

September 29, 2019

### **By What Name Should God's Children Be Called?**

It isn't uncommon to hear men say "there's nothing in a name." However, what **men** teach and what **God**, through His word, has taught do not always harmonize. The aforementioned quotation is a good example.

With God, names have always been important. God changed the name of Abram to Abraham, of Sarai to Sarah (Gen. 17:5,15), and of Jacob to Israel (Gen. 32:28). The context of each of these Scriptures reveal that God had a purpose in giving these people different names and that the names given were more fitting for the work to which they were called.

God promised to give those in His "house" an "everlasting name" (Isa. 56:15). Isaiah further stated, saying, "*the Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a **new name**, which the mouth of the Lord will name*" (Isa. 62:2). Please note: God's people would be called by "*a **new name***;" it would be given to those in His "**house**," and it would be after the **Gentiles** had seen His righteousness.

In acts 2, we read of the establishment of the church, which later was referred to as the "house of God" (I Tim. 3:15). In Acts 10 we read of the conversion of the first Gentiles to Jesus Christ. In Acts 11:26 (after the Gentiles had seen God's "righteousness") the "disciples" were "*first called **Christians** in Antioch.*" This name had never before been used. The expression "*were called*" is from *chrematizo*, which means to receive a divine appellation. Hence, God called His followers "**Christians.**" It was not given in derision. It was from heaven, and in every sense of the term it was "*a new name.*"

Note further: Paul "*almost*" persuaded Agrippa to become a "**Christian**" (Acts 26:28). Peter taught that one is to "*suffer as a **Christian***" and thus "*glorify God in this matter*" (I Peter 4:16).

Human names in religion are unauthorized. They are divisive in nature, given for the purpose of designating peculiar religious parties and are, therefore, contrary to the prayer of Jesus (John 17:20-21). Human names are condemned in the Scriptures (I Cor. 1:10-15). Human names in religion give honor to persons (such as "Lutheran"), exalt some ordinance (such as "Baptist"), or some form of church government (such as "Presbyterian"), and thus rob Christ of the honor belonging only to Him. They create confusion in the mind of the sinner and thereby serve as stumbling blocks.

Charles Spurgeon, a talented Baptist preacher wrote: "I say of the Baptist name, let it perish, but let Christ's name last forever." John Wesley said "I would to God all party names were forgotten." Martin Luther made this plea: "I pray you to leave my name alone, call not yourselves Lutherans, but Christians."

Friend, do you want to please God? Then do not wear a religious name unknown to the word of God, or belong to a church, the name of which cannot be found in the Bible. Surrender party names, disregard the doctrines of men, and take your stand upon a “*thus saith the Lord.*”

\*\*\* —B. Witherington