

## **CHRISTIAN : THE DIVINE NAME**

**Ac.11:22-26**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The name “Christian” is a special and unique name that has been misused and abused by the world at large and the denominational world in particular.
  - a. The world abuses the name “Christian” by using it as a term to describe political factions in various parts of the world, such as the “Christian Democrats” in Europe and the “Christian Lebanese” in Lebanon.
  - b. The denominational world misuses the name “Christian” by attaching the name to most anything, such as “Christian games”, “Christian books”, “Christian television”, “Christian schools”, “Christian politics”, etc.
  - c. But the worst abuse of the name “Christian” is when this special name is used to refer to anyone and everyone who remotely claims to follow Christ, including Baptists, Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Methodists, Mormons, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, Universalists, etc.
2. We need to understand and appreciate the proper meaning and use of the name “Christian”.
  - a. The name “Christian” is found three times in the N.T. and is used to designate those who were followers of Christ, Ac.11:26; 26:28; 1Pet.4:16
  - b. W.E. Vine, Vol. I, 191: “Christian (CHRISTIANOS), a word formed after the Roman style, signifying an adherent of Jesus...”
  - c. Never is “Christian” used in the Bible as an adjective to describe things such as games, books, schools, colleges, politics, etc.
3. The word “Christian” is used only as a proper noun, an identifying name of one who follows and obeys Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
4. In view of this, let us examine the scriptural meaning and usage of this special name.

### **II. DISCUSSION**

#### **A. THE NAME CHRISTIAN IS A DIVINELY GIVEN NAME, Ac.11:26.**

1. In the O.T. God promised through Isaiah his prophet to give a new name.
  - a. God would call his servants by another name, Isa.65:15.
  - b. The name was to be given by God in his house, a name better than “sons and daughters”, an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off, Isa.56:5.
  - c. The new name was to be given from the Lord when the Gentiles would see righteousness and salvation from Jerusalem, and all kings his glory, Isa.62:1,2.
2. The new name was given in N.T. times after the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ to the right hand of God in heaven.

- a. The new name could not be “brethren”, “disciples”, “children of God”, “sons of God”, or “saints”.
  - (1) None of these are proper names but merely descriptive terms.
  - (2) None of these terms were “new”. All had been used in the O.T. to describe God’s people prior to N.T. times.
    - (a) Josh.1:14,15; Psa.133:1: “brethren”.
    - (b) Isa.8:16: “disciples”.
    - (c) Psa.82:6: “children of God”.
    - (d) Remember, the name was to be “better than of sons and daughters”, Isa.56:5.
    - (e) Deut.33:2,3; Psa.116:15: “saints”.
- b. The new name given in the N.T. is the name “Christian”, first mentioned in Ac.11:26.
  - (1) This name “Christian” was and is “another name” and a “new name”, one different from any of the terms applied to God’s faithful under the O.T.
    - (a) Neither Abraham, nor Moses, nor David, nor even John the Baptist were ever called Christians.
    - (b) But you and I can bear this name! See Jas.2:7; 1Pet.4:14-16.
  - (2) The name “Christian” was and is a “better” and an “everlasting” name as it is derived from the name of the Son of God!
    - (a) Christ is better than the angels, having a more excellent name than they, Heb.1:4.
    - (b) And it is Christ whose name is everlasting as is his honor and power, 1Tim.6:14-16.
  - (3) The name “Christian” was given when the Gentiles saw righteousness and salvation from Jerusalem, and kings his glory.
    - (a) In Ac.10,11 the household of Cornelius became the first Gentile converts to Christ.
    - (b) Ac.8:1-4 and 11:19-26 record the quick spread of the gospel among the Gentiles at Antioch.
    - (c) Ac.2 reveals that the gospel began to be preached at Jerusalem on the 1<sup>st</sup> Pentecost after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.
    - (d) The book of Acts reveals that kings saw his glory.
    - (e) Ac.11:26 reveals that the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians at Antioch.
- c. This fulfilled the Lord’s O.T. prophecy that a new name would be given when the Gentiles saw the righteousness and salvation of the Lord from

out of Jerusalem. See also Rom.1:14-17; 3:21-27; Gal.2:16; 1:23; 1Cor.15:1,2.

