

Bible study

A NOTE ON THE 'NAME' OF CHRIST AND 'PREACHING CHRIST'

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Some are now beginning to teach again that we should concentrate preaching Christ. Or that the New Covenant relaxes the 'Old' Testament. Or that the 'Old' Testament scriptures referring to Israel actually refer to the Church. This is a tired old Evangelical, empty and meaningless teaching leading true Christians on the path toward destruction.

"We fight not for glory nor for wealth nor honours; but only and alone we fight for freedom [or Truth], which no good man [or Christian] surrenders but with his life." -
Kenneth MacAlpins, 843 AD

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We should 'preach Christ'!

Of course we should! But not in the way that the Evangelicals and Pentecostals do.

Today, 'preaching Christ' just means preaching about Him as a human and limits preaching to mainly the four Gospels and the New Testament. Little use is made of the Old Testament (a misnomer itself – it should really be called the 'former books of the Bible'), the prophecies or the God of the Old Testament.

It would appear that the 'preaching Christ' brigade misuses certain scriptures relating to this subject with the intention of leading people astray from true Church of God doctrine with a well oiled route toward blatant Evangelicalism with one of the few differences between them and us being Sabbath observance.

Allow me to explain. Throughout the Old Testament God's Way was proclaimed; His name was glorified; and His prophecies revealed. But preaching just about the name YHWH or Elohim etc are not emphasized. Instead, His truths, doctrines, Laws, principles for living and so on are taught – this is how God's name is glorified. This is how He is preached. It is not the name itself, but all it represents.

This supposed 'preaching Christ' is a major error of those that wish to take us back to an impossible salvation in preaching about Christ's name, without a clue as to what it really means. It is also a major heresy that is being quietly and insidiously introduced without debate. For a long time the new Tkachians have been ploughing the field and sowing their evil seeds. Now they water the seeds and nurture their horrible growth.

They gloat as these spring into terrible weeds, choking off Christians and causing them to lose God's truths.

Now, the New Testament is an extension of the Old – it reflects, continues and enhances the teachings and principles of the Old – it does not do away with them at all. Rather, the New Testament builds upon and enriches the Old and in no way replaces it or spiritualises it away.

For those that proudly 'preach Christ' to God's children, I ask "Why don't you ever preach the return of Christ?"

They, instead, state that when they preach about social issues such as marriage, that is the Kingdom. What a load of heretical garbage and insanity which they poison the brethren with:

"Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in *all* holy living and godliness,
looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2Pet 3:11-13)

The Bible throughout is very specific about looking forward to the return of Christ and to emphasise that as the focus. His return; resurrection; the events leading up to it coupled with a warning message; the millennial reign of the Messiah; what the millennium will be like; and the eternal incredible Kingdom of God – yet these are virtually never touched upon by these types whose sermons are virtually unrecognizable from those of Evangelical ministers.

Here are some of the scriptures which they wrest to their own (and others') destruction. Scriptures which they twist with intention to lead the brethren back into captivity to an impossible salvation of watering-down the very Words of God Himself!:

Act 2:21 And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the **name** of the Lord shall be saved.

Act 2:38 And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the **name** of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Act 3:6 But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee. In the **name** of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.

Act 3:16 And by faith in his **name** hath his **name** made this man strong, whom ye behold and know: yea, the faith which is through him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Act 4:7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what **name**, have ye done this?

Act 4:12 And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other **name** under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.

Act 5:40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles unto them, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the **name** of Jesus, and let them go.

Act 21:13 Then Paul answered, What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the **name** of the Lord Jesus.

Rom 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my **name** might be published abroad in all the earth.

Rom 10:13 for, Whosoever shall call upon the **name** of the Lord shall be saved.

1Co 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, through the **name** of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Eph 1:21 far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every **name** that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

Phi 2:9 Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the **name** which is above every **name**;

Col 3:17 And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, *do* all in the **name** of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

2Th 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the **name** of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us.

Heb 1:4 having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent **name** than they.

Heb 6:10 for God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his **name**, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister.

Heb 13:15 Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his **name**.

So what do these verses really mean?

Just what do you mean 'name'?

One point to remember is that the names of each of the forefathers of the nations listed in Genesis 10 reflect their characters and that of their progenitors. It is said that about half of what we are mentally (character, nature and personality) is inherited; and the other half is due to our environment.¹

We are told in scripture that: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches" (Prov. 22:1) and "A good name is better than precious ointment" (Eccl. 7:1). Thus, in the Bible, a name is something to be taken seriously, and not to be a word meant for phonetic beauty alone - it was given as a sacred act (witness the naming of Israel and others in Genesis, Christ himself etc). In the language of

¹ See Vernon's article "Heredity and Environment in the Growth and Decline of Intelligence" (1975)

Sanskrit, for example, it "had a magical self-fulfilling power".² It was not so long ago (a mere few decades) that it was believed that a name placed upon a new-born babe would result in it fulfilling the characteristics of the name. This is exactly what we find in Genesis.

