12. Matt 16:18: What did Christ build?
13. Eph 5:23-30: What else might one call the body, the church?
14. Rev 19:7-8: Who is the bride of the Lamb? What is her clothing?
15. Rev 21:2: How is the Holy City, the New Jerusalem dressed?
16. Rev 21:9-11: Who is the bride of the Lamb?
17. 2 Cor 11:2: What did Paul promise the Lord?
18. Eph 4:4-6: How many bodies are there?