

The Name of God's People

What's in a name? A name does have significance - whether you are referring to a personal name or the name of an organization. It has purpose. It identifies; it distinguishes.

Consider the name of the Son of God. Does it matter that man knows what His name is - the name His Father gave Him? God's angel Gabriel told Mary, "... *and you shall name Him Jesus*" (Luke 1:31). Later Joseph was also told by the angel, "... *and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21). God did not randomly select a name that sounded good but a name that was connected to the very reason He sent Him to earth. Jesus was also called "*Immanuel, which translated means, God with us*" (1:23). Would it be right for anyone to address or refer to God's Son by a different name, a different identification, than what God has revealed? Of course not!

Disciples of Jesus Christ are believers who adhere to His teaching. Jesus taught, "*If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine*" (John 8:31). He is the Master Teacher. Disciples are His students seeking to imitate Him. "*The one who says he abides in Him [God, Christ] ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked*" (1 John 2:6). "... *the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch*" (Acts 11:26). The name for a disciple of Jesus is Christian. The word "*called*" [chrematizo] can also mean "*warned*" (Matthew 2:12; Hebrews 8:5; 12:25) or "*directed*" (Acts 10:22). Christians were so called by divine direction, indicating to whom they owed their allegiance.

Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18), and He did. Daily the Lord added obedient believers to the number of "*those who were being saved*" (Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14). That number was designated as the church (Acts 5:11; 8:1, 3) - which in Greek meant *a calling out of* in the sense of an assembly or gathering. Collectively, disciples of Christ are called out ones. "*For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.*" (Acts 2:39) The invitation of Christ is not only to be saved but also to be part of His church, His body of the saved (Ephesians 5:23). Whose name did 1st century churches wear? They bore the name of the One who called them, who purchased and cleansed them and whose sovereignty and dominion they were under. Thus congregations of Christians scattered across the globe were distinguished as "*churches of Christ*" (Romans 16:16), "*church of God*" (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2) and "*churches of God in Christ Jesus*" (1 Thessalonians 2:14). Today, we ought not to identify ourselves by any other name but that which God has revealed because the church belongs to Him. To do differently is to rob God of the glory and honor which is due Him.