

The Name "Christian" and Bible Inspiration (Part I)

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How can we know the Bible is from a supernatural source? Consider the fact that the historical evidence demonstrates that the canon of the Old Testament was completed long before the first century A.D. The Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, was executed over two centuries before Christ came to Earth. Hence, when the New Testament, which arose in the 1st-century A.D., possesses specificity with regard to fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, the unbiased person will inevitably “sit up and pay attention.” Unlike the productions of mere men unguided by Deity, the Bible contains scores of prophetic utterances—separated from their fulfillment by hundreds of years—that verify its divine origin.

Hebrew Prophecy and The Messianic Age

Hebrew prophecy is a multi-faceted, fascinating form of divine communication. Each of the Hebrew prophets possessed as central to their purpose the necessity of delivering to their contemporaries hard-hitting, penetrating messages from God Who was displeased with His people’s behavior. Yet, frequently embedded in these powerful proclamations were the anticipations and eventualities that emanated from the Mind of an infinite, eternal God Who exists above and beyond time itself. As the “Ancient of Days” (Daniel 7:9,13,22), God’s omniscience, eternity, and timeless infinitude enable Him to transcend time; His self-existence spans the ages. Consequently, His revelations to the prophets are riddled with messianic era anticipations and “types and shadows”¹ of the things that were to come in the working out of God’s scheme of redemption. One example of this divine methodology is seen in the prophecy uttered by God in 2 Samuel 7:12-16—

When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod

of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.

This prophecy has been widely considered to be messianic in nature in that it anticipates the coming of Jesus, the Son of God, whose physical body would descend genetically from David, and Who would establish His kingdom, i.e., the church/house of God (Matthew 1:1; 4:17; 16:18; Acts 2:30; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 1:8; 10:5; et al.). However, observe that additional details are fused among the messianic foreshadowing that do not refer to Christ. For example, Solomon also came from David's body. Jesus committed no iniquity (2 Corinthians 5:21), while Solomon did. While Jesus established a spiritual kingdom/house, Solomon replaced his father over the physical kingdom of Israel, not being rejected as was Saul. Such intertwining and intermixing is typical of Hebrew prophecy in the way it juxtaposes the immediate conditions within ancient Israel with future events and expectations.²

Isaiah 62

One such remarkable prediction was offered by the 8th-century B.C. prophet Isaiah.³ Often referred to as the “messianic prophet,” due to his prolific allusion to the coming Messiah, Isaiah also anticipated many other features pertaining to the establishment of Christianity and the arrival of the kingdom of Christ. One particularly eye-opening prophecy mentioned by Isaiah is his⁴ reference to the name that would characterize the citizens of the kingdom of Christ. It reads:

For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,

Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns.

The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory.

You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will name.

You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more

be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married.

For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you (62:1-5).

More than any other Old Testament prophet, Isaiah's prophetic oracles are saturated with anticipations of the coming of Christ and the Christian era. Hence, we would particularly expect his writing to be characterized by an intertwining of events and occurrences, some of which pertained to his own day and some of which referred to events several centuries removed from his day. We would expect him to direct the attention of his contemporaries to the return from Babylonian Captivity, while simultaneously foreshadowing the coming of the Christ centuries later. This circumstance is precisely what we find in Isaiah 62. God had forsaken the Israelites due to their iniquity—graphically realized in the foreign invasions and subsequent captivities inflicted by the Assyrians and Babylonians (2 Kings 17:23; 24:1-25:1ff.; 2 Chronicles 6).⁵ In His providential orchestrations, God arranged for their return from captivity, which enabled them no longer to be “forsaken.” Yet such reassurance is pregnant with meaning pertaining to the Christian era. The Church which Jesus established is His bride.⁶ The ingathering of souls into Christ's Church enables them no longer to be “forsaken,” having been “sought out” for redemption. British scholar, historian, and Camden Professor of Ancient History at Oxford, George Rawlinson, well said: “Israel's ‘salvation’ would be made manifest; primarily by her triumphant return from Babylon, and more completely by her position in the final kingdom of the Redeemer.”⁷ F. Delitzsch made the same point in his discussion of Isaiah 62: “The whole history of salvation is the history of the taking of the kingdom, and the perfecting of the kingdom by Jehovah.”⁸ As the Hebrews writer explained to his Christianized Jewish audience: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (12:22).

The chapters leading up to chapter 62 are laced with messianic overtones. For example, when Jesus visited the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth (Luke 4:16), He quoted Isaiah 61:1-2 (Luke 4:18-19) and declared in no uncertain terms: “Today this Scripture is

fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:12). The prophecy of the “name” in Isaiah 62 commences only nine verses later. Commentators generally identify the surrounding chapters as depictions of Christian era events.⁹

Intimate acquaintance with the events and circumstances under which Christianity commenced its existence on Earth facilitates a proper interpretation of Isaiah’s remarks. This fascinating prophecy contains four features that merit close consideration: (1) righteousness/salvation would go forth from Jerusalem; (2) the Gentiles would see this righteousness/salvation; (3) a new name would be given; and (4) the Lord Himself would bestow that new name. As is often the case with Old Testament prediction, one must go to the New Testament to find fulfillment and clarification of such marvelous assertions.

Salvation Goes Forth From Jerusalem

In accordance with the inner workings of Hebrew parallelism—so prominent and characteristic of Hebrew poetry—“Zion” and “Jerusalem” refer to the same location.¹⁰ The city had a spiritually and morally checkered history throughout the Old Testament. However, the New Testament’s clarification of the scheme of redemption—formulated in the mind of God from eternity (Ephesians 3:11; Revelation 13:8)—pinpoints the moment in time when Isaiah’s graphic depiction was fulfilled. After some 4,000 years of human history, the Gospel was announced in its fullness as a bright, burning light¹¹ for the entire world to see. This momentous event transpired in Jerusalem in A.D. 30 as reported by Luke in Acts 2.

Jesus had specifically instructed the apostles “not to depart **from Jerusalem**” (Acts 1:4), since “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, **beginning at Jerusalem**” (Luke 24:47). From that very location, they would be Christ’s witnesses “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8; cf. Luke 24:48). Indeed, Isaiah earlier predicted that it would be “out of Zion” and “from Jerusalem” that “the law,” the “word of the Lord,” would “go forth” (2:3). Many royal decrees went forth from Jerusalem through the centuries of kingly occupation of the throne of Israel. Likewise, many decrees of God via His prophets sprang forth from this city as well as a host of other geographical locations of the world throughout biblical history. But this

prophecy pinpoints a monumental event in redemptive history in which God's ultimate, eternal intentions commenced to climax. In fact, the events on the day of Pentecost described in Acts 2 have caused perceptive students of the Word to describe the chapter and the occasion as "the hub of the Bible."¹²

The term "righteousness," given in parallel position with "salvation," refers to the means by which humans could finally and ultimately be made righteous in order to stand redeemed before God.¹³ Indeed, for the first time in human history, the Gospel in its fullness and climactic culmination was announced.¹⁴ The long concealed "mystery" was now being revealed.¹⁵ No one, this side of the cross, can be approved by God who does not embrace the religion of Jesus Christ.¹⁶ Hence, for the first time in human history, the terms of entrance into the kingdom of Christ were publicly proclaimed and, thereafter, it was from that location that the proclamation of the Gospel emanated (Acts 8:4; 11:19). The first feature of Isaiah's prophecy received spectacular fulfillment.

