

# Rise Up And Build

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*"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18*

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## **"And the Disciples Were First Called Christians"**

*"Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul, And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were **first** called Christians in Antioch," Acts 11:25,26.*

It is interesting that the word "*Christians*" appears for the first time in the scripture just cited. It is also interesting that the words "*were called*" is translated from *chrematidzo* (Greek), which is typically used in the New Testament to denote a divine calling, a calling in which **God** is the One doing the calling, or a calling done by divine direction. This word is thus used nine times in the New Testament (cf. Matt. 2:12,22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; 11:26; Rom. 7:3; Heb. 8:5; 11:7; 12:25). This being the case, then it must be admitted that the name "*Christian*" was not given in derision by the enemies of Christ; rather it was a name given by the Lord to appropriately designate His followers.

It is a fact that other names were also given to refer to Gods people in the New Testament — such as "*disciple*," "*believer*," "*saint*," and "*brother*." However, each of these terms were also used in the Old Testament to refer to the Lord's people (Isa. 8:16; Ex. 4:31; Psa. 106:16; Lev.25:46; etc.). But the name "*Christian*" is not found in al the Old Testament, nor does it occur in the New Testament prior to Acts 11:26. Indeed, in that respect "*Christian*" was a "**new name**," a name divinely given.

Though the name "*Christian*" was first given to denote the disciples "*in Antioch*," it was divinely foretold and anticipated many centuries beforehand. And this brings us to that great prophecy set forth in Isa. 62:1,2, which is worded thusly: "*For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. (2) 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.*"

We shall now examine that prophecy more closely. (1) "*Zion*" and "*Jerusalem*" are used synonymously. (2) Jehovah would not hold His "*peace*," or He would "*not rest*" until her

righteousness would go “*forth as brightness,*” and “*her salvation as a lamp that burns*” — referring to the message of salvation which would initially go forth from Jerusalem. (3) The Gentiles would “*see*” God’s “*righteousness,*” (4) His people would be “*called by a new name,*” and (5) they would be “*called*” that name by “*the mouth of the Lord.*”

Looking first to the “*salvation*” going forth from Jerusalem, we call to mind a prophecy given earlier by Isaiah (Isa. 2:2-3), which is worded as follows: “*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths,’ for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*”

Like his prophecy in Isa. 62:2-3, the prophecy in Isa. 2:2-3 is jam-packed with vital information which, to thoroughly examine, would require several pages. However, to narrow it down to our purposes herein, we note that the prophet spoke of (1) The “*latter days,*” (2) the Lord’s “*house,*” (3) that “*all nations shall flow to it,*” and (4) “*the word of the Lord*” going forth “*from Jerusalem.*” And this brings us to the New Testament, and initially to that great sermon proclaimed first in Jerusalem, as is recorded in Acts two. Peter identified that time period as the beginning of “*the last days,*” Acts 2:17, or to the final dispensation set forth in the Bible. On that day “*the church*” which Jesus said He would “*build*” (Matt. 16:18) came into existence (Acts 2:47), and we learn from I Tim. 3:15 that the “*house of God*” and “*the church of the living God*” are one and the same. We observe further that **Jerusalem** was the place where this message of salvation was first proclaimed, it being upon the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-5).

Before further examining the prophecy in Isa.2:2-3, we shall note other scriptures which are also related to this same issue. First, we note Matt. 28:19, wherein after Jesus was raised from the tomb, He commanded His apostles to go and “*make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” However, during this same time period Jesus informed His disciples “*that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem,*” and that they should “*tarry in the city of Jerusalem until*” they were “*endued with power from on high,*” Luke 24:47,49. Indeed, they did tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they were “*endued with power from on high,*” and in Acts 1:8 Luke also recorded Jesus as saying to His apostles that “*you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” Please note: They were to receive “**power**” when the **Holy Spirit** had “*come upon*” them, and in Acts 2:1-4 we learn that this occurred “*on the day of Pentecost,*” when they (the apostles) “*were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*” To sum it up, please note: they were in Jerusalem, they were “*endued with power from on High*” when the Holy Spirit came upon them. This was the beginning of “*the last days,*” and the word of the Lord began to “*go forth from Jerusalem,*” fulfilling the prophecy of Isa. 2:2-3.

And this brings us back to the initial prophecy we noted; namely Isa. 62:2-3 wherein we observed that: (1) “*salvation*” would go forth “*as a lamp that burns,*” (2) “*The Gentiles*” would “*see*” or partake of God’s “*righteousness*” (or salvation) and (3) God’s people would be “*called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord*” would “*name.*” We now return to Acts 2, the day of Pentecost, and Jerusalem, wherein there “*were dwelling...Jews...from every nation under heaven*” (Acts 2:5). All those saved on that day were “**Jews.**” In the following chapters the word of the Lord went forth to **Judea**, then to **Samaria** (Acts 1:8; 8:5), and now in chapter eleven in a predominantly **Gentile** city, “*the disciples were first called Christians,*” thereby fulfilling the prophecy of Isa. 62:3-4 regarding the place, the time period, and the people whom the Lord

would call “*by a new name.*”

Hence, the name “*Christians*” was divinely given — given by “*the mouth of the Lord.*” Contrary to the rantings of modern false teachers, it was not a name given in derision by the enemies of Christ! This is why Paul tried to “*persuade*” King Agrippa “*to become a Christian,*” Acts 11:28, and this is the name by which Peter said we may “*glorify God,*” I Pet. 4:16.

As it relates to the word “*Christian,*” we note that it consists of the word “*Christ*” and the suffix “*ian,*” meaning “*of,*” pertaining to, or belonging to. In short, a Christian is one who is “*of Christ,*” and in I Cor. 1:11-13, we discover that in order for one to be “*of Christ*” (a Christian) two things had to occur: (1) Christ had to be crucified for that person and (2) that person had to be “*baptized in the name*” of Christ,” clearly indicating that one who has not been scripturally baptized is not really a Christian — regardless of how religious he may be!

In New Testament days there were no hyphenated Christians; no one was called “a Baptist Christian,” “a Presbyterian Christian,” or some other kind of Christian. Religious party names are divisive by their very nature (I Cor. 1:11-13), and completely contrary to Jesus’ prayer for unity (John 17:20-21), and contrary to God’s plan that both Jews and Gentiles be reconciled unto Him in that “*one body*” (Eph. 2:16), or the one church of which Jesus is the builder (Matt. 16:18), the “*head*” (Eph. 1:22,23), and the “*Savior*” (Eph. 5:23). I must concur with Rice Haggard who, in “An Address to the Different Religious Societies, on the Sacred Import of the Christian Name” (1804), wrote, saying, it is “but a due honor to the Lord Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, that they who profess his religion, should wear his name.” The church Jesus built is His bride (Eph. 5:22-33); a good wife wears the name of her husband. A true Christian is “*married...to Him who was raised from the dead*” (Rom. 7:4), namely to Jesus Christ (I Cor.15:1-4). Why, oh why, would anyone who professes to be a Christian choose to wear some unbiblical, man-originated religious name which dishonors Jesus Christ, and which is inherently contrary to the “*unity of the Spirit*” for which He so fervently prayed and so sacrificially died to make possible?

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