

THE SCRIPTURAL NAME

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In Acts 4:10-12, we read, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is *none other name* under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is something in a name. In Colossians 3:16-17, Paul said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together *in my name*, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20) In Acts 2:38, Peter said, "... Repent, and be baptized every one of you *in the name* of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." In Luke 24:47, Jesus said, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached *in his name* among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Individual names divide and classify. "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." Here, we see Nimrod in his human government planning to give them a human name, but God did not see it that way. We see how God went down and confused their speech. When He confused their speech, He confused everything. He divided them asunder. They couldn't agree on the name of brick. They couldn't agree on the name of mortar. They couldn't agree on anything. It divided them.

One man's name on a check for a thousand dollars is not always as good as another man's name. There are brethren in this building whose name on a check for a thousand dollars would be worth a thousand dollars but mine would be worth three dollars because I'm told that is what it costs when one bounces.

Mothers don't name their children Beelzebub, Jezebel, Ahab or names such as these because there is something in a name. This story is told of a irreligious woman who was about to give birth to her first child. A preacher told her to be sure to give her child a Bible name. When the child was born, it was a boy. She opened her Bible and read, "... O Lucifer, son of the morning!..." (Is. 14:12), and so she named him Lucifer. The preacher was bewildered when he found it out and he told her she must change it quickly because it also says, "Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

God has ever given names for His people. In Genesis 5:2, it says, "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created." God named Ishmael, Isaac, John and Jesus before their birth. He changed Abram's, Sarai's and Jacob's names. In prophecy, God promised a new name was to be give in His house for His people. "Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." (Is. 56:5) God's house is the Church. "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou

oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (I Tim. 3:15) A name was to be given to the Church. It was to be given after the Gentiles were converted. "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." (Is. 62:2) In Isaiah 65:15, we read, "And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name:"

Some people say that since the Church was already in existence before the name was given then we are at liberty to name it anything we want to. They say the church at Jerusalem was the first congregation in existence but that it was later over in Antioch before the name was given. They should remember that the house of Jacob was already in existence before the name was changed to Israel but after the God given name was given then they were to wear that name.

The new name mentioned in the prophecy is the name Christian. "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Acts 11:25-26)

This new name was to be given after the Gentiles came in and it was. It was to be given in the Church and the name Christian was. The Gentiles were converted in Acts, the tenth chapter because they were called Christians in Acts, the eleventh chapter. It was to be a new name for the disciples. Notice the one or the instrument through which this name was to be given. The Lord told Ananias to go over there to Saul of Tarsus. "Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." (Acts 9:13-16) In Acts 26:28, Paul tried to persuade Agrippa to be just a Christian.

By way of comparison, let us notice Matthew 22:15-22. "Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left him, and went their way." To be identified as belonging to Caesar, the coin had to have both the right image and also the name of superscription upon it. In order to belong to Christ we must be converted into His image and we must wear His name.

"O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from they fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name." (Isa. 63:17-19) He is saying here that these were not the Lord's people because they were not called by God's name. To belong to Christ, we must wear his name.

During W. W. II, there were some known as Japanese-Americans and others known as German-Americans and so on. It was soon learned that these appellations tended to divide and factionalize the American people" because the country was at war and passions were inflamed to those of Asian ancestry. It was finally suggested by a great statesman that we cease to have hyphenated Americans. He said that the United States had become a melting pot and that people of all backgrounds could find hope here. He said, "Let us cease being Japanese-Americans or German-Americans but let us all simply be Americans." His plea was designed to

unite our country.

Being united is essentially what the New Testament demands. One says, "I am a Presbyterian-Christian." Another says, "I am a Methodist-Christian." Another says, "I am a Baptist-Christian." This goes on and on and we get more and more factionalized. Paul taught against this in I Corinthians. His plea was, "Not I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (I Cor. 1:10) Then he rebuked the Corinthians for themselves after the names of preachers or men, showing them that we are to wear the name of the One who was crucified for us and in whose name we are baptized, the One who died on the cross for us. They were saying they were following different men. In reality they had on a small scale back there what we have on a large scale today. One was saying, "I am of Paul. Paul planted the gospel here so I'll stick with him." Another would say, "Well, I am of Ciphers because he said he was the apostle to the Jews." Another said, "I'm of Apollos, because he was an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures. He can really preach." Others just said, "We are of Christ." Paul condemned such as being carnal. He said they were not baptized into their names and that they were not crucified for them. "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (I Cor. 1:13)

