

Building Bridges of Peace

Names, Terms and the Reason for their Use.

*"I have become all things to all men,
that I might by all means save some." ~ Apostle Paul*

TO appeal to a broader audience, the names of God have been used in their Hebrew and in their equivalent Greek or English translations. We find the apostles and authors also used God's name in different languages and explaining the meanings of certain words and names in others languages within the same text. Also, the New Testament was recorded in Greek, Arabic and Hebrew. Paul used more than one language when expressing God's names and other words or phrases, as he traveled throughout Asia Minor. To appeal to a wider audience, the authors of the New Testament would use a word or name for God in one language and then translate its definition into another language.

Messiah

The use of the descriptive title Messiah translated as Christ is just one of many examples. Notice:

John 1:41 He (*Andrew*) first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). NKJV

Wanting to reach Jews and non-Jews alike, John used both the Hebrew description of the name of the Son of God (Messiah) and the Greek equivalent (Christ). Similarly, we find Matthew doing the same thing:

Matt 1:23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, "God with us."
NKJV

Matthew wrote for a primarily Jewish audience so he used the Hebrew language. "Immanuel" is Hebrew, but "God with us" is Greek. Clearly, Matthew was using God's names in both languages so that he would appeal to both Jews and non-Jews. Not wanting to leave out the non-Jews, he explained the meanings of Hebrew names in terms the Greeks would also be able to relate with. This is important.

We find this practiced by many of the apostles in a variety of different instances (Matt 1:23, Mark 5:41, Mark 15:22, 34, John 1:41,42, John 9:7, Acts 4:36, Acts 9:36). Clearly, John saw a benefit and purpose in referring to Yeshua as both Messiah and Christ (John 1:41).

Jesus is an adaptation and variation of both Latin and Greek. It's from the Greek "*Iesou's*." Jesus is the result of a people that found it difficult to pronounce "Iesou's," and so settled upon "Jesus." Today, Iesou's is considered a Greek translation of the Hebrew name Yeshua, or Yeshuah – meaning "My Salvation," "God is my Salvation" or "The Lord delivers."

Christ is Greek for the Hebrew term meaning *The Anointed One* – or the *Messiah*. Messianic is another descriptive term that is, in reality, identical in meaning to the term "Christian" with the only real difference being the root language it comes from and labels that different groups sometimes attach to the real meaning of the words for further identification purposes. Today, the term "Messianic" is used by many Jewish and Gentile Christians who do not want to be confused with a mainstream Christianity that ignores the "Jewishness" of our Messiah, or His practices and teachings – including what many mistakenly call the "Jewish Feasts," "Jewish Sabbaths" and old "Jewish Laws."

While many believers use the term "Messianic" to differentiate themselves from other Christians who do not keep God's Laws (Torah); some Christians avoid use of the term "Messianic" out of fear of being thought of as "Jewish" or not wanting to appear to practice any form of Judaism. But the original Church of God was primarily Jewish in its membership and continued to attend synagogues each Sabbath for

hundreds of years after Messiah's death and resurrection! As God called more and more people from all nations, they joined in with, and remained in the fellowship and company of, their Jewish counterparts! The saints who believed in Messiah Yeshua – both Jews and non-Jews alike – were all Messianic believers in Messiah (Christ), and as such were made *one* through the blood of Messiah (Eph 2:14). Paul taught the Gentiles that they were “grafted into” the natural olive tree that is Israel. Therefore, Jews and Gentiles should learn to be comfortable with one another – especially converted believers.

Rom 11:17 For if the firstfruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*; and if the root *is* holy, so *are* the branches.

17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,

18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, *remember that* you do not support the root, but the root supports you. NKJV

The “tree” that is called Israel is at the core of true Christianity.

