

## Church Names

Are names important? Don't we all answer to certain names, but not others? Don't each of us care what we are called? If we are going to use the Bible as our authority, shouldn't we look into it for guidance on what Bible related things should be called? If a name is Not found in the Bible, should we be calling congregations by those names? In this lesson we will explore the topic of names in the Bible that we have been scripturally authorized to call ourselves if we are His followers.

### God gave His people a specific name

**Isaiah 56:4-5** “For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.” God is letting us know in these Old Testament verses that a name was going to be given to His people that He wanted them to be known by. God was Going to give His people a name. If I want to be one of God's people, shouldn't I want to know what that name is, and go by it? If I don't care what I am called than doesn't it mean god's will is not that important to me?

**Isaiah 62:1-2** “For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.” Again, God is letting us know that His people were going to be given a specific name that He wants them to have. So if I want to be a child of God, shouldn't I want to accept the name my Heavenly Father wants me to have once I know what it is?

**Acts 11:25-26** “Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” and **Acts 26:28** “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” The Name God gave His people is revealed to us by Luke in the book of Acts. At the very time the Church was beginning, God's children, the followers of Christ, became known as Christians. Agrippa was a king, and was aware of the name Christian and what it means. It of course means one is a follower of Christ. This name became widely known and is still with us today. The name Christian will mean a follower of Christ until the end of time, because remember god himself said the name would not be cut off. (Please note the name Christian appears in **1 Peter 4:16**, we will examine that verse later.) So, if God created the name Christian for His followers, and I want to be His child, shouldn't I take the name of Christian? Doesn't this mean if I choose another name to be called, I am disobedient to God and therefore Not His child?

### Importance of names

Common sense about the importance of names. Doesn't a bride usually take their husband's name? In a contract or on a check doesn't it matter what name we use? When naming our children isn't this usually done with some kind of forethought? If we can see why names are important in these areas perhaps, we can see the importance of names in Biblical matters.

**Acts 4:10-12** "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Only by one name can we be saved and that is by Christ's name. Doesn't that alone make a name important? Only by wearing Christ's name, after becoming obedient to him can I be a Christian. Only by being a faithful Christian can I be saved. If I wear any name other than Christ's I will therefore, Not be saved. How important does that make wearing the proper name? When I come to a place where people gather to worship, shouldn't I care what name they wear? Lutherans are wearing Martin Luther's name, not Christ's. Baptists are wearing John the Baptists name, not Christ's. If I do not wear Christ's name through obedience to Him, I do not belong to Him and I am lost. Remember, salvation comes by one name alone, Christ's name.

**Acts 5:40-42** "And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." and **1 Peter 4:14-16** "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (As noted, earlier **Peter 4:16** also contains the word, Christian.) If any of us ever suffer hardship or persecution in the name of Christ we need not be ashamed. We are glorifying God with our efforts. However, if I am not wearing Christ's name then I am not glorifying God. Names are important.

**Ephesians 3:21** "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Shouldn't I glorify Christ's name by wearing it and not someone else's name? I wear the name Zumalt to honor my earthly father. Shouldn't I wear Christ's name, as a Christian, to honor Him and give glory to Him, and not some man that did not die for me so I could be saved? John the Baptists was a good man and obedient to God, but he did not die on the cross so I could be saved. Martin Luther did not die for me so I could wash away my sins, he was only a man, not the son of God. I should be wearing Christ's name to glorify and honor Him.

**Colossians 3:17** "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." Should I take action and work in the name of Christ, or in the name of some man? When I wear the name Christian I am acting in Christ's name. If I do not wear the name Christian I do not act in Christ's name. If I wear John the

Baptists name, Martin Luther's name, or any name other than Christ's, I am not acting in Christ's name. To be working in the name of Christ, I must wear His name only.

### Honor and responsibility of wearing the name Christian

**Ecclesiastes 12:13** "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." and **Luke 17:10** "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." We really only have one duty on earth, which is to fear God and keep His commandments. How can I keep God's commandment's and be obedient to Him, if I do not wear Christ's name? I simply cannot.

**Matthew 5:14-16** "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Can I be a light to this world, if I am not known as an obedient Christian to those around me? No I cannot. The people that I live and work around should see by the way I live my life that I am a faithful Christian. This does not mean walking around being arrogant, but rather walking humbly in a life that stands out to others. The people of the world will see an obedient Christian not participating in sinful activities and being involved in Christ's church. Sometimes one might be resented for these differences but it might also cause someone to want to learn more about Christ. By wearing Christ's name and living according to His will one can be a light to the world.

**1 Corinthians 15:58** "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." If I wear the name Christian, I also have the responsibility to be doing His work by being a faithful Christian laboring to spread His Word.

**Colossians 1:12-14** "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:" If I wear the name Christian, I also have the responsibility to be thankful in my attitude, because my redemption came through Jesus's blood He shed for me.

**2 Timothy 2:15** "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." If I wear the name Christian, I also have the responsibility to be knowledgeable about God's Word. I need to study it to make sure I am living as God would have me live, and so I can properly teach others about Christ.

**Hebrews 5:8-9** "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;" If I wear the name Christian, I also have the responsibility to be living in obedience to God, even if I sometimes suffer for it. After all, God's salvation is only for those that are obedient to Him.