The Church at Pergamos was commended for holding fast the name of Christ. "...and thou boldest fast my name..." (Rev. 2:13) The name of the Body of Christ is the Church in Acts 2:47, but as to its ownership, the apostles called it the Church of God in Acts 20:28. It is my firm conviction that here it referred to Christ because in Luke 24:39, we read, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me." John 4:24 says, "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." God, the Father, referred to Christ as God in Hebrews 1:8, "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom." Romans 16:16 says, "...The churches of Christ salute you." Christ said, "...my church ..." He said, "... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18) If I wish to speak of the same Church that Christ spoke of and to indicate the ownership of it as He did, then I would be compelled to say "Christ's Church or the Church of Christ."

Some people are opposed to saying that we are members of the Church of Christ. They are opposed to this name but I maintain that it is a Bible name. In Matthew 16:18, Christ said, "... upon this rock I will build my church ..."

Church comes from the Greek word, 'ekklesia'. It means the called out people. Whose called out people? The called out people of Christ. We are members of the Body. (I Cor. 12) The Body is the Church (Col. 1:18) So, I say I am a member of the Church of Christ and I am unashamed to be just that. Paul said, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks of God and the Father by him. (Col. 3:17) "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named." (Eph. 3:14-15) In verses twenty and twenty-one, we find, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church of Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." It is a worthy name. James 2:7, "Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?"

This is an old-fashioned sermon from an old-fashioned gospel. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Rom 7:4)

It is natural" to wear the family name. My entire family wears my name. Suppose I should come to this meeting and one sister said, "Hello. I'm Sister ^A__," but she went home with Brother B . Another would say, "I'm Sister B ." but she went home with Brother D_. I want you to know I never would get it straight which woman belonged to which man.

Sometimes with all the modern names in this world we are inclined to ask what do they believe in? Who do they belong to? What does that name infer? Who do they follow after? If one subscribes to Muhammad and the Koran and nothing more he will be a good Muhammadan and nothing more. If one subscribes to the Pope and the Catechism and nothing more he will be a

good Catholic and nothing more. If one subscribes to Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon and nothing more he will be a good Mormon and nothing more. If one subscribes to the gospel of Christ as recorded in His Word he will be a good Christian. He will be a member of the Body of Christ and nothing more. The Church is not mine. If the Church were mine I could name it anything I wanted but it is not mine and it is not yours. It is the Lord's Church. I realize that there are several titles that are applied to the Church or are descriptive of it: the bride of Christ, the body, one body, body of Christ, the church, Church of the first-born, Church of God, Church of the Living God, Churches of Christ, City of God, Flock, Flock of God, Habitation of God, God's Building, God's Husbandry, Household of God, Israel of God, Kingdom, Kingdom of God's Dear Son, The Lamb's Wife, the People of God, the Spiritual House, the Temple of God and Mt. Zion. Jesus is the purchaser. He is the intercessor. He is the Saviour. He is the builder. He is the owner. He is the head. He is the bridegroom. The Church is His. Christ said, "... my church ..."

I heard a story that supposedly happened in Southern Alabama. Once a group of religious people approached a wealthy businessman while they were canvassing the area for donations to build a church. The wealthy businessman said, "Oh yes, I'll give you a thousand dollars." They said, "Thank you, mister. We've never had a donor give that much before." He said, "I just have one request and that is that you put over the door, THIS IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST." They said, "No, we know we couldn't do that without even asking the elders." He said, "I'll still give you the thousand dollars but I have one other request." They said, "Let's hear it." He said, "Put over the door, THIS IS NOT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST." They said, "No, we could never do that." I am proud to have it over the door and I am not ashamed of it. I am not ashamed to have that title, to be a member of His Body. It is encouraging to be a member of it. I assure you that it is imperative that you be a member of it because Paul says in the Ephesian letter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1:3) Where in Christ? In his Body. What is His Body? His Body is the Church. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." (Col. 1:18) So, we will be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in His Church.

On one occasion Agrippa stood before the Apostle Paul and said, "... Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:28) Paul answered him with great fervor, "... I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am ..." You say you are almost persuaded to be a member of the Body of Christ. I would to God that you were not almost but all together a Christian. That's what we preach. The Church stands today to make Christians and guide them into the pearly gated of Glory.