God inspired Peter to show how God had opened up Salvation to the Gentiles, through the same cleansing of Messiah's blood (Acts 11:1-18). This resulted in the beginning of a bond fellowship that God intended between the two, with the sharing worship, meals and

the like (vs3). Paul further showed that one of the purposes of our Savior's sacrifice was to unite the Hebrews together with all God calls! This is a great truth! The covenants that were given to Israel were being shared with people from all races and nations who believed in Yeshua as Messiah and who walked with God. They were no longer cut off from the promises of God. Notice:

Eph 2:11 Therefore remember that you, once
Gentiles in the flesh — who are called
Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision
made in the flesh by hands
12 that at that time you were without Christ, being
aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and
strangers from the covenants of promise, having no
hope and without God in the world.
13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far
off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
NKJV

These new saints were no longer considered “*aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.*” This is because they were no longer considered “*strangers from the covenants of promise*” that were given to Israel! God help us to see this, for it appears that Satan has blinded this wonderful Good News from many in order to further the breach that Messiah shed His blood to heal!

Eph 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself **one new man from the two, thus making peace,**

16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. NKJV

Messiah spilled His blood to tear down the wall of division. Let's each resist letting anyone place a wall in the church between Jewish and non-Jewish believers again!

Failure to understand the significance of the unity that God desires between Jewish and Gentile believers has prevented many from fully realizing many of the blessings of truth contained in the covenants and promises that God is sharing with them. One tends to read the words of Moses, the prophets, psalms and writings (the Tanach) with a different eye of understanding when they realize many of the promises are applicable to them too! Just as one might not want to curse those whom God has blessed, one might not read the Old Testament, with a mental disconnect, thinking it's old and done away and only referring to the Jews, when they realize they are grafted into Israel – not called to replace Israel! Replacement theology is Satan's lie to hide the promises from the saints. One might be so quick to dismiss as "Old" and done away, many of the wonderful promises and testimonies God is sharing with the world through the seed of Abraham.

Gen 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." NKJV

The faith God brought the world through His Son – the Jewish son of David – is rooted in Hebrew history, Hebrew religion, Jewish life and faith. Therefore, when practiced in its pure form, being a disciple of Yeshua will continue to appear somewhat “Jewish.” Because the Jews or Israelites were the first people to receive God’s Words, and because they are the ones God chose to preserve His Words (Rom 3:1-2), a form of what some will try to dismiss as “Judaism” is always going to be a part of God’s Truth and His Church.

A Messianic or Christian Church of God

Some believe a Messianic is merely a Jewish Christian, but there are many Gentiles who also consider themselves Messianic and/or who attend Messianic congregations. Again, Messianic really means follower of Messiah – just like Christian does. While Messianic Jews and Gentiles alike place their hope in the mercy of God through the Messiah, like all Christians do, at least congregation’s labeling themselves as Messianic can generally be expected to keep God’s laws, Sabbaths and Feasts. Generally,

Messianic congregations do not believe the Messiah came to abrogate the Law of God. They understand He came to fulfill it (Matt 5:17-19)! A Messiah that taught and fulfilled His Father's Law has been the mantra of the true Church of God for generations.

Just like not all who call themselves "Church of God" have similar core beliefs but varying doctrines, so those groups who call themselves Messianic believers also share core beliefs but may vary significantly in their doctrines and practices. Both Biblically and in modern times, true faithful saints are found in both groups naming themselves Church of God and Messianic congregations. A house divided against itself shall not stand.

The most often used church name in the New Testament (and therefore usually the most preferred) for Jews and Gentiles alike was "the Church of God" (Acts 20:28, 1 Cor 1:2, 10:32, 11:22, 15:9, 2 Cor 1:1, Gal 1:13, 1 Tim3:5). Yet, even that biblically descriptive name has been applied to so many different churches today that differ vastly in their practice and doctrine from the church Jesus and the apostles founded, that it has lost most of its original esoteric meaning to most people. Having said that, Paul did also refer to the Messiah's flocks as the "Churches of Christ:"

Rom 16:16 Salute one another with an holy kiss.
The churches of Christ salute you. KJV

Since “church” means “congregation,” and since, as John showed us in John 1:41, *Christ* is a direct translation of *Messiah*; to say, “churches of Christ” is the same as saying “churches of Messiah” or Messianic congregation. Paul also referred to the church as “**Church of the Firstborn**” (Heb 12:23). Obviously the firstborn was Jesus (Rom 8:29). Equivalent translations of that application of Paul’s name for God’s Church then would be: *Church of Messiah, Church of Yeshua, Church of Jesus or Church of Christ*. **It takes more than a mere name to be a body of faithful disciples and believers of Christ and the Most High Father.**