Gentiles Included

Interestingly, only Jews were assembled on the day of Pentecost when the Gospel went forth—though "from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). But no Gentiles were present. Indeed, Luke goes out of his way to clarify the fact that the initial proclaimers of the Gospel of Christ, stimulated by the persecution that arose surrounding Stephen's death, went forth "preaching the word to **no one but the Jews only**" (Acts 11:19). Peter explained the background and divine rationale for this circumstance to Jerusalem Jews:

You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, "And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed." To you **first**, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities (Acts 3:25-26).

By divine design, **only** Jews were recipients of the Gospel message at the beginning.¹⁷

But Isaiah proceeds to state that the Gentiles would likewise "see," i.e., experience and receive the salvation.¹⁸ He had already declared:

“The Gentiles shall come to your light” (60:3). In the unfathomable plan of God, a time lag occurred between the initial presentation of the Gospel to the Jews and its presentation to Gentiles. The Jews were given the privilege to encounter the message of salvation first—not due to their superiority over non-Jews—but due to their ongoing, long-standing involvement in the grand scheme of redemption that brought Jesus into the world.¹⁹ However, within a few short years,²⁰ the Gentiles were likewise treated to contact with the Gospel. The encounter was precipitated by a Roman centurion’s reception of an angelic vision urging him to get into contact with Simon Peter. In the meantime, Peter experienced his own vision which left him perplexed, even as the representatives of the military commander arrived at the gate of the house where Peter was lodging. He accompanied the men to Caesarea where he met Cornelius and many others who had gathered to hear God’s instructions. The resistance by Jews to Gentile inclusion could only be overcome by direct intervention by God by means of Holy Spirit baptism—a powerful demonstration of God’s redemptive intentions (Acts 10:44). After hearing the Gospel, the Gentiles were obedient to the message and became Christians (Acts 10:48). Paul later explained this earthshaking event in the following words: “it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” (Ephesians 3:5-6). The second feature of Isaiah’s prophecy had been dramatically fulfilled.²¹

A New Name

The Gospel having gone forth from Jerusalem, and the Gentiles having been incorporated into the same body of Christ as the Jews, Isaiah asserts that the Lord Himself would instigate the use of a new name. It is notable that God’s people throughout Bible history were designated by several names that characterized their relationship with God and with one another. For example, both Old and New Testament devotees of God were known among themselves as “believers” (*pistoi*) or those who “believed” (*episteusin*; e.g., Exodus 4:31 [LXX]; Acts 5:14), “brethren/brothers” (*adelphoi*; Psalm 133:1; Acts 15:23), “disciples” (*mathetai*; e.g., Isaiah 8:16 [Hebrew]; John 9:28), “saints”

(*hagioi*; e.g., Psalm 34:9 [LXX]; Romans 1:7), “servants” (Isaiah 56:6 [LXX]; Acts 4:29; 16:17), “the elect” (*eklektoi*; Isaiah 45:4 [LXX]; Colossians 3:12; 2 Timothy 2:10), and simply “the Church” (e.g., Acts 14:27). They were also identified as those of “the Way” (Acts 19:9,23; 24:14,22). Those more hostile to Christianity labeled them a “sect” (Acts 28:22; cf. 24:14) and “the sect of the Nazarenes (*Nazoraion*)” (Acts 24:5), and even “Galileans” (Acts 2:7). Yet in this prophecy Isaiah seems to anticipate a **new** name that had not been characteristic of God’s people in either testament.²²

Despite the fact that Isaiah’s allusion is to a **single** name,²³ some have suggested that the “new name” is to be equated with one or more of the names delineated in the context of Isaiah, i.e., “Hephzibah” (“My delight is in her”) and “Beulah” (“married”) in verse 4, or “The Holy People,” “The Redeemed of the Lord,” and “Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken” in verse 12. Apart from the fact that verse 2 specifies “name” in the singular, Hebrew scholar Hugo McCord challenges these suggestions, in light of Isaiah 62’s clear application, contextually, to the time of the establishment of Christ’s Church:

That the “new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name” (Isaiah 62:2) was the name Hephzibah (Isaiah 62:4) is erroneous. Hephzibah was a girl’s name in use long before the establishment of the New Testament church. Manasseh’s mother was named Hephzibah (II Kings 21:1). That the “new name”...was the name Beulah (Isaiah 62:4) is likewise erroneous. The word Beulah was already in use when Isaiah made his prediction (cf. Isaiah 54:1 in the Hebrew: the English word Married translates Beulah).²⁴

These appellations certainly fit the circumstances of Israel’s restoration following the cataclysmic national upheaval she experienced, but they are not the “new name” to which Isaiah referred. There is more to consider.

Given by the Lord

Isaiah was insistent: the new name that would arise would, in fact, be given by God Himself. The terminology that the Holy Spirit selected to inform us of the arrival of the name Christian is significant: “And the disciples were first **called** Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). The

words “were called” are a rendering of the Greek verb *chrematidzo*.

Chrematidzo

An examination of this term in the original sources reveals that the lexical evidence is fairly uniform. However, keep in mind that lexicographers, like those who compile dictionaries that describe how words in that particular language are currently being used, must rely on an accurate grasp of contextual usage to establish the meaning of a word, thereby risking misunderstanding of the meaning of a word due to bias or misapprehension. Once the **usual** meaning of a word is ascertained, one must seek to recognize that primary meaning in all of its occurrences—unless forced to do otherwise due to a figurative use or a clearly established secondary meaning that arose in that linguistic climate. One must most certainly take into consideration **the Bible’s own inspired use of a term**—even if that use does not fully conform to secular usage at the time (cf. *agape*).²⁵ The fact of the matter is that the term *chrematidzo* manifests a uniform, consistent use throughout the New Testament. No existing textual factor necessitates imposing multiple separate or unrelated meanings onto the word.

This term had as its original and primary meaning the notion of transacting business (from *chrema*).²⁶ From this primitive meaning came the later variations of the term—what Reicke identifies as “two Hellenistic developments.”²⁷ Current Greek authorities typically specify two central meanings: (1) a divine communication and (2) to be called or named. For example, the most popular lexicon today gives the two meanings first as “impart a divine message, make known a divine injunction/warning,” and second as “to take/bear a name/title, to go under the name of.”²⁸ Similarly, in his *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Gingrich gives the same two meanings, i.e., “of God impart a revelation or injunction or warning” and “bear a name, be called or named.”²⁹ Reicke describes the first meaning in the words, “God instructs someone by revelations... the recipient of revelation being an instrument of divine rule,” which includes “the decree of a sovereign,” and the second sense as “appearing as something,” with Acts 11:26 and Romans 7:3 the “two cases” in the New Testament in which the latter meaning applies.³⁰ A host of additional Greek authorities, with

little variation, affirm these same two basic usages.³¹ These lexicographers and linguistic experts cite Acts 11:26 and Romans 7:3 as **the only two instances** in the New Testament of the second meaning of the term. But why single out these two from among the others and assign an alternative meaning? And why insist on the simple meaning of “call” when the Greek has several other words that are more suited to conveying the idea of “calling” or “naming”?³²

New Testament Occurrences of *Chrematidzo*

The term *chrematidzo* occurs nine times in the New Testament.³³ Consider the Holy Spirit’s own use of this unique term (from the NKJV):

Matthew 2:12—“Then, being **divinely warned** in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.”³⁴

Matthew 2:22—“But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being **warned by God** in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.”