3. Question: Who called the disciples “Christians”?

a. Erroneous views:

(1) Some commentators suppose the disciples were called “Christians” by their enemies as a name of derision.

(a) W. E. Vine, I., p.191: “As applied by Gentiles there was no doubt an implication of scorn... Tacitus, writing near the end of the first century, says, ‘The vulgar call them Christians.’”

(b) Robertson, Word Pictures In The N.T., Vol. III, p.160: “The name was evidently given to the followers of Christ by the Gentiles to distinguish them from the Jews since they were Greeks, not Grecian Jews.”

(2) Other commentators say the disciples called by or gave themselves the name “Christian”.

(a) A footnote on Ac.11:26 in the Emphatic Diaglott says, “others with much more probability suppose it (the name Christian) was adopted by themselves both for convenience, and to keep out a term of reproach.”

(b) Vine, I, p.191, after saying the Gentiles gave them the name “Christian”, then said: “From the second century onward the term was accepted by believers as a title of honor.”—as if they finally accepted it and gave themselves the name.

(3) Both of these denominational views are totally wrong and attempt to avoid the divine significance of the name “Christian”.

(a) In other words, a Methodist, a Baptist, a Catholic, or a Presbyterian does not want to admit that God gave and approved the name Christian.

(b) Notice that both of these views assume the name “Christian” came from men.

(c) But Ac.11:26 does not say “their enemies called them Christians”, nor does it say “they called themselves Christians”, nor that they “finally accepted the name Christian as an honorable name” since men had tagged them with it in derision.

(d) Who did call them Christians?

b. Proof that God called the disciples “Christians”

(1) In the original Greek, the phrase “were called” (chrematizo) means “divinely instructed” or “divinely called”.

- (a) See W.E. Vine, Vol. I, p.31, Admonish, #3: from “CHREMATIZO...The word is derived from *crema*, an affair, business. Names were given to men from the nature of their business (see the same word in Acts 11:26; Rom.7:3); hence the idea of dealing with a person and receiving instruction.”
- (b) Vine, Vol. I, pp.164,165, “Called” #11: “CHREMATIZO occasionally means to be called or named, Acts 11:26 (of the name ‘Christian’) and Rom.7:3...where it has this meaning. Its primary significance, to have business dealings with, led to this. They ‘were (publicly) called’ Christians, because this was heir chief business.”
- (c) The same word is used in Rom.7:3: “So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be *called* an adulteress...”
- (d) Also Ac.10:22, just one chapter earlier, the same word was used by Luke to describe Cornelius’ vision of an angel from God. Cornelius “was warned of God by an holy angel to send” Peter to his house to hear the gospel” (Berry’s lit. translation: “was divinely instructed by a holy angel”).
- (e) Lk.2:26, again same word, “And it was revealed unto him (Simeon) by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” (Berry’s Lit. trans. “And it was to him divinely communicated by the Holy Spirit...”)
- (f) Mt.2:12, 22: first the wise men, then Joseph, “being warned of God in a dream” (Lit. “having been divinely instructed in a dream”).
- (g) In Heb.8:5, we are told that “Moses was admonished of God [or “divinely instructed”]” – using same word.
- (h) In Heb.11:7, same word, “By faith Noah, being warned of God [Lit. “divinely instructed”]”.
- (i) In Heb.12:25, same word, “...For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth [Lit. “him that on the earth divinely instructed them”]”.

2. Thus, an examination of the use of the Greek word used in Ac.11:26 indicates “the disciples were divinely called Christians first at Antioch.”