Some have assumed that having what they have been taught was the only correct name was an evidence of their being the true “Church of God.” Other churches, (ones which were called by some other name), were not *really* considered part of the true Church of God, just because they didn’t have the “right name.” But such a belief is not founded in scripture. Respectfully, such a limiting belief is more akin to being misled with a blind self-confidence than it is to an understanding of the words of the Holy Bible.

Yahweh and Lord, Torah and Law

Torah is one of those descriptive terms that, when translated into the English word “law,” is quite

inadequate and limiting. When we read the English word “law” in the Bible, it is most generally translated from the word “Torah.” In English, “law” usually invokes the thought of God’s commandments. But Torah means so much more than merely God’s Commandments. Torah means the whole instruction from God – including, but not limited to His Commandments. Torah refers to the whole of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. But in context, Torah also includes the whole of God’s Words – including the prophets, writings and Psalms. For a Messianic or understanding Christian, Torah would then include the New Testament as well. Torah implies and includes the whole of God’s law, but it is so much more! Torah includes God’s enlightening Testimonies, Statutes, the written examples and stories, God’s instructions, the prophecies, the inspirational writings, the Gospels, and epistles etc.... At its core, TORAH means ALL of God’s instructions! Paul referred to the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Let’s not limit God’s Words by our unfamiliarity with certain words which God inspired to be used in Holy Scripture.

It would take too much time to record herein all the times when God’s names – each filled with unique, rich meaning – are translated simply as God or LORD. God has many names. The primary name we find in scripture is Yahweh (YHVH). It means, the Eternal, self existent one who is and has always been. This name also speaks to God’s omnipotence and holiness. Variations of this Great Name are Yah, and I AM. This

name is usually translated simply as LORD. There are many other names of God, with totally distinct and different descriptive meanings, which are given to describe aspects of God's power, love or tenderness – but which are all translated simply as “Lord.” Therefore, like the apostles, we sometimes also use the Hebrew name to convey its full descriptive depth of meaning.

Why Avoid Judaic Terms?

Some, out of fear or concern of perceived “Judaism,” have avoided the use of these names and other terms that are used in the Bible, including terms and names used by the Gentile members of biblical Church of God. How sad it is to see the depth and beauty of God's chosen words of scripture being supplanted by lesser words which conceal the true meanings of the words they are supposed to be translated from.

It is understandable why people would want to avoid going in the direction of “Judaism,” if Judaism meant becoming like the Pharisees. This author also wants to avoid that form of “Judaism,” or anything close to it! But to avoid anything one perceives as “Jewish” is to avoid the “root” and “tree” that we are all grafted into, which is Israel (Rom 11:17-18). Let's not throw out the baby with the bath water. A person can learn from the best of other cultures and peoples, without emulating their weaknesses or faults.

An attempt is being made on this site to use terms that:

- 1 Accurately describe the original apostolic Jerusalem Church of God, to which believing Gentiles are grafted in.
- 2 Speak to the type of people that are the most likely to respond to this truth, i.e., those who are interested in seeking the full counsel of God and are thereby more likely to keep God's Sabbath, Feasts and study Torah.
- 3 Use a variety of terms (Jesus / Yeshua, Christ / Messiah, Passover service / Seder, etc...) in an attempt to reach and bring together differing believers into the unity of the One name that God has given us as the Savior of the World – the Son and Lamb of God (John 3:16).

This has been a difficult but important task, and I am doing my best with it. But with the vastness and diverseness of what is called “Christianity” today, it is nearly impossible to find modern names or terms that purely describe the true biblical Church of God or its doctrine.

Even more difficult has been the task of finding words that speak to as many believers in our Messiah as possible, while alienating as few as possible. While

one group of people is attracted and made more comfortable by the use of certain words and terms, other believers are distrustful and suspect of those same terms. The same applies vise-a-versa. This was one of Paul's greatest challenges, and one that he struggled frustratingly with throughout his life. This author has been made to understand Paul's frustration.