Now note some scriptures on the subject of God's name in the Old Testament:

"But unto you that fear my **name** shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings; and ye shall go forth, and gambol as calves of the stall."
(Mal 4:2)

"A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if then I am a father, where is mine honor? and if I am a master, where is my fear? saith Jehovah of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my **name**. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy **name**?" (Mal 1:6)

"For then will I turn to the peoples of a pure language, that they may all call upon the **name** of Jehovah, to serve him with one consent." (Zep 3:9)

"... they that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father go unto the *same* maiden, to profane my holy **name**." (Amos 2:7)

"Now Solomon purposed to build a house for the **name** of Jehovah, and a house for his kingdom." (2Chron 2:1)

"... but in very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, to show thee my power, and that my **name** may be declared throughout all the earth." (Ex 9:16)

"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because **he hath known my name**." (Ps 91:14)

It is self-evident from these scriptures that His 'name' is not just the word, but the very Being Himself.

Rushdoony notes that a name in scripture refers to one's very being and character. He quotes R C Meredith:

"The third commandment deals with God's name, His office, His position as the great sovereign RULER of the universe ...

In the Bible, personal names have a meaning.

² Smith 1984: 293

Every name or title of God reveals some attribute of the Divine character. In studying God's Word, we learn new facts about God's nature and character with each new name by which He reveals Himself. In other words, God names Himself what He is!

If men use the name of God in a way which denies the true meaning and character of God, they are breaking the third commandment."

Not only the Old but the New Testament meaning of name bears out Meredith's point. Thus, in the Greek New Testament,

'By a usage chiefly Hebraistic the name is used for everything which the name covers, everything the thought or feeling of which is roused in the mind by mentioning, hearing, remembering, the name, i.e., for one's rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellences, deeds, etc.' [emphasis mine]

Rushdoony then points out that many titles for our great God are "revelatory aspects of His nature"³. In other word His name, whether used in the Old or New Testament is not the word or name itself as we might think in today's culture or modern English – it is rather one's very nature, character, interests and emphasis. This is true of human characters as well but this is best left to another paper.

The *Good News* magazine under the sub-heading "What's in a Name?":

"God's names tell us about Him. But God is not a name. Nor should we worship His name. We worship God, not the sound of a name – unlike those who make a fetish – and idol – out of God's many names.

God's names and titles help us to see some of His character. His names are only symbols of what He is. We respect His names because they represent Him. But God reveals Himself primarily through His Word. Only a tiny fraction of that Word concerns His name as such ...

"... the character of God ... is the origin of His names – The same character in us will lead us to have eternal life like God and to bear His names which summarize His character."⁴ [emphasis mine]

One excellent article on this topic is "Ethnology and the Study of Proper Names" in *Anthropological Linguistics* which has the following pertinent observations:

"a proper name works, i.e. denotes an entity, because it has been rightfully bestowed and consequently 'belongs to' its bearer ... For example, the Delaware Indians consider "a person and his name (are) one" (Weslager 1971) ... In many

³ Rushdoony 1973: 125-127

⁴ Grabbe 1980: 9

societies the personal name is considered to be part of, or identical with, the soul, self, or personality of its bearer ... For the Basotho, a Bantu speaking people, the descriptive meaning of a name influences the character of its bearer "a man usually behaves in accordance with his name" (Mohome 1972: 171) ... People in Surinam who behave badly may be said to have 'ruined their names'".⁵

Just as many old societies knew this to be the case, so these scriptures are pointing out that a name has meaning. A name describes one's reputation, one's entire character.

For example, the descendants of Simeon and Levi, sons of Israel, are described as sometimes being a violent, cruel people, taking after their forefathers. (Gen 49:5-7; 34:24-31) But having certain characteristics which may be described as "negative", is no excuse for anyone or any nation to behave unseemly. We should try and suppress the negative, inherited traits within us, and instead reinforce those which are positive. We must overcome ourselves. All humans are born with ingrained traits.⁶ But unlike animals, our traits do not have to overwhelm us – once we become aware of them we can choose to go with them or to go in a different direction. Our instincts were made extremely weak in us so as to allow us to be free moral agents. Behavioural scientists and social engineers have seized on this to try and mould men into the image that they wish us to be.

Here is another Biblical example:

"Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this worthless fellow, **even Nabal; for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him:** but I thy handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send." (1Sam 25:25)

Notice Ps 20:1:

"The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; **the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.**" (Ps 20:1)

Bullinger in his famous *Companion Bible* explains the above:

"name. Put by Fig. *Metonymy* (of Adjunct), Ap. 6, **for the person himself**. Occurs three times in this Psalm: v. 1, the Defending Name; v. 5, the Displayed Name; v. 7, the Delivering Name." [emphasis mine]

His reference to Appendix 6 is as follows:

⁵ Bean 1980: 305-316

⁶ Whether social engineers like it or not, there are certain biological bases for human social behaviour (See Hinde, (1974) and Wilson (1975)) as studies of both humans and the animal world show. No matter how far apart upon this planet cultures have developed, no matter how separated, they all basically, hold to social rules and values – many of which are similar. This is particularly true of the family, sexual behaviour and taboos, murder, male-female roles, etc. (Jack: 1977: 153). Mankind, then, has natural biological tendencies – which some may call "mild instincts". Let us not overlook genetic inherited traits working in each of us (Evans: 1978: 27).

