

Glorify God in This Name

by Jason Hilburn

Our God deserves more glory and praise than we could ever give Him. Being thankful to God for all He has done, and realizing how great He is, we should naturally desire to give Him glory. However, we are also **commanded** to give Him glory. We need to make sure that we are glorifying God in every way that we can: *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"* (1 Corinthians 10:31). We can glorify God by our actions (Matthew 5:16), but we must also glorify God in the religious names we use.

God has given us certain names to wear that glorify Him. For example, when we call ourselves Christians, we give glory to God: *"but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name"* (1 Peter 4:16 ASV). The Bible teaches plainly that we are to seek authority from God in everything we do, including the names we use: *"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..."* (Colossians 3:17). We are commanded to speak as God has spoken in His Word: *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..."* (1 Peter 4:11). Peter went on to explain WHY we must speak as the Scriptures speak: *"...that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ..."* (1 Peter 4:11). We speak as God speaks in the Bible so that God in all things may be glorified through **CHRIST** (such as when a person says, "I am a **CHRISTIAN**, a member of the church of **CHRIST**").

Without question, the Bible teaches that there is only one church, and it belongs to Christ: *"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). He is the Savior of that one body (Ephesians 5:23), and all the saved have been added to that one church (Acts 2:41, 47). The "church of Christ" is a Scriptural term for that one church, and there are several Scriptural names for Christ's church, such as:

- "My church," Matthew 16:18 (It is **Christ's** one church He built)
- The "body of Christ," (**Christ** is the Head and owner of His body, Ephesians 1:22, 23).
- The "church of the Lord," Acts 20:28 ASV (**Christ** is Lord of lords, 1 Timothy 6:15).
- The "church of God," 1 Corinthians 1:2 (**Christ** is God, John 1:1).
- The "church of the living God," 1 Tim. 3:15 (**Christ** is LIVING after death, 1 Cor. 15:3, 4).
- The "church of the firstborn," Heb. 12:23 (**Christ** is the firstborn from the dead, Col.1:18).
- The "Lamb's wife," Revelation 21:9 (**Christ** is the Lamb, John 1:29).
- The "house of God," 1 Timothy 3:15 (**Christ** is God, John 1:1, and it is Christ's house).
- Christ's "own house" Hebrews 3:6 (The house of **Christ**)
- The "kingdom of His dear Son," Colossians 1:13, 18 (**Christ's** kingdom).

Here are a few reasons why we should use Scriptural names:

- 1) **To obey God** (Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11, 16).
- 2) **To follow the authorized Scriptural examples** (Acts 11:26, 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16, Romans 16:16, etc.).
- 3) **To glorify God** (1 Peter 4:11, 16).
- 4) **To avoid causing sinful division.** Man-made names cause division. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for the man-made names and divisions they were espousing (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:3-5). Divisions created by unscriptural names are not sanctioned by God – they are contrary to the will of God, and therefore sinful (1 John 3:4). If two men met and one said, "I am a Catholic," and the other said, "I am a Lutheran," there would already be a wall of division there before they could even begin a conversation. However, if both men introduced themselves as "Christians,"

that would be a great step toward Scriptural unity. The other steps would include fully submitting to the Word of God in every way, leaving behind not only man-made names, but also doctrines and ways of worship not found in the New Testament Scriptures. When Jesus was praying to His Father (as recorded in John 17), His most frequent request was for His followers to all be ONE (John 17:11, 21-23). As a matter of fact, He repeated this request at least four times in one prayer! So how can we be one? He gave us the answer in that same prayer when He said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). To "sanctify" means to "set apart," and God's people are set apart from others by wholly following the Word of God! We can all be one if we will all obey the Word of God, live by the Word of God, and drop names and teachings that are not found therein.