Luke 2:26—“And it had been **revealed** to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.”³⁵

Acts 10:22—“And they said, ‘Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was **divinely instructed** by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you.’”³⁶

Acts 11:26—“And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples **were first called** Christians in Antioch.”

Romans 7:3—“So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she **will be called** an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.”

Hebrews 8:5—“...who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was **divinely instructed** when he was about to make

the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’”

Hebrews 11:7—“By faith Noah, being **divinely warned** of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”

Hebrews 12:25—“See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him **who spoke** on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven.”

If the reader will take the time to examine each verse, paying close attention to the bold words, it becomes readily apparent that in each verse, with the possible exception of Acts 11:26 and Romans 7:3, the speaking, calling, or warning that is described entails **divine** activity. In fact, English translators are so confident of this fact that they literally insert words to make certain the English reader recognizes the intended import of *chrematidzo*. Specifically, the following terms are introduced by translators into five of the above nine verses:

Matthew 2:12—“divinely”

Matthew 2:22—“by God”

Acts 10:22—“divinely”

Hebrews 8:5—“divinely”

Hebrews 11:7—“divinely”

These six words are not in the Greek text; they were added by the NKJV translators in order to aid the English reader in grasping the import of *chrematidzo* in each instance. Translators did not need to insert a qualifier into Luke 2:26 since the verse already contains its own qualifier (i.e., by the Holy Spirit). Likewise, Hebrews 12:25 has “Him” preceding “who spoke.”³⁷ Hence, seven out of the nine verses in the New Testament, in which the term *chrematidzo* occurs, clearly and unmistakably use the term to refer to **divine communication**.

Endnotes

1 While this expression is not found verbatim in Scripture, it accurately represents the situation. See Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; 10:1; Luke 24:47. Also Thomas Taylor (1816), *Christ Revealed: Or the Types and Shadows of Our Saviour in the Old Testament Opened and Explained*

(Glasgow: Jack & Gallie).

2 A variety of terms have been generated by scholars over the years in an attempt to describe/identify the intricate features of biblical prophecy. One such attempt consists of the term *sensus plenior*, meaning “fuller sense,” which refers to those Bible prophecies where, in addition to the immediate circumstances to which the prophet’s words apply, some of the words also apply to persons or events in the future. This phenomenon is an attractive explanation for the prophecy of Isaiah 62. See Andrea Fernandez (1927), “Hermeneutica,” *Institutiones Biblicae* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute), second edition, pp. 306-307, and Raymond Brown (1955), *The Sensus Plenior of Scripture* (Baltimore, MD: St. Mary’s Seminary and University). See also the New Testament’s use of “type” and “antitype” (Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 1 Peter 3:21).

3 Scholars through the centuries have typically identified Isaiah as an 8th-century B.C. prophet, i.e., he lived and worked in approximately 750 B.C. Liberal scholars have attempted to shift the writing of the book of Isaiah to much later. However, even in the face of such bias, the Great Isaiah Scroll, included among the Dead Sea Scrolls, is dated at the latest 125 B.C. The book of Isaiah had to have been in existence prior to that time. Even modern liberal scholarship dates the section that includes chapter 62 to over 500 years before Christ. See “The Great Isaiah Scroll,” in *The Digital Dead Sea Scrolls* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum), <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah#62:2>.

4 Like all Old Testament prophecy, God is the actual speaker. See F. Delitzsch (1976 reprint), *Isaiah in Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 7:435.

5 Interestingly, God prompted His prophets to liken the sinful behavior of the Israelites to sexual infidelity (e.g., Hosea). Israel had been married to God after He rescued her from her infantile, bloody predicament (Ezekiel 16). He had been a husband to her (Jeremiah 31:32). But she played the harlot, committing spiritual fornication with idols and false gods (Jeremiah 3:9). On the basis of their spiritual infidelity (physical fornication being the only legitimate ground for divorce—Matthew 19:9), the nation of Israel placed herself in the position of being legally divorced by God (Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8). Consequently, she was rejected, forsaken, and made desolate.

6 Read Luke 5:34-35; John 3:29; Ephesians 5:32; Romans 7:4;

Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2,9; 22:17.

7 George Rawlinson (1950), *Isaiah* in *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H.D.M. Spence and Joseph Exell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 10:430.

8 7:435.

9 For example, in his commentary on Isaiah, Wayne Jackson labels chapters 58-65 as “The Glory of the Messianic Age” in (1991), *Isaiah* (Abilene, TX: Quality Publications), p. II. Premillennial commentators typically apply surrounding chapters to the return of Christ and the establishment of His alleged millennial reign on Earth. For a critique of millenarianism, see Dave Miller (2014), “Left Behind—or Left Bedazzled? (Parts I/II),” *Reason & Revelation*, 34[11]:122-125,128-131 and 34[12]:134-137,140-143. In any case, even if, in context, the immediate application is the restoration of the nation of Israel after Babylonian Captivity, like many Old Testament prophecies, the ultimate application is undoubtedly to the Christian era.

10 “Zion” is alluded to over 160 times in the Bible, first mentioned in 2 Samuel 5:7 when David attacked and captured it from the Jebusites, making it his capital city. Isaiah uses the term some 47 times.

11 The underlying term refers to “the splendor, or the bright shining of the sun, the moon, or of fire”—Albert Barnes (2005 reprint), *Notes on the Old Testament: Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 2:380. “[A]s a torch that blazeth”—Rawlinson, 10:430. See other uses of the term in Judges 15:4, Nahum 2:4, and Zechariah 12:6.

12 E.g., James Bales (1960), *The Hub of the Bible* (Rosemead, CA: Old Paths Book Club). As extremely significant as the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is in a proper understanding of God’s redemptive will, the Bible likewise places Acts 2 in tandem with the atoning activity of Christ on the cross as of similar significance in bringing to culmination several Old Testament prophecies, including Isaiah 2:1-5, Micah 4:1-5, Daniel 2:44 and 7:13-14, and Joel 2:28-32, not to mention Jesus’ own declaration that He would personally build His Church (Matthew 16:18) during the lifetime of some of His disciples (Mark 9:1).

13 See Romans 1:17; 3:21-22; Philippians 3:9.

14 The Gospel had actually been preached to Abraham (Galatians 3:8), i.e., he was informed that “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3; cf. 18:18; 22:18). But the specifics and the details of Christ’s salvific activity were not brought to fruition until the

cross, followed by the apostolic explanations issued via their Gospel preaching.

15 See Romans 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:9; 3:3,4,9; 6:19; Colossians 1:26-27.

16 See John 8:24; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 10:43; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; cf. Isaiah 53:11.

17 See also Acts 13:46; Romans 1:16 (“for the Jew first”); 2:9.

18 Cf. Isaiah 42:1.

19 Read carefully Paul’s inspired assessment of the role of the Jews in God’s plan to redeem mankind expounded in Romans 9-11. See especially 9:5 and 11:28. It is evident that, so far as salvation is concerned, the Jews are on equal footing with everyone else in their access to the Gospel and forgiveness of sin. But they, like everybody else, must obey the Gospel of Christ to receive salvation. Read also Paul’s forthright declarations in Romans 2:28-29 and Galatians 3:28 where it is made abundantly clear that **fleshly** connection to Abraham is superfluous so far as personal forgiveness is concerned and that all that matters “now” (Romans 3:21; 8:1) to God is **spiritual** Israel, i.e., New Testament Christians who compose the Church of Christ—“the Israel of God”—regardless of ethnicity (Galatians 6:16).