"Met-o'-ny-my; or, Change of Noun.

When one name or noun is used instead of another, to which it stands in a certain relation.

1. Of the Cause. When the cause is put for the effect (Genesis 23:8. Luke 16:29).
2. Of the Effect. When the effect is put for the cause producing it (Genesis 25:23. Acts 1:18).
3. Of the Subject. When the subject is put for something pertaining to it (Genesis 41:13. Deuteronomy 28:5).
4. Of the Adjunct. When something pertaining to the subject is put for the subject itself (Genesis 28:22. Job 32:7)."

As we have seen, in the Bible a nation is named after its ancestor. And so it was most often in the classical world.⁷ As they migrated, the nations were given new and different names by observers – friend and foe alike – so that they even changed their own names eventually. But many kept their original names until recent centuries - anciently, they kept their original names. Dorothea Austin in *The Name Book* maintains the ancient tradition and understanding that

"Your name is a very important aspect of your personality, and this book has been compiled so that you may recognize the character-building value in understanding its meaning ...

"Our Western culture does not give the same importance to the meaning of names as has been given in the past ... Each name carries its own message ... the heritage, significance and spiritual application inherent in a name".⁸

As the language of nations changed, gradually, over the decades and centuries, so did their names. However, it is quite possible to trace the names of nations back through history to the original. For further information on the Biblical perspective of names see Arthur Custance's book *The Flood: Local or Global?*, Part IV, chapter 1 "Names as Different Societies Have Viewed Them"⁹ and Part IV, chapter 2 "Names as Scripture Views Them".¹⁰

Concluding Remarks

So, when one 'preaches Christ' – in the REAL sense – he is proclaiming what Christ Himself preached. It is not about the letters C h r i s t. Instead, it is about the real meaning of that name and all it stands for.

⁷ Hoeh: 1957: 4

⁸ Austin 1982: 5

⁹ Available at http://www.custance.org/Library/Volume9/Part_IV/chapter1.html

¹⁰ Available at http://www.custance.org/Library/Volume9/Part_IV/chapter2.html

Therefore, in preaching Christ, we proclaim the true Gospel of the future Kingdom of God on earth, born again in the resurrection, His prophecies, the Old Testament and so forth. Sorry, but the New Testament does NOT spiritualise the Old away nor should we read the New more than the Old. We are not Protestants that just meet on Saturday – but you wouldn't think so the way so many are going nowadays.

Yet there are those that love to misapply scriptures such as:

“... but we preach Christ **crucified**, unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness.” (1Cor 1:23)

“But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been **crucified** unto me, and I unto the world.” (Gal 6:14)

It should now be clear: these quotes from Paul MUST be understood within their Biblical context (as well as historic, linguistic etc) and not taken outside of Biblical context or alone or re-interpreted within an Evangelical framework.

Just saying “Christ” or “Jesus’ over and over again to energise one into a frenzy or to think that this will invoke God to suddenly produce miracles is similar to pagan and Buddhist mantras. They have no place in a Christian's life.

Knowing His name is an Hebraism – demonstrating once again that the New Testament continues the doctrines of the 'Old' Testament.

“I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and **hast not denied my name ...**

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and **I will write upon him the name of my God**, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: **and I will write upon him my new name.**” (Rev 3:8, 12. Cp Ps 91:14; Jer 7:10, 14; Ps 74:7; John 17:12)

What has inspired this article?

A few years ago someone advocated that the Church of God preach about the person Christ rather than the Gospel. Peter warns us:

“the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother **Paul** also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you;

as also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Ye therefore, beloved, knowing *these things* beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness." (II Pet 3:15-17)

They misunderstand the writings of Paul on Galatians, the New Covenant and 'preaching Christ', let alone a number of Laws and Biblical principles. You can tell these people by their fruits.

Remember, the first century Church of God had many wolves, serpents and hirelings that led the Church into apostasy. Each century has seen many of these workers of iniquity.

Do we really think that the past few decades are different? That this is still not occurring? That they get away with spiritually murdering the brethren by deceiving?

If you think that, then please think again!

Final thoughts: we, of all people, are meant to drink deeply of the waters of Zion. Not drink muddied or impure liquids. Of all people, they should know the truth about the doctrine of 'preaching Christ'.

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"Still, if you will not fight for the right [or Truth] when you can easily win without bloodshed, if you will not fight when your victory will be sure and not so costly, you may come to the moment when you will have to fight with all the odds against you and only a precarious chance for survival. There may be a worse case. You may have to fight when there is no chance of victory, because it is better to perish than to live as slaves [better to go down fighting than be a coward]." - Winston Churchill