- 5) **Names are important to God** (He changed Abram's name to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Jacob to Israel, etc.). To say that names are insignificant and trivial is to accuse God of doing trivial things, and to ignore the Scriptures!
- 6) **Names are meaningful.** We don't hear of many baby girls being named Jezebel, nor do we hear of many baby boys being named Judas. That is because names have significance!
- 7) **There were Old Testament prophecies about God's children being called by a new name that would come from God** (such as Isaiah 62:1, 2). This was apparently fulfilled in Antioch: "...*And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*" (Acts 11:26). Why would we want to use names other than the God-given names, whether as individuals or as a group?
- 8) **Members of a family wear the same name.** From the beginning of creation, brides have worn the names of their husbands (Genesis 2:23; 5:2). A bride who loves her husband is not ashamed to wear His name, and furthermore, she would dishonor her husband if she refused to wear His name! The church is the bride of Christ, and she should wear His name (Ephesians 5:22-33; Revelation 21:9). Paul said that the whole family of God wears His name: "*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).

If one merely believes and obeys the Bible, he will simply be a Christian. Agrippa said to Paul, "*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*" (Acts 26:28). Paul simply wanted Agrippa to be a Christian. In what denomination was Paul? Paul was not in a denomination, and neither should we be! God simply wants people to be Christians -- nothing more, and nothing less.

If you could somehow travel back in time, can you imagine meeting Paul and telling him that you are a "Baptist"? There was no religious group in the first century called the Baptists. Notice what Charles Spurgeon, arguably the most recognized Baptist preacher of all time, said about man-made names such as "Baptist": "I say of the Baptist name, let it perish, but let Christ's name last forever. I look forward with pleasure, to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. I hope the Baptist name will soon perish; but let Christ's name endure forever." -- *Spurgeon Memorial Library, Vol.1, p. 168.*

What if you met Peter and told him that you were a "Lutheran"? He might say, "Who is Luther, and why do you glorify him? I am a Christian, and I glorify Christ." Notice what Martin Luther said to his followers about wearing the name "Lutheran":

I pray you to leave my name alone, and call not yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for anyone. St. Paul would not let any call themselves after Paul, nor of Peter, but of Christ. How then, does it befit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name to the children of God? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to theses party

names and distinctions: away with all; and let us call ourselves only Christians after him from whom our doctrine comes. -- *The Life of Luther*, by Stork, p. 289.

Perhaps brother Leroy Brownlow stated it best when he wrote:

I am sure that method and system should be used in the Lord's work, but I am not a Methodist; that we should have bishops (the Greek word being episcopos) to oversee the work in a congregation, but I am not an Episcopalian; that we should have elders (the Greek word being presbuteros) who are bishops to rule and oversee in the congregation, but I am not a Presbyterian; that each congregation is independent, but I am not a Congregationalist; that it takes immersion to constitute the act of baptism, but I am not a Baptist; that Christians should be holy but I am not a Holiness; that Christ will come again, but I am not an Adventist; that the church is universal or catholic, but I am not a Catholic. According to some good folk—since I believe in the above facts—I should call myself a *Methodist – Episcopalian – Presbyterian – Congregationalist – Baptist – Holiness – Catholic – Christian*. A monstrous hyphenation and a rather long name! It is unnecessary, too. We find in the Bible that the disciples were called Christians, but we never read of any person being called some hyphenated Christian. Regardless of what names others wear, I prefer to stick to the Bible and be a Christian only. – *Why I Am a Member of the Church of Christ*, pp. 32, 33.

Brother Thomas B. Warren wrote a book entitled *The Bible Only Makes Christians Only and the Only Christians*. The title of his book alone makes a true and profound statement! If a person merely had knowledge of the Bible, with no external knowledge of man-made religions, he could obey the Bible, and he would simply be a Christian. He would be like the converts on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36-47), the converts in Samaria (Acts 8), the converts in Antioch (Acts 11:26), and any other convert who had simply obeyed the Word of God. Those people were not in denominations – they were simply in the Lord's church. The man who only knew what the Bible said, and therefore only followed what the Bible said, would never say, "I am a Methodist," because there are no Methodists mentioned in the Bible! God has warned us not to go beyond what is written, and we should not take that warning lightly (1 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 22:18, 19). The unity for which Jesus prayed is impossible when people will not agree to go back to the Bible as our sole source of authority (John 17:17; Colossians 3:17; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17). May we all simply follow the Word of God, being nothing more than Christians, members of Christ's church. That is what God wants us all to be.