20 The amount of time that transpired between the conversion of the Jews in Acts 2 and the conversion of the first Gentiles in Acts 10 cannot be pinpointed with certainty. However, scholars are in general agreement. For example, Reicke states that the name “Christian” was given “around 40 A.D”—Bo Reicke (1974), “*χρημα, χρηματίζω, χρηματισμός*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 9:482. H.B. Hackett (1870), *A Commentary on the Original Text of the Acts of the Apostles* (Boston, MA: Gould & Lincoln), p. 193 —“Thus ten years or more elapsed after the Saviour left the earth before the introduction of this name.” Exeter College scholar of Oxford, Sydney Gayford, added: “it is certainly before the Herodian persecution of 44...not very long before it; perhaps between 40-44”—(1898), “Christian” in *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), 1:384. Professor of Biblical History at Bangor Theological Seminary, George Gilmore, notes: “The date implied by the passage is 40-44 A.D”—(1977 reprint), “Christian,” *The New Schaff-Herzog*

Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, ed. Samuel Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 3:39.

21 It is not without significance that God delayed the bestowal of the new name for several years after the establishment of the church of Christ on Earth. It was absolutely essential to the divine scheme of things for the kingdom to incorporate “all peoples, nations, and languages” (Daniel 7:14). God “desires **all** men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), “not willing that any should perish but that **all** should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9)—without regard to nationality or ethnicity. Consequently, the ultimate name by which God wanted His people to be known was delayed until this crucial reality was achieved. Hence, Luke uses the term *protos* (prwvwtw\$)—“for the first time” (Danker, p. 894) to flag the fact that those who obeyed the Gospel of Christ on the day of Pentecost, as well as all those who did so during the intervening decade, had not worn the name “Christian.” The disciples were not called “Christians” first in **Jerusalem**. Rather, the bestowal of that appellation was divinely withheld and reserved for the disciples only **after** Gentiles were added to the kingdom.

Some commentators catch the drift of this concept, though they do not seem to grasp its significance in the overall divine scheme. For instance, John Calvin noted in passing: “much people was grown together into one body, as well of Jews as of Gentiles”—(1999 reprint), *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 1:471. Heinrich Meyer notes that it was not until Antioch that “the Christians, in consequence of the predominant Gentile-Christian element, asserted themselves for the first time not as a sect of Judaism, but as an independent community”—(1879), *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), p. 296. Henry Alford asserted: “but now that a body of men, compounded of *Jews and Gentiles*, arose, distinct in belief and habits from both, some new appellation was required”—(1980 reprint), *Alford’s Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 2:129, italics in orig. John Guyse adds: “thereby shewing that all invidious distinctions between believing *Jews and Gentiles* should cease for ever, now they were incorporated together into one and the same body of Christ”—(1797), *The Practical Expositor* (Edinburgh: Ross & Sons), 3:137, italics in orig. And Frederick Maurice: “But to the disciples it signified that they were

witnesses for a King, and a King whom **all nations** would in due time be brought to acknowledge”—(1854), *Lectures on the Ecclesiastical History of the First and Second Centuries* (Cambridge: Macmillan), p. 79, emp. added.

22 Willis insists, “The idea that the new name is ‘Christian’ is fanciful and ignores the context” in John Willis (1980), *Isaiah in The Living Word Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. David Jones (Austin, TX: Swete Publishing), 12:458. Apart from a lack of proof for such an assertion, his dismissive exclusion of prophetic anticipations of the coming Christian era is, itself, fanciful and ignores the context. This entire multi-chapter section of Isaiah is riddled with messianic expectations. One wonders if he would extend the same terse brush off to Jesus, Himself, Who stated emphatically to the disciples: “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that **all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me**” (Luke 24:44).

23 The singular form of the Hebrew word for “name” (*shehm*) is used here rather than the plural (*shemos*). See *Hebrew-English Lexicon* (no date), (London: Samuel Bagster).

24 Hugo McCord (1963), “The Divine Name,” *Gospel Advocate*, 105[50]:790, December 12. Observe that the restoration of Israel to their land in the 6th century B.C. in the wake of the Babylonian Captivity constituted an initial fulfillment of the descriptive terms that Isaiah set forth (i.e., from “Forsaken” and “Desolate” to “Hephzibah,” “Beulah,” “The Holy People,” “The Redeemed of the Lord,” “Sought Out,” and “A City Not Forsaken”). However, as noted earlier, in keeping with the intricacies and flexibility of Hebrew prophecy, these terms also naturally, and with meaningful relevance, apply to the New Testament era and the arrival of Christ’s Kingdom/Church. Those incorporated into her may once again be “married,” in a blissful state in which they look forward to the promised land—the heavenly rest (Hebrews 4:8-11). “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12:28).

25 For discussions of the development of *agape* and its enhanced use in the New Testament, see Walther Gunther and Hans-Georg Link (1976), “Love” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*

(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 2:538-547, and Ethelbert Stauffer (1964), “*agapao, agape, agapetos,*” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1:21-55. See also New World Encyclopedia contributors (2019), “Agape,” *New World Encyclopedia*, www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Agape&oldid=1017946.

26 R.J. Knowling (no date), *The Acts of the Apostles in The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 2:268.

27 9:481.

28 Frederick Danker (2000), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), third edition, p. 1089.

29 F. Wilbur Gingrich (1965), *A Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago: The Chicago University Press), p. 237, italics in orig.

30 pp. 481-482.

31 Classical Greek scholars Henry Liddell and Robert Scott cite instances of several shades of this fundamental meaning, including “in N.T. of divine warnings or revelations,” but then go ahead to list Acts 11:26 with the meaning “to be deemed” while placing Romans 7:3 under a different meaning of “to be called” (1901), *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 1740. Harvard professor of Ancient, Byzantine, and Modern Greek, E.A. Sophocles, gave three variations on the word: (1) “*to declare, to deliver an oracle,*” (2) “*to assume a name or title, to be called,*” and (3) “*to be, to have been in existence.*” He cites Acts 11:26 and Romans 7:3 as instances of the second meaning— (1914), *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p. 1169, italics in orig. George Wigram lists five meanings: “be called, be admonished of God, be warned of God, reveal, speak”—(1870), *The Englishman’s Greek Concordance of the New Testament* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons), p. 1018. Similarly E.W. Bullinger (1908), *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co.), p. 997. Wesley Perschbacher notes the initial meaning of “*to have dealings, transact business*” and then adds “in N.T. *to utter a divine communication,*” with the passive signifying “*to be divinely instructed, receive a revelation or warning from God,*” but then gives as the

intransitive meaning in both Acts 11:26 and Romans 7:3 “*to receive an appellation, be styled*”—(1990), *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), p. 440, italics in orig. William Mounce gives the same analysis as Perschbacher in (2006), *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 1312. G. Abbott-Smith does the same, inconsistently stating that the term is used in the New Testament “of divine communications” but then isolates Acts 11:26 and Romans 7:3 as having the meaning “*to assume a name, be called*”—(1922), *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons), pp. 483-484, italics in orig. W.E. Vine, whose scholarship according to F.F. Bruce was “wide, accurate and up-to-date” (Foreword), states emphatically that the meaning “to be called or named” in Acts 11:26 and Romans 7:3 are “the **only** places where it has this meaning”—(1940), *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell), p. 164, emp. added. Also Charles Robson (1839), *A Greek Lexicon to the New Testament* (London: Whittaker & Co.), p. 506, and Alexander Souter (1917), *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press), p. 284, and Joseph Thayer (1889), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: American Book Company), p. 671. Interestingly, James Moulton insists that “two entirely distinct words” are involved in the discussion, one from the word for “business,” thereby meaning “*to be called*” or “*to do business under the name of Christ, to bear the name of,*” and the other coming from the word for “oracle,” thereby meaning “to warn”—(1919), *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), 2:265,408, italics in orig.

