

Redwater Restorer

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness..." (Matthew 3:3)

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Biblical Names

Though some may deny it, names are important. Names are important to God also. Throughout biblical history God changed the name of certain individuals to reflect their calling. For some He chose the names of their children to present a message to mankind. In like manner God has given a name to His children. The prophet Isaiah spoke of a new name by which God's people would be called. This name would be given at a time when the Gentiles would see God's righteousness. *"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"* (Isaiah 66:2). As we noted in our last article the Gospel had begun to be preached in Jerusalem (Luke 24:45-47). The church was established (Acts 2:47). In accordance with God's plan (Acts 1:8) the Gospel was carried to a lost world. In Acts chapters 10,11 we are told of the Gospel coming to the first Gentile converts, the house of Cornelius, and then to the inhabitants of Antioch. Then in Acts 11:26 we read, *"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."* This is the name given by God to His children. There are other terms as well found within God's word which describe various aspects of the Christian character. Here are five of the most common:

I. Members of the Church are called Christians because we are one like Christ. *"If any man suffer as a **Christian**, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."* (1 Peter 4:16).

II. Members of the Church are called the children of God because we are the children of God by regeneration. *"For ye (Christians) are all **the children of God** by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* (Galatians 3:26-27).

III. Members of the Church are called brethren because we belong unto the same spiritual family. *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault. Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."* (Galatians 6:1).

IV. Members of the Church are called saints because we are sanctified. *"To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called **to be saints**."* (Romans 1:7).

V. Members of the Church are called disciples because we are learners of Christ. Luke said in reference to Christians, *"And **the disciples** were called Christians first in Antioch."* (Acts 11:26).

Now, members of the New Testament Church are called by Biblical names because you should not wear a human name. Human names are divisive. Notice what Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians. *"Now I beseech you,*

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Biblical Names (Cont.)

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. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name" (1 Corinthians 1:10-15). "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" (1 Corinthians 3:3,4). Notice also what has been said by the reformers who established some of the more prominent denominations of our day:

I. From Martin Luther, the leader of the Reformation Movement: "I ask that men make no reference to my name, and call themselves not Lutherans, but Christians. What is Luther? My doctrine, I am sure, is not mine, nor have I been crucified for any one. St. Paul, in 1 Cor. 3, would not allow Christians to call themselves Pauline or Petrine, but Christian. How then should I, poor, foul carcass that I am, come to have men give to the children of Christ a name derived from my worthless name? No, no, my dear friends; let us abolish all party names, and call ourselves Christians after Him Whose doctrine we have." - Hugh Thomason Kerr, A Compend of Luther's Theology

(Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943, p. 135)

II. From John Wesley, another reformation leader, among whose followers are Methodists, Wesleyans, etc.: "Would to God that all party names, and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world, were forgot and that the very name [Methodist] might never be mentioned more, but be buried in eternal oblivion." - John Wesley, Universal Knowledge, A Dictionary and Encyclopedia of Arts, Science, History, Biography, Law, Literature, Religions, Nations, Races, Customs, and Institutions, Vol. 9, Edward A. Pace, Editor (New York: Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1927, p. 540)

III. From Charles Spurgeon, one of the greatest Baptist preachers who ever lived: "I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living! I hope that the Baptist name will soon perish, but let Christ's name last forever." - Spurgeon Memorial Library, Vol. I., p. 168.

Yes, names are important. Let us speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. Let us call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways. Names are important to God. By the name given to His children glory is given to Christ. "*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,*" (Ephesians 3:14,15). The Lord's true church will be glad to wear the name of their Saviour and nothing more.

Mark Miller

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