To the Jews, Paul was persecuted for not being "Jewish" enough in his teachings and practices. To the Gentiles, Paul was persecuted for bringing a strange new "Jewish" religion to them. But with God's help, Paul was able to bring believing Gentiles and Jews together into the one true faith in the Son of God. In Christ, being a Jew or Gentile is less important than living the true faith (Gal 3:28). This does not mean that Jews are to become like Gentiles, leaving their heritage behind. The natural tree we're all grafted into is Israel. It means that we put aside our personal lives to let Messiah Yeshua live in us (Gal 2:24). There is one LORD and one Church – the Church of God, the Messianic Church of Christ kept in His Father's Name – meaning kept in His Father's favor and truth. That includes Messianic believers and Gentile believers. This new body of believers from all nations and races continued to attend synagogue with their Jewish brethren for hundreds of years. As a new branch of Christianity took hold, a new wall of division took hold. For many, that wall of division remains to this day. But that is now what God intended for us.

Paul was all things to all people, so that he could save as many as possible (1 Cor 9:22). But let's remember; all during Paul's faithful ministry to the Gentiles, his hope and intent was always to provoke to salvation his fellow Jews, that all may be one in Messiah (Rom 11:13-14).

Haggadah, Seder and Feast Days

The reader will notice names used interchangeably that describe God's Holy Feasts. Sabbath or Shabbat, Unleavened Bread is also *Matza* or *Matzos*, Pentecost is *Shavuot*, The Feast of Trumpets is also called *Yom Teruah*, Atonement is also known as *Yom Kippur*, The Feast of Booths or Tabernacles is also called *Sukkot* and the Last Great Day is also known as *Shemini Atzeret*. *Rosh Hodes* is Hebrew for New Moon – the first day of each month in the Hebrew calendar.

For Passover, the term *Seder* means “the order.” In reference to Passover, *Seder* means, the order of the Passover Service. *Haggadah* means “the telling.” It refers to the telling of the events surrounding the Passover. The Haggadah is based upon and includes the Seder, but it entails much more. The Passover Haggadah is the story of Passover that is to be told every year to our children. Passover was to not to just be eaten, it was to be explained in detail annually at its appointed time (Ex 13:14-15). A Messianic Seder is the order of the service for those who believe in

Messiah as Savior. A Messianic Haggadah is the telling of the story of Passover – enjoining both the prophetic lessons of the first Passover in Egypt with their fulfillment at Messiah’s last Passover Seder with His disciples.

Messiah and His apostles ate the Passover with all of its teachings and symbols thoroughly explained and its historical stories re-told, just as Jews had done for centuries. What was different was a fuller explanation of the meaning of the symbols. Messiah was symbolized by the lamb, Messiah is the true unleavened bread from heaven, and the wine represents His blood – shed for the remission of sins. The Passover Yeshua kept with His disciples is distinct from the form of Passover that has been adopted by many churches today. The faithful Church of God will continue to keep the Passover service in the same manner as Messiah’s Passover – with the full Seder and Haggadah with the new deeper understanding of the symbols. While it is admirable to see people strive to keep Passover to the best of their understanding, they miss out on much of its meaningful blessings when they do not keep it fully as Yeshua and His apostles enhanced and kept it from ancient days.

Those who know how the original Passover was anciently kept by the Jews through the ages will recognize the similarities and pattern in Jesus’ Passover Seder, as recorded in the Gospels. Yeshua, and His church have kept the same Passover Seder in

continuous perpetuity, adding to it only the deeper understanding of the symbolic meaning of the lamb, bread, wine, and the foot-washing and foot washing attitude that is now to accompany it.

I hope this introductory and summery explanation for the reason for our interchangeable use of English, Hebrew and Greek terms and names is enlightening and taken for its intended purpose – to reach out to as many different people as possible and build *bridges of peace* based in truth, as we all respond to the Good News revealed through Messiah Yeshua.

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