32 For example, the normal Greek verb that means “to call” is *kaleo* with its host of derivatives (*eiskaleo, epikaleo, metakaleo, proskaleo, sunkaleo*, etc.). Other words include *phoneo* meaning “to call, to call by name” as when the disciples call Jesus “Teacher and Lord” (John 13:13), or the shepherd “calls his own sheep by name” (John 10:3). Vine says these latter two instances carry “the implication of the pleasure taken in the possession of those called” (p. 164). The Aorist (*eipon*) of the Greek word *lego* (“to say”) specifically means “to call by a certain appellation” as in John 10:35, and the derivative form *epilego* means “to call by another name” as in John 5:2. Though he thinks the name “Christian” was “first given by outsiders,” this fact is acknowledged by E.H.

Plumptre: “The term for ‘were called’ is not the word usually so rendered. Better, perhaps, *got the name of Christians*”—(1884), *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Cassell Petter & Galpin), 190-192, italics in orig.

[33](#) W.F. Moulton and A.S. Geden (1899), *A Concordance to the Greek Testament* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), p. 1011.

[34](#) See F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and Robert Funk (1961), *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press), p. 164, who render the phrase “to receive a direction (from God)” and “receive a divine command” (p. 200).

[35](#) Blass, Debrunner, and Funk note regarding this verse that “the inf[initive] expresses an assertion” (p. 200) and may be rendered “prophesy” (p. 204).

[36](#) Blass, Debrunner, and Funk render the phrase “receive a divine command” (p. 200).

[37](#) Marcus Dods renders Hebrews 12:25—“Him that made to them divine communications on earth” in (no date), *The Epistle to the Hebrews in The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 4:373.

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The Name "Christian" and Bible Inspiration (Part II) **by Dave Miller, Ph.D.**

[EDITOR’S NOTE: Part I of this two-part series appeared in the February issue. Part II follows below and continues, without introductory comments, where the first article ended.]

Romans 7:3?

But what about Romans 7:3? What is the meaning of *chrematidzo* in this verse? “So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called¹ an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.” What did Paul/the Holy Spirit intend to convey by noting that the woman “**will be called** an adulteress”? Called by whom? An examination of the context of Romans 7 reveals that Paul is discussing the unprecedented relationship that the Christian has with Christ. Those

who were reluctant to jettison the Law of Moses failed to realize they could not have both—Moses and Christ. In fact, a death of sorts had occurred with regard to the Mosaic system though God had instigated it some 1,500 years earlier. He no longer interacted with human beings through that legal framework since it was “obsolete” (Hebrews 8:13), “passing away” (2 Corinthians 3:11), and “nailed to the cross” (Colossians 2:14). He now interacts with “all”² human beings via the Gospel (Romans 1:16). Paul uses an illustration associated with God’s law that presses his point. God’s marriage law binds a woman to her husband until his death—stated by God Himself the day He enacted the institution of marriage for the very first two human beings: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Jesus added: “Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6). This stricture is **God’s** law—not man’s. It originated with **Him**—not man. Any man who puts away his wife and remarries while that wife is still living is counted **by God** as an adulterer.³ Any woman who puts away her husband and remarries while that husband is still living is counted **by God** as an adulteress. The fact is that mere human beings through human history, from country to country and culture to culture, have concocted their own definitions of “adultery” and sexual sin. However, it matters not what human laws legislate, or how human courts rule, or what anyone on Earth thinks. Public opinion is irrelevant when it comes to God’s laws. How a person’s marital status is publicly reckoned by society is of no ultimate meaning or consequence. Rather, **God** is the One who defines and reckons what constitutes a violation of His marriage laws. Consider this clarification of Paul’s illustration:

So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called [**by God**] an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that [i.e., **God’s**] law, so that she is no adulteress [**by God’s reckoning**], though she has married another man.

It is true that as humans adopt their own social mores—whether invented by themselves or received from God—a given culture or society will publicly reckon a woman guilty of adultery as they define the concept. But their reckoning on the matter is not what decides whether a woman is actually an adulteress—even as human opinion does not decide which Law of God is in effect this side of the cross. Observe

that Paul’s words “so that she is no adulteress” are parallel to “she will be called an adulteress.” The latter does not refer to public opinion on the matter, but rather constitutes a forthright declaration of objective spiritual reality—which can only come from God. This evaluation of this passage is verified by the conclusion that Paul draws from his illustration: “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead” (Romans 7:4). He did **not** mean to convey that the wider public would so reckon them in their relationship with the Law. It is God who dispenses the right for those who were under the Law of Moses to set it aside and place themselves under submission to the Law of Christ. Only God can legislate what laws apply to whom at any given time in earthly history. Consequently, John Jones rightly observes that the woman in question “will be deemed or called an adulteress, **on the authority of the divine law.**”⁴

Based on this analysis of the context of Romans 7, the occurrence of the term *chrematidzo* in verse 3 is a reference to **God’s own declaration** regarding the circumstances under which a woman is an adulteress. It does **not** refer to public opinion or what society may decide to call, count, or reckon a woman with regard to her marital status. If such be the case, it follows that out of the nine occurrences of the term *chrematidzo* in the New Testament, eight are unequivocally allusions to **divine** callings. If eight of the nine New Testament occurrences are without doubt references to **divine** callings or actions, on what basis could one legitimately (i.e., grammatically and linguistically) reject this same usage in the only other occurrence if, in fact, the same meaning makes perfect sense and fits the context? Nothing in the context of Acts 11:26 necessitates a meaning that deviates from the standard meaning. Furthermore, extra-biblical occurrences of the term do not trump Bible usage.⁵

