

God's Name

IN THE NAME OF GOD

This author is unknown to me but I found it interesting.

People of different religions believe in using God's name as Jehovah, Elohyim, Lord, Yeshua, Jesus only, etc. Who is right?

Peter said:

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.

11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Jesus said: Mt 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Acts 2:36-38 Peter again says:

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

37 ¶ Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In Old Testament times no one had used the name of Jesus for anything. But we know that we are told to Ask in his name.

Wherever we might be, and to whatever we might belong in a religious sense, we strive to think, believe, and do in the Name of God. The Gospel is preached in the Name of God. Churches are formed in the Name of God to do the Work of God. People re-organize, speak, write, preach and teach, and work in the Name of God and Jesus Christ, the Son of God. But there are such varieties of Gospel messages and differences in preaching about the nature of God.

There are so many different voices and efforts all preaching and working in the Name of God. Though these voices might use the same name, it means markedly different things to different people. Does not God reveal Himself (Matt 11:27; Jn 1:18)? The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Truth. God is not a respecter of persons. He wants people to know Him. So what assurances can anyone have that anything done in the Name of God is in the Name of God?

Let us consider these questions in the light of the Scriptures. But how shall we use the Scriptures to come to right conclusions about what "In the Name of God" means?

INTRODUCTORY SCRIPTURES

Let's look at some verses and let them guide us in developing our understanding.

The first biblical reference is in Ps 69 which is by David, the future King and Shepherd with the King of kings and the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11; Jer 23:4-6; Ezk 34:23,24).

Ps 69:29-30 I am poor and sorrowful; let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high. 30 I will praise the Name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving.

We should praise the Name of God in song!? Do we know what that means? And do we have the means to praise the Name as this Scripture describes?

34 Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moves in them.

Do we recognize that all of creation does/should praise God? Do we feel this praise? And how do we view this verse in the light of what Paul said in apparent contradiction in Rom 8:22? For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now.

Do we believe we know where the saints will live and what they will possess at the Return of the Son of God? Then everybody shall know exactly who God is!

36 Also, the descendants of His servants shall inherit it, and those who love His Name shall dwell in it.

Those who know the love of courtship and then spousal love, know what it means to be enraptured in the hearing of the name of the beloved with all its meaningfulness. How in love are we with the Name of God and all its meanings?

The second reference is in Daniel ch 2 when he responded to interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the huge image with its head of gold and feet of iron and clay.

Dan 2:20 Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the Name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His.

We have the implication that those who bless the Name of God increase in wisdom and power.

This is consistent with James' words in Jas 3:13,17:

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom (The wisdom of God is expressed in humility toward God and His word, and not in any arrogance. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure (i.e., without any impurity of motive, no pretence), then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

The apostle Paul told Timothy in 2Tim 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

With the spirit of wisdom, love, the power of God, and excellent 'common sense' (which is so uncommon) how could one not praise God for such gifts? But we've seen that these are contingent on knowing God as David and Daniel did, and hence responding to His Name as these men did. Do we? If not, why not? It would seem that they knew a God different to most people's understanding. All our beliefs must be based on the teaching of the prophets, apostles and Jesus Christ (Eph 2:20).

The third reference occurs in Rom 2. Paul spoke to the Church of God in Rome which had a large Judaic-tradition influence. He speaks as strongly as Christ did against the Jewish leaders in Jn 8 (see Jn 8:40-44). The arrogance of self-deceivingly claiming to know the true God perverted many attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (vv 17-23). Notice Paul's scathing comment: Rom 2:24 For "the Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written (in Isa 52).

Like Christ said, so Paul affirms that the Name of God was blasphemed by Judaic traditions upheld so strongly by the religious leadership. Is it possible for us, who also pray, worship, keep Sabbaths and claim to know God and speak in His Name, to blaspheme His Name?

Isa 52:4-6 For thus says the Lord GOD, "My people went down at the first into Egypt to reside there, then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. (Does God do anything without cause?). 5 Now therefore, what do I have here," declares the LORD, "seeing that My people have been taken away without cause?" Again the LORD declares, "Those who rule over them howl, and My Name is continually blasphemed all day long (Here the cause is stated! So is God telling us what people accuse Him of - and falsely). Therefore My people shall know My Name; therefore in that day I am the one who is speaking, 'Here I am.'"

Out of error people will come to know who God really is. Why do I express the conclusion that way? Because a name and names provide identity, nature, reputation, character, status, power, level of authority. A change of name means a change in status, reputation, and destiny. This is readily illustrated in Abram/Abraham, Jacob/Israel.

The fourth occurrence of this phrase is in 1Tim 6:1. Paul's pastoral epistle has numerous instructions about how ministers are to serve the people of God and what they should teach. 1Tim 6:1 Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the Name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. How interesting! The Name of God is associated with doctrine. Knowing the true God and therefore correct doctrine are interlinked. As we progress we shall see the significance of this even more.