**B. THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST SENT TO PREACH THE RISEN LORD AND SALVATION IN HIS NAME PERSUADED MEN TO BEAR THIS NAME, Ac. 25:22-26:29, with emphasis on 26:28,29.**

1. “To persuade” means “to apply persuasion, to prevail upon to win over, to persuade, bringing about a change of mind by influence of reason or moral consideration,” Vine, p.861.
  - a. Paul wanted King Agrippa to change his mind and do something!
    - (1) Do what? To become a Christian, “even as I”.
    - (2) Belief alone was insufficient. Agrippa believed but he still needed to do something to become a Christian. See Ac.9:6; 22:10,16; Mk.16:15,16; Ac.2:36-41.
2. One has to be baptized in water in the name of Christ in order to become a Christian and bear this special name. See 1Cor.1:10-13; Mt.28:18-20.
  - a. Only in baptism can one “put on Christ,” Gal.3:26,27.
  - b. Only in baptism can one be buried with Christ and risen to walk in newness of life, Rom.6:3-6; Col.2:12.
  - c. Therefore:
    - (1) One cannot bear the name “Christian” unless he had “put on Christ
    - (2) One cannot “put on Christ” except by baptism in the name of Christ.
    - (3) One cannot bear the name “Christian” except by baptism in the name of Christ.
  - d. All those who have not been baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins have no right to bear the name “Christian”.
    - (1) For example, if I have not become a member of the President’s family, I have no right to bear the family name “Bush.”
    - (2) While I might call myself a “Bush”, George Bush can refuse to recognize me as a member of his family. Cf. Mt.7:21-23.

**C. THERE IS NO OTHER NAME GIVEN AMONG MEN WHEREBY WE MUST BE SAVED, Ac.4:11,12.**

1. Question: Is there anything in a name?
  - a. God thinks there is, even if men do not!
    - (1) God changed Abram’s name to Abraham, Gen .17:5.
    - (2) Sarai’s name to Sarah, Gen.17:15.
    - (3) Jacob’s name to Israel, Gen.35:10.
  - b. Would you name your son “Judas” or “Nero”? or your daughter “Jezebel”?
    - (1) One historian noted the impact of history upon names and said:
      - (a) We name our sons “Peter” and “Paul” and our dogs “Nero”.
      - (b) And we may call the town prostitute “Jezebel”!
2. Salvation is found only in Christ’s name, Ac.4:12.
  - a. The “whole family” of God is named by Christ’s name, Eph.3:14,15.

- b. This excludes all other names: Angelican, Baptist, Catholic, Episcopalian Methodist, Mormon, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Unitarian, Universalist or Jehovah's Witness.
  - (1) Where are these names for God's people found in the Bible?
  - (2) Are these names better than the name of Christ in the name "Christian"?
    - (a) Christ has a "more excellent name," Heb.1:4.
    - (b) Christ's name is "above every name," Phil.2:9.
  - (3) How are these names any better than any other human name such as Smith, Williams, Cook, or even Dye?
- 3. Paul condemned division and the wearing of human names representing that division, 1Cor.1:10-13; 3:3-5.
  - a. Those at Corinth were sinning by separating themselves into parties and calling themselves after men, wearing human names: "Paulites", "Appollonians", and "Cephites".
  - b. Paul wanted to know who was crucified for them, just any man? Into whose name were they baptized?
- 4. It is the name of Christ for which we are to:
  - a. Labor, Rev.2:3.
  - b. Do all we do in word or deed, Col.3:17.
  - c. Hold fast, Rev.2:13.
  - d. Not deny, Rev.3:8.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

- 1. We would, like Paul, persuade you "to be a Christian", Ac.26:28.
- 2. Lay aside the names of men and human inventions in religion.
- 3. The names of men were not given or authorized by God; they give no glory to God and there is no salvation in them.
- 4. We urge and plead with you as Paul pleaded with King Agrippa.
- 5. Believe and obey the gospel of Christ and become a Christian, nothing more, nothing less!
- 6. One cannot glorify God in a human name; but we are to glorify God in the name "Christian", 1Pet.4:16.

Credit to Wayne Greeson for this sermon