The Same Meaning in Acts 11:26

As a matter of fact, despite the general uniformity among Greek authorities in isolating Acts 11:26 and Romans 7:3 from the other occurrences of the word by assigning a different shade of meaning to them, a number of language scholars do not concur with the inconsistency. They, in fact, assign the same meaning to these two verses

as they do to the other seven. For example, in his widely acclaimed and longstanding commentary on Acts, Adam Clarke insists: “The word *chrematisai* in our common text, which we translate *were called*, signifies in the New Testament, to *appoint, warn, or nominate*, by *Divine direction*.”⁶ Matthew Poole, 17th-century English theologian and biblical commentator, affirmed that the name “Christian” was given “by Divine authority, for the word imports no less. And that it was not a name they gave themselves, much less was it a name the enemies of Christianity gave unto the professors of it... But God would have Christ’s disciples to be called Christians.”⁷ George Benson, 18th-century British theologian, commentator, and Greek scholar, explained the meaning of the word in Acts 11:26: “*chrematidzo* signifieth, *to be warned by a divine admonition*” and, regarding its occurrence in Romans 7:3, he states: “perhaps, there it ought to be understood in **the same sense**.”⁸ Philip Doddridge, 18th-century English Congregationalist minister, educator, and hymnwriter, translated the sentence in Acts 11:26 —“*And the disciples were by Divine appointment first named Christians, at Antioch,*” and explained that “the use of the word *chrematisai* implies, that it *was done by a divine direction*.”⁹ 18th-century English independent minister, John Guyse, of whom John Wesley stated in the Preface to his *Notes on the New Testament* that he was indebted to Dr. Guyse for many “useful observations,” observed regarding Acts 11:26: “It is well known that (*chrematisai*) the word here used, commonly, **if not always**, in the *New Testament* signifies to be *divinely warned, or warned of God*: And this is the sense in which our sacred historian used it, *chap. x.22 and Luke ii.26*.”¹⁰ Observe that Guyse calls attention to the fact that the same inspired writer—Luke—had already used the same word on two previous occasions to refer to **divine** interpositions, making Luke’s usage uniform and consistent. Wayne Jackson well summarizes the matter: “The term ‘called’ is used exclusively in the New Testament of a divine calling.”¹¹

Not Given by Mere Men

Having dismissed the possibility that God is the Source of the name “Christian,” many commentators postulate that the name was given by the enemies and critics of the church, likely given in derision,¹² and

probably by the Romans.¹³ Others claim that the name simply arose from among the Christians themselves.¹⁴ Of course, if we have understood the Isaiah prophecy correctly, the first of these postulations is incorrect. The second is correct—if understood in the sense that God bestowed the name from within the believing community via Divine instruction.¹⁵

Notice that, since we are informed in no uncertain terms that the new name came “from the mouth of the Lord,” we must consider in what way or through what means the Lord achieved this action. We certainly have instances in Bible history where God spoke audibly and directly to individuals.¹⁶ He also communicated His will via dreams, visions, and angelic visitations.¹⁷ However, Luke provides us with clues to help us make sense of the means by which the Lord bestowed the new name. In his *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* based on the Nestle Greek text, Alfred Marshall rendered the relevant sentence in Acts 11:26, referring to Paul and Barnabas—“And it happened to them also year a whole **to be assembled** in the church and **to teach** a crowd considerable, and **to call** firstly in Antioch the disciples Christians.”¹⁸ Although a literal, albeit awkward, rendering, do not miss the fact that “to be assembled,” “to teach,” and “to call” are all three infinitives¹⁹ that hark back to Paul and Barnabas. It was Paul and Barnabas who did the teaching, assembling, **and calling** (i.e., divine calling/prophesying).

Meyer explained the same grammatical nuance in which the three successive infinitives are tied to the verb and pronoun (*egeneto autos*) —“it happened to them.” He concluded: “But it is logically correct that *xrhmatissai* should still be dependent on *egeneto autos*, just because the reported appellation...was causally connected with the lengthened and successful labours of the two men in that city.”²⁰ In other words, the “calling” is tied to the verb (“it happened”) and pronoun (“them”)—again, indicating Paul and Barnabas as the instrumentality of the calling. A.T. Robertson adds his confirmation: “This first active infinitive *chrematissai* is also a subject of *egeneto* and is added as a separate item by the use of *te* [another word for “and”—DM] rather than *kai* [“and”—DM].”²¹ Lenski agrees: “By being added with *te*, the third infinitive is connected with both infinitives that precede and thus states that it was during this year that the disciples bore...the name ‘Christians.’”²²

Again, these Greek sources agree that the third infinitive (“to call”) is linked to the previous two infinitives, and all three modify the verb “it happened.”

Noting the underlying Greek, Benson states: “Whereby is signified, that *Barnabas* and *Saul* first gave them the name of *Christians*.”²³ Guyse says the mouth of the Lord gave the name “by immediate suggestion to Saul and Barnabas”²⁴—which accords fully with the New Testament depiction of the nature of inspiration. Jackson agrees: “[I]f the disciples ‘were [divinely] called’ Christians, the name must have been conveyed in some fashion, and the use of Barnabas and Saul might well have been the means.”²⁵ Adam Clarke agrees: “If, therefore, the name was given by Divine appointment, it is most likely that Saul and Barnabas were directed to give it.”²⁶ In fact, the grammar of the passage makes it **certain**—not merely “most likely.” The same persons who “assembled” and “taught” are the same persons who “called.”²⁷ No doubt God achieved His will in bestowing the “name” in the same manner in which He guided Paul and all inspired spokesmen in their divine communications.²⁸ McGarvey summarizes the origin of the name “Christian” in Acts 11:26: “The fact that Luke here adopts it, and that both Paul and Peter afterward recognized it, gives it all the validity of inspired usage, and, therefore, all the weight of divine authority.”²⁹

Other Occurrences

It’s no wonder, then, that when on trial before King Agrippa, with Roman procurator Porcius Festus in attendance, Paul pressed the King with a personal appeal to recall his own belief in the Old Testament prophets. “Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You almost persuade me to become a Christian’” (Acts 26:28).³⁰ It is likewise not surprising that Peter, in the midst of an epistle that focuses on the overwhelming persecution and suffering³¹ being perpetrated on believers, he admonished them: “For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men’s matters: but if a man suffer **as a Christian**, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God **in this name**” (1 Peter 4:15-16, ASV). Peter understood that the “name” (*onomati*) under which followers of Christ were to live and bear their

hardships is the name “Christian” (see also vs. 14; 2 Timothy 2:19; James 2:7).

Isaiah 62:2 = Acts 11:26

In view of these facts, there are those authorities, though admittedly in the minority, who see the connection between Isaiah’s prophecy of a “new name” and the bestowal of the name “Christian” in Acts 11:26. For example, in his widely acclaimed commentary series, Matthew Henry alludes to Isaiah 62:2 as being fulfilled in Acts 11:26.³² Likewise, Guyse offered these remarks on Acts 11:26: “So God put a peculiar honour upon this church of converted proselytes, calling them by another, and *a new name*, which it was prophesied the mouth of the Lord should name (Isa. lxii.2. and lxxv.15).”³³ Referring to the church at Antioch, Guyse also noted:

So these believers at *Antioch* were the first, who in a still higher sense, not without warrant from divine intimations, publicly and solemnly took upon themselves the name of *Christians*...thereby professing, and glorying in their relation to *Christ*, as the only anointed Saviour.³⁴

James Coffman likewise made the connection between Isaiah 62 and Acts 11:26, and also tied Isaiah 56:5 to the same occurrence.³⁵ He asserted: “This is the only name specifically commanded by an apostle as the one in which the Lord’s people should ‘glorify God.’”³⁶

SUMMARY

Despite the fact that other names are mentioned in the Isaiah context, causing hesitancy by some to connect the prophecy with the singular name of “Christian,” nevertheless, “Christian” holds transcendent status on the basis of the fact that Isaiah pinpoints **very specific future events** that would precede and culminate in the bestowal of the new name. His prophecy specifically anticipates (1) the establishment of the church in Jerusalem in Acts 2, consisting only of Jews, (2) followed by the incorporation of the Gentiles in Acts 10, (3) in turn giving way to the inspired declaration by Luke in Acts 11 that for the **first** time in human history, the disciples were designated “Christians.” These Earthshaking

events are too significant and integral to the divine scheme of redemption to be coincidental or circumstantial.