God's people are known collectively or individually as

These are examples of God authorized names for His followers to collectively, (as a body), or individually be called by.

**Matthew 16:15-19** “He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” and **Acts 20:28** “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Christ said, “I will build my church,” so shouldn’t it wear His name? Christ bought and paid for the church, which is His Kingdom, with His Blood. Why would Christ’s church have any name other than His? (The Church is of course the people that make up the congregation, and not the brick and mortar building that people meet inside of.) The church belongs to Christ and therefore it is His, the church of Christ. Christ’s people collectively are His church. Christ’s people are also called the church of God.

**Acts 2:47** “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”, and **Acts 8:1** “And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.”, and **Acts 12:1** “Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.” Again, we see Christ’s people collectively called the church. The Lord added those that were saved to His church only, and no one else’s’. The church at Jerusalem was persecuted and spread throughout the land. King Herod persecuted members of the church. Christ’s followers are often called the church. (Note “the” is singular as in only one.)

**Acts 5:14** “And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.”) As we see in this verse, unsurprisingly, an individual follower of Christ can be referred to as a believer, or several followers of Christ as believers. (One person alone cannot be referred to correctly as The Church of Christ or The Body of Christ, but one person alone can be called a believer.)

**Acts 9:29-31** “And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.” and **Galatians 6:1** “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” In these verses we see a name that a Christian can call a group of fellow Christians is, brethren. Luke and Paul both call a group of fellow Christians, brethren. As Paul and Luke are both Christians, in these verses they call other Christians, brethren.

**Acts 11:25-26** “Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” and **Acts 16:1** “Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek.” In **Acts 11:26** we see that followers of Christ were called Christians. So as multiple people following Christ are Christians, an individual follower of Christ is a Christian. In using the name, “Christian,” one is openly identified as being part of Jesus’s body of followers. In both of the above verses we see followers of Christ called disciple when referring to one person, or disciples when referring to more than one individual.

**Romans 8:16** “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:” and **Galatians 3:26-28** “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” As faithful Christians belong to God, and are His followers, we see children of God, as another name God’s followers can be called by. Remember, many of these God authorized biblical names His followers can be called by denote the concept of belonging to God. Church of Christ denotes the church belongs to Christ. Children of God denotes belonging to God. So if one is in a group called the People’s church it means the church belongs to the people, not God. Do we want to be in congregations that belong to Christ or someone else?

**Romans 16:16** “Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.” Christ’s people collectively are called The churches of Christ in this verse, making it a God authorized name to use for His worshipers. Don’t we want to use only names God authorizes us to use? If we don’t have God’s authority for a name, we cannot use it and be pleasing to Him.

**1 Corinthians 1:1-2** “Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:” and **1 Corinthians 6:1-4** “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.” and **Philippians 4:21-22** “Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household.” It might possibly come as a surprise to some of you, but all Christians are Saints. If one is a faithful Christian one can also be referred to as a Saint. Unlike the way this term is often used, it does not mean that one has performed miracles, or that some group of people long after your death have decided to give you this title. A Saint is any and every faithful servant of Christ.



**1 Corinthians 6:15** “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.” Individually, one can be referred to as a member of Christ.

**1 Corinthians 12:27** “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” Christ’s people collectively are called the body of Christ in this verse, making it a God authorized name to use for His worshipers. We also see each individual member of the body of Christ, makes up the body in its totality.

**Ephesians 1:22-23** “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” and **Colossians 1:18** “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” In these verses we see the church and Christ’s body are one in the same, and that Christ alone is it’s head. If anyone, for example, the Pope, is considered the head of a body of worshipers, that is not authorized by God. Only Christ has the authority to be the head of the church. Anyone not following God’s authorized pattern is not obeying Him.

**Colossians 1:12-15** “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:” In these verses we can see, to be in Christ church, is to be in His Kingdom. Christ’s church and Kingdom are one in the same. When we become baptized, Christ’s blood washes away our sins and we enter into His church or Kingdom.

**1 Timothy 3:15** “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” Christ’s people collectively are called the church of the living God in this verse; thus we also have authorization to use this name as His followers.

**Hebrews 12:23-29** “To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.” Christ’s people collectively are called the church of the firstborn in these verses, giving us authorization to use this name as His worshipers. We also again see that the church and the kingdom are one in the same.

**1 Peter 5:1-4** “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that *fadeth not away.*” Christ’s people are called the flock of God in these verses, giving us authorization to use this name as His flock.

### Conclusion

If we want to be obedient followers of God, we must call ourselves by God approved, or scriptural names, otherwise what is the point? If we don’t care about obeying God and going to Heaven, we can call ourselves whatever we want to. If we want to obey God and go to Heaven, we must use the scriptural names God has provided us in His Word. We must call ourselves by God authorized names we find in the Bible, such as, Christians, the church, church of God, The churches of Christ, the body of Christ, the church of the living God, church of the firstborn, the kingdom, flock of God, believers, brethren, disciple, children of God, saints, members of Christ, or other names that we can find in the scriptures. The only names we have God given authority to call ourselves, as His followers, are those He gave us in His Word. All other names we have no God given authority to use, and are folly.