

What's in a Name?

Many people today try to convince us that there is nothing in a name. They expect us to believe that names are not important in the religious world. The question we want to answer in this tract is “what’s in a name?”

When we are born into this world, the first decision that is made for us is what our name will be. Our parents often spend a lot of time and thought to give us the most fitting and meaningful name to wear through life. As we grow, we use this very name for identification purposes. In life, we will have a birth certificate, passports, national identity cards, driver’s license and other types of man-made documents. What is unique about all of these documents is that they all bear the same name: our own name! This name is how we are recognized as who we are.

As we were growing up, our parents, teachers, and others could get our attention just by calling our name. If my name is John, and my father calls for John, then I would respond. However, if my father called for Mary, I would not respond, because that is not my name.

One event which affects most of us is voting. When one comes of age and goes to vote, he must show identification of some type. If he signs a name other than what his identification shows, will that be accepted? If the official looks at his picture and signature on his identification card, but he has signed a different name on his form, would this be accepted?

If one goes into a bank or a post office, is it important that he show his identification? Is it important that he sign the right name? The fact is, names are **very important** in every part of life!

In religion, it is no different. If I am talking about Jesus, I can’t say “Peter” and expect people to understand that I am talking about the Son of God. I can’t say “Israelites” and expect people to know I am talking about “Christians.” As the people of God, it is important that we know and understand what we are saying. We must use Bible names in Bible ways if we are to be pleasing to God!

Now let’s consider a few names which are very important to a child of God. The Bible talks of the word “church.” “Church” comes from the Greek word *ἐκκλησία* (ekklēsia) which means the “called out” or “assembled.” The word “church” is talking about the Christians, not the building.

However, in the religious world today, most people think that the church is the building in which we meet.

Many today use religious titles that are not according to the plan of God. Sometimes ministers or religious leaders like to be called by “Father,” or “Reverend.” The Bible is clear in its teaching that there is only **one** who is to receive such religious titles: God! (Matthew 23:8-12) Some also like to be called “Pastor,” or “Bishop” when they do not meet the qualifications stated for this office in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The early church was happy to be known as Christians only, as we read in Acts 11:26, “*the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*” (Isaiah 62:2; Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16; Acts 4:12). All are one in Christ and equal in His calling (Galatians 3:28).

What about the name we call the assembly of Christians; is it important? In the Bible, we find several names which are used to refer to an assembly of Christians or a specific congregation. Here are some examples:

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| Matthew 16:18 | “My church.” | This shows it is Christ’s church. |
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| Acts 8:1 | <i>“The church.”</i> | This shows it is the called out (<i>ἐκκλησία</i>). |
| 1 Cor. 1:2 | <i>“The church of God.”</i> | This shows it belongs to God. |
| Romans 16:16 | <i>“The churches of Christ.”</i> | This shows it belongs to Christ. |
| Eph. 4:12 | <i>“The body of Christ.”</i> | This shows it belongs to Christ. |
| 1 Tim. 3:15 | <i>“The church of the living God.”</i> | This shows ownership. |
| Hebrews 12:23 | <i>“church of the firstborn.”</i> | This refers to first fruits or firstborn Christians. |

Notice that all of these titles give the praise and devotion to Christ! It is Christ’s church, He founded it, He built it, and He purchased it! He is our Redeemer, Savior, King and friend. Jesus is everything to a true Christian, because of all of the things He has done for us. Why would we dare name His church after a man or earthly thing? *“To Him be the glory both now and forever”* (2 Peter 3:18). May God be praised in all things and may we as Christians

be satisfied being His loyal and devoted subjects.

Let’s keep in mind how important names and titles are. We must be very careful about using religious names and titles carelessly. Religion should be the most important thing to a child of God, so let’s show God we respect Him by using religious names in a proper and Biblical way.



Truth For The World

truthfortheworld.org

info@tftw.org

P.O. Box 5048
Duluth, GA 30096
U.S.A.



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