Pause for a moment, “take a step back,” and contemplate how God brought to fruition His plan of salvation. “When the fullness of the time had come” (Galatians 4:4), we see the arrival of Christ in human form on Earth (only after some 4,000 years of human history in which God actively operated providentially “behind the scenes” in anticipation of what was to come), His life culminating in a propitiatory death (around which the sole means of atonement revolves), His resurrection and ascension and, finally, the establishment of His Church and the commencement of the proclamation of the Gospel. This remarkable establishment—second only to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in spiritual importance—specifically and intentionally was composed initially only of Jews, even though it was God’s intention from eternity to save **all** people regardless of ethnicity or nationality. Hence, though the initially exclusive outreach to Jews was deemed divinely appropriate (cf. Acts 13:46-47), it was not until the Gospel was offered to the Gentiles that we see the climax and pinnacle of God’s redemptive intentions. It makes complete sense, then, that God would mark this defining eventuality—this eternally significant spiritual accomplishment in which the first Gentile converts were made and the first Gentile church was established—with a Heavenly notification and stamp of approval of this divinely wondrous occurrence. He did so by bestowing the name that He intended from all eternity to identify those who would render submission to His Son.³⁷

“By what more glorious, or more honorable name, could they have been called? A name, which, in its genuine and original meaning, includeth in it everything that is virtuous and amiable, just and charitable, noble and divine!”³⁸ Indeed, all those who profess to be Christians would do well to abandon humanly-devised denominational names and conform themselves to the name intended by Deity from all eternity to characterize those who belong to Him.

CONCLUSION

With uncanny precision—characteristic only of divine foresight and eternal pre-planning—the arrival of the name Christian in human history

is further demonstration of the inspiration of the Bible. Such earth-shaking events are too marvelous for the finite human mind to fully fathom. Only an eternal Being could orchestrate such magnificent spiritual realities.

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—**things which angels desire to look into** (1 Peter 1:10-12).

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How **unsearchable** are His judgments and His ways past finding out! “For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?” “Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?” For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen (Romans 11:33-36).

ENDNOTES

1 Greek sources identify the use of *chrematisei* in this verse as an example of a “Gnomic future.” See G. Abbott-Smith (1922), *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons), p. 484, and Ernest De Witt Burton (1898), *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), third edition, p. 36.

2 The term “all” is used several times in Romans as a technical word for all categories of human flesh, i.e., Jew and Gentile. Cf. “every” (2:9; 3:19) and “none” (3:10-12).

3 Jesus gives but one exception to this general rule, found in Matthew 19:9.

4 John Jones (1825), *The Tyro’s Greek and English Lexicon* (London: Longman, et al.), second edition, p. 1332, emp. added. This observation is supported by the fact that the Gnomic future here has the force of an imperative, i.e., “let her be called.” The imperative makes it a command. Whose command? Paul would not be speaking of humans commanding other humans. Rather, he was simply relaying a command of God—that

such a woman is to be considered to be in a state of adultery. See Nigel Turner (1963), *Syntax in A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, ed. James Moulton (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), 3:86. Also Barbara and Timothy Friberg (1981), *Analytical Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 485.

5 The name “Christian” appears in several early secular writers, including Pliny the Younger (*Letters*, 10.96), Suetonius (*Life of Nero*, XVI.2; *Life of Claudius*, XVIII.2), Tacitus (*Annals*, XV.44), as well as Jewish historian Josephus (*Antiquities*, XVIII.3.3). Even the use of the term by those outside the Christian community supports the conclusion that Acts 11:26 refers to an action taken by God. Hermann Olshausen notes that among “profane” writers, “it is used especially where mention is made of giving names or titles of office, according to the radical meaning of the word, ‘to manage affairs of state’”—(1860), *Biblical Commentary on the Gospels and on the Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), 4:379. Accordingly, observe that this usage squares with the idea that God Himself gave the name to manage the affairs of the new kingdom. Secular writers merely used the word as an identifier of the group to which they were referring, without necessarily intending any sort of derogatory overtones.

6 Adam Clarke (1855), *Matthew to the Acts* (New York: Carlton & Phillips), 1:772, italics in orig.

7 Matthew Poole (no date), *A Commentary on the Holy Bible: Matthew-Revelation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 3:422.

8 George Benson (1756), *The History of the First Planting of the Christian Religion* (London: J. Waugh and W. Fenner), 1:248, italics in orig., emp. added.

9 Philip Doddridge (1807), *The Family Expositor* (Charlestown, MA: S. Etheridge), p. 164, italics in orig.

10 John Guyse (1797), *The Practical Expositor* (Edinburgh: Ross & Sons), 3:136, parentheses and italics in orig., emp. added. Guyse received the degree of D.D. from Aberdeen in 1733.

11 Wayne Jackson (2005), *The Acts of the Apostles from Jerusalem to Rome* (Stockton, CA: Courier Publications), p. 138.

12 For example, in the prestigious *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* series, Richard Longenecker alludes to “its having first been given in derision”—(1981), *Acts in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 9:402. Yet A.C. Hervey insists: “There is no

evidence...of its having been given in derision”—(1958 reprint), *The Acts of the Apostles in The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H.D.M. Spence and Joseph Exell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 18:359. Also John M’Clintock and James Strong: “There is no reason to think with some that the name ‘Christians’ was given in absolute *derision*”—(1968 reprint), “Christian,” in *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 2:269, italics in orig. Likewise Jackson: “The name...was not given in derision by the enemies of Christ” (p. 138). Also S.T. Bloomfield (1845), *The Greek Testament* (London: Longman, et al.), 1:596—“There is no reason to think...that the name *Christianoi* was given in *derision*.... [T]here is no proof that it was a term of reproach.” In fact, according to G.V. Lechler and K. Gerok, this view “has nothing to recommend it, except the circumstance that the people of Antioch were notorious for their wit and satire”—(1864), *Theological and Homiletical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. J.P. Lange (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), 1:436.

13 Olshausen maintained: “This name proceeded from the Gentiles, and, as the form of it shews, from the Romans” (4:379). Heinrich Meyer states emphatically: “This name decidedly originated not in, but *outside of, the church*.... Hence the origin of the name must be derived *from the Gentiles*”—(1879), *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), p. 296, italics in orig. Also G.V. Lechler and K. Gerok: “the name proceeded from the Gentiles” (1:435). Likewise A.C. Hervey: “they received the name of Christians...from the outside world, and accepted it themselves” (18:359). F.F. Bruce claims the name is “a Latin formation (with suffix *-ianos* from Latin *-ianus*”—(1988), *The Book of Acts in The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Gordon Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 228. However, Christopher Wordsworth insisted that “the termination *-onus* is *no proof of a Roman extraction*”—(1872), *The New Testament...in the Original Greek* (London: Rivingtons), 1:96, italics in orig. Though he concedes the Latin termination of the word, R.J. Knowling says, “it is difficult to find an origin for the title amongst Christians or amongst Jews.... [B]ut there is no need to suppose that the name was of Roman origin”—(no date), *The Acts of the Apostles in The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 2:268-269. M’Clintock and Strong agree with this observation, noting that the Latin termination “is not indeed a conclusive proof that it

emanated from the Romans, because such terminations had already been familiarized throughout the East by the Roman dominion” (2:269). Similarly, H.B. Hackett stated: “**The argument is not decisive**, since Latinisms were not unknown to the Greek of this period”—(1870), *A Commentary on the Original Text of the Acts of the Apostles* (Boston, MA: Gould & Lincoln), p. 193, emp. added. Noting the older critical scholars’ objections to the historicity of the statement in Acts 11:26, based on the infrequent use of the term “Christian” as well as the Latin termination *-ianos*, John Dickie states emphatically: “But there is general agreement now that these objections are **groundless**”—(1979), “Christian” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1:657, emp. added.