In the midst of the seven last plagues is the fifth use of the Name of God. Rev 16:9 Men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the Name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. So the issue of the true knowledge and godly response to the Name of God persists to the end! Mankind refuses to learn, and seems unable to learn, rejects the knowledge of God.

“WHAT’S IN THE NAME?”

Let's examine the notion: What's in a name? And let's look at contexts of use in the Gospel of Matthew, the first book of the NT. I could have started in the attempt to prove what I supposed should be proved, as has been the case in the past: this is how we were all programmed. Who wants to know exactly what God's view really is? Yes, we will look at Genesis also. The Bible from start to finish is full of this topic.

Matt 1:21 (The messenger/angel of God, named Gabriel [Lk 1:26], said to Joseph): “Mary will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

In Matt 1:23 we have the editorial comment referring to Isa 7:14: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.” This is the only NT use (but see Isa 8:5-10,14).

Then in Matt 1:25 we find that Joseph has obeyed the messenger, and the consequence is given: [Joseph] did not know [Mary] till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. He called His name JESUS (which means: Yahweh, help; Yahweh delivers; Yahweh is Salvation [Bock, “Luke”, p 129-130).

Matt 6:9 begins to answer the apostolic request: Lord, teach us to pray (Lk 11:1): “In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed (Gk hagiazo, to make holy) be Your Name.

Which Name? God has many names. All His names reveal His nature, characteristics, status, and so forth. One must regard God's Name as sacred, holy, reverend. What is meant by making God's Name holy?

Ps 111:1 uses the name, LORD, (Heb YHWH or Yahweh; 5321 times in the OT; called the Tetragrammaton, because the name is made from 4 letters; Memra in the Aramaic Targums. Yahweh is from the root to be, also existence, development: [TWOT, Item 484]). Notice v 9: 9 He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever: Holy and awesome is His Name.

Is the Name of God holy and awesome to all of us? Isa 29 says it must be!

Isa 29:23-24 But when [Jacob] sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst, they (the children of Israel: Ex 4:22; Heb 12:23) will hallow My Name, and hallow the Holy One of Jacob, and fear the God of Israel. 24 These also who erred in spirit will come to understanding, and those who complained (criticised; grumbled) will learn doctrine.

Here Scripture again tells us that doctrine (God's teaching) is linked to reverence for God's Name, holding His Name in awe. How? Why?

Religious people can use the Name of God in vain? Matt 7:21-23 Matt 7:21-23 Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name, cast out demons in Your Name, and done many wonders in Your Name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

What an interesting definition of lawlessness Jesus gives us. These people use the Name of God, preach the Gospel in the Name of God, do miracles in the Name of God. So the Scripture here is not speaking of atheists, nor non-believers, but of people who seem to be believers, but who are rejected by Jesus Christ? Why?

It becomes very evident that merely using the words, God, Yahweh, LORD, Jesus the Christ, LORD of hosts, Almighty God, and so on, is not the same as using the Name of God in sincerity and in Truth, in holiness and awe - with understanding and knowledge from God.

Those who know their God (see Dan 11:32 where it says that those who know their God shall do mighty works; Jn 8:55,56; 1Jn 2:4; 4:8,15) will experience what the Messiah told us: Matt 10:22 You will be hated by all for My Name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

Matt 24:9 says the same: They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My Name's sake.

Matt 12:21 tells us that Gentiles will come to trust in His Name. More on that later.

In view of the fragmentation of the churches and scattering of people, the rise of more and more sects and even cult-like groups, most claiming to preach the Gospel and to have the God of Israel with them, Matt 18:20 should be relevant. The context is in how to deal with an erroneous brother. Some would believe this means, that if two or three people (laity or ministry) come together in the Name of God and make any doctrinally erroneous or stupid decisions God will likewise agree to the doctrinal error or stupidity. This is because of the overriding principle of Church Government and is akin to the notion of papal infallibility. In this kind of reasoning people are supposed to admit, in blind folly, that the church has power over God. Furthermore, by using the magical Name, all decisions are validated. Matt 18:20 upholds this madness, some would have us believe:

For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am there in the midst of them.

How can anyone be certain that God is indeed present, by His Spirit, with those with claims on His Name? We have so many claimants with diverse and contradictory doctrines, especially as to who God is, and who the Christ is. Some will respond that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. How is he the Son of God, what is His present relationship to God the Father? If He is co-equal and co-eternal with His Father (Jn 20:17) - then we have two gods, and ditheism, and not monotheism. These papers raise issues and give biblical exposition many have never considered. Catholicism, which claims to be monotheistic but invokes prayers to many gods: to the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven (Jer 44:17-26), Paul, Peter, etc. Many other, but much smaller, churches claim to be monotheistic. They are ditheistic or binitarian, i.e., they worship two equal gods. This is anti-biblical.