14 Elias Bickerman held that *chrematidzo* means “assume the name” or “style oneself” and so means that the Christians themselves originated the name—(1949), “The Name of Christians,” *The Harvard Theological Review*, 42[2]:109-124, April. Matthew Henry agreed: “Probably they called themselves so, incorporated themselves by that title.... they gave themselves a name”—(1838), *The Comprehensive Commentary on the Holy Bible*, ed. William Jenks (Brattleboro: Brattleboro Typographic Company), p. 62. Wordsworth cites his agreement with Eusebius who “appears to ascribe its imposition to the Church herself, and not...to her enemies” (1:96). But Dickie disagrees: “The name...did not originate with the Christians themselves” (1:657). As noted previously, so does Poole: “...not a name they gave themselves” (p. 422). And R.C.H. Lenski is emphatic: “It is at once evident that the disciples did not invent this name themselves”—(2001), *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostle* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), p. 457. Observe, however, that this view does not necessarily exclude the source of the name being God—since outsiders would have naturally attributed its origin to the Christians themselves out of ignorance as to the role the Lord would have exercised by divine inspiration in bestowing the name via His spokesmen. Poole illustrates this very point by attributing the source of the name to “Divine authority” while stating “it was not a name they gave themselves” (p. 422).

15 John Calvin understood this fact in his comments on Acts 11:26: “Christ brought forth his name thence like a standard, whereby it might be made known to all the world that there was some people whose captain was Christ, and which did glory in his name”—(1999 reprint),

Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 1:471. (1:472).

16 For example, Moses (Exodus 33:11) and Job (Job 38:1).

17 For example, Abraham (Genesis 15:1), Joseph (Genesis 37:6), Pharaoh (Genesis 41:25), Balaam (Numbers 22:22ff.), Peter (Acts 10:3), and Ananias (Acts 9:10).

18 Alfred Marshall (1958), *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 517.

19 All three are first Aorist infinitives—Samuel Bagster (no date), *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons), pp. 97,386,438. *Chrematisai* is in the active voice which indicates that “they called” rather than “they were called,” as would be the case if the word was in the passive voice. “To teach” is also active, while the third infinitive (“to be assembled”) is passive. Nevertheless, all three modify the leading verbal phrase, “It happened to them,” i.e., to Paul and Barnabas. Hence, what happened to Paul and Barnabas was that “they were assembled,” “they taught,” and “they called,” i.e., they called the disciples Christians first at Antioch. See also Knowling, 2:268. Some lexicographers limit the occurrence of the verb *chrematidzo* in the New Testament to the passive, e.g., Thomas Green (1890), *A Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament* (New York: John Wiley & Sons), p. 205. However, as Hugo McCord rightly observes, its appearance in Hebrews 12:25 discounts that notion since the present participle in that verse is in the active voice—(1963), “The Divine Name,” *Gospel Advocate*, 105[50]:790, December 12. p. 790; recall Marcus Dods’ rendering: “Him that made to them divine communications on earth”—(no date), *The Epistle to the Hebrews in The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 4:373. Ultimately, even if *chrematisai* were passive, it would not alter the fact that the disciples were first designated “Christians” by someone, and evidence is lacking for attributing that action to outsiders. If Isaiah 62:2 refers to this occurrence, the matter is settled as to Who was responsible for imparting the name. On the passive, compare Alexander Buttman (1873), *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (Andover: Warren F. Draper), p. 188, and Hervey: “Its common meaning is, in the passive voice, ‘to be warned by God’” (18:359). To the contrary, see the discussion in Gareth Reese (1976), *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Joplin, MO: College Press), pp. 420-423.

20 p. 295.

21 A.T. Robertson (1930), *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman), 3:160, brackets added.

22 p. 457.

23 1:248, italics in orig.

24 3:136.

25 p. 138, brackets in orig.

26 1:772.

27 In an interchange with Alexander Campbell printed in *The Millennial Harbinger* beginning in September 1857 on the origin of the name “Christian,” James Shannon articulated succinctly the misrepresentation by the KJV in its rendering of Acts 11:26—“[I]t breaks a single sentence into two; converts the active voice into the passive; the infinitive mood into the indicative; and the accusative case into the nominative”— (1858), “The Christian Name—No. 2” in *The Millennial Harbinger*, 1[8]:454.

28 See 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 2 Timothy 3:16; Matthew 10:19; 2 Samuel 23:2. For a discussion of the meaning of “inspiration” and how the Bible defines that phenomenon, see Dave Miller (2014), “The Nature of Bible Inspiration,” Apologetics Press, <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=13&article=5012>.

29 J.W. McGarvey (1863), *A Commentary on Acts of Apostles* (Bowling Green, KY: Guardian of Truth Foundation), p. 147.

30 The Greek text is somewhat difficult to clarify, causing some translators to take Agrippa’s statement as a forthright indication that he was partially convinced by Paul’s defense, while other translators take Agrippa’s reaction ironically, if not sarcastically, and cast the statement as a question. For discussion of the textual question, see Bruce Metzger (1975), *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies), p. 496; Jack Lewis (1991), *The English Bible From KJV to NIV* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), second edition, pp. 184,391; F.F. Bruce (1990), *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 506, who renders it: “In short, you are urging me to act the Christian.” Regardless of how one understands Agrippa’s statement—whether sincerely or ironically—it nevertheless bears out the fact that he understood Paul’s objective: **to encourage people to become Christians.**

- [31](#) Forms of the word “suffer” occur 17 times in 1 Peter in the NKJV.
- [32](#) Matthew Henry (1810), *An Exposition of all the Books of the Old and New Testaments* (London: W. Gracie), 4:823.
- [33](#) 3:136, italics and parentheses in orig.
- [34](#) 3:136-137, italics in orig.
- [35](#) James Burton Coffman (1976), *Commentary on Acts* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing House), pp. 234ff.
- [36](#) p. 235.
- [37](#) According to Walter Grundmann, the name “Christian” “denotes Christ’s adherents, those who belong to Him”—(1974), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 9:537. Also Dickie, 1:657—“an adherent of Christ.” Hence, as Hans Bietenhard observes, they are “the possession of their Lord”—(1981 reprint), “*onoma*” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 5:279. Or as K.L. Schmidt notes, they are “partisans of Christ”—(1965), “*ekklēsia*” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 3:516. Richard Longenecker says the word means “‘Christ’s followers’, or ‘those of the household of Christ’” (9:402).
- [38](#) Benson, 1:249.

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