

# PREFACE: NAMES, TERMS, AND THE REASON FOR THEIR USE

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

—Apostle Paul

**T**O APPEAL TO a broader audience, in this book the names of God have been used in their Hebrew and in their equivalent Greek or English translations. We find the apostles and authors of the New Testament also used God's name in different languages and sometimes explained the meanings of certain words and names in more than one language, within the same text. The New Testament was recorded in Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew. The use of the descriptive title Messiah translated as Christ is just one of many examples. Notice: "He [Andrew] first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated, the Christ) (John 1:41)."

## NAMES OF JESUS

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: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, ‘God with us’” (Matt. 1:23).

Matthew wrote for a primarily Jewish audience so he used the Hebrew language. “Immanuel” is Hebrew, but “God with us” was from the Greek. Clearly, Matthew was using God’s names in both languages so 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 be able to relate to. This is important. (See also Matt. 1:23; Mark 5:41; 15:22, 34; John 1:41–42; 9:7; Acts 4:36; 9:36.) Clearly John purposely referred to Yeshua (Jesus) in both the Hebrew tongue (Messiah) and the Greek (Christ). Therefore, we too should be comfortable referring to Jesus the Christ in various languages.

The name *Jesus* is a variation of the Greek *Iesous*, which is a translation of the Hebrew *Yeshua* (or *Yeshuah*), meaning “Salvation” or “the Lord delivers.” The name and pronunciation of “Jesus” resulted from the English speaking people’s inability to pronounce the Greek name “Iesous” properly.

“Christ” is Greek for the Hebrew term meaning “Anointed One”—or “Messiah.” Thus, “messianic” is another descriptive term that is in reality identical

in meaning to the term “Christian” with the only real difference being the labels that different groups use to refer to one another. 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.”

### MESSIANIC

While many believers use the term messianic to differentiate themselves from Christians who do not keep God’s laws (or the Torah), some Christians avoid using 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! Even Paul taught the Gentiles that they were “grafted into” the natural olive tree that was Israel: “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, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you” (Rom. 11:17–18). Therefore, Jews and Gentiles should learn to be comfortable with one another.

The “root” of Israel is at the core of true Christianity. The faith God brought the world through His Son—and

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 call “Judaism” is always going to be a part of God’s truth and His church.

Some believe a messianic is merely a Jewish Christian, but many Gentiles consider themselves messianic and/or attend messianic congregations. While messianic Jews and Gentiles alike place their hope in the mercy of God through the Messiah like all Christians do, messianic congregations 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 who taught and fulfilled His Father’s law has been the mantra of the true church of God for generations. But even among those groups who call themselves messianic believers today, many vary significantly in their doctrine and practices.

### CHURCH/CONGREGATION

The most often used church name in the New Testament (and therefore usually the most preferred) for Jews and Gentiles alike was “Church of God” (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:1;

Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 3:5). Yet 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." Romans 16:16 says, "Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you."

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 that 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.

## TORAH

Torah is one of those descriptive terms that when translated into the English word *law* is quite inadequate and limiting. When we read the word *law* in the Bible, it is most generally translated from the word *Torah*. In English, *law* usually invokes the thought of God's 10 commandments. But Torah means so much more than merely God's commandments. Torah means, instruction from God. Torah includes, but is not limited to, God's commandments. Torah usually refers to the whole of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. But in context, the full Torah could also include the whole of God's words—including those found in the prophets, writings, and psalms—also referred to as the *Tanach*. For a messianic or understanding Christian, the full extent of Torah could then include the New Testament as well as the Tanach. Torah implies and includes the whole of God's law, but it is so much more! Torah (God's instruction) includes God's enlightening testimonies, His wise statutes, the written examples and stories, God's oracles and precepts, the prophecies, the inspirational writings, songs and proverbs, the Gospels, the epistles, and so on. At its core, Torah means *all* of God's instruction. Paul referred to the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Let's not limit God's words by *our* unfamiliarity with certain words that God inspired to be used in Holy Scripture.

## A BROAD APPEAL

It would take too much space to record herein all the places where God's names—each filled with unique, rich meaning—are translated simply as God or LORD. Therefore, like the apostles, we sometimes also use the Hebrew name to convey its full descriptive depth of meaning.

Some, out of fear or concern of perceived “Judaism,” have avoided terms that are used in the Bible, including terms and names used by the Gentile members of the biblical church of God. How far have some descended out of fear or of being uncomfortable or being suspicious of the unknown?

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” we are all grafted into, which is Israel (Rom. 11:17–18). Let's not throw out the baby with the bathwater. A person can learn from the best of other cultures and peoples without emulating their weaknesses or faults.

An attempt has been made in this book to use terms that

- Accurately describe the original apostolic Jerusalem church of God, to which Gentiles were invited and grafted into;
- Speak to the type of people that are the most likely to read a book of this nature, that is, those

who are already predisposed to keep or at least consider God's Sabbath, feasts, and Torah;

- Vary (Jesus/Yeshua, Christ/Messiah, Passover service/Seder, and so forth) in an attempt to reach and bring together differing believers in 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've done my best with it. But with the vastness and diverseness of what is called Christianity today, it is nearly impossible to find names or terms that purely describe the 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 made more comfortable by the use of certain words, others seem distrustful or suspicious of them, and vice versa. This was one of Paul's greatest and most frustrating challenges, one that he struggled 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 Gentiles together into the one true faith with the believing Jews. 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 lives to let Messiah Yeshua live in us (Gal. 2:24). There is one Lord and one church—the church of God, the 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. Indeed, 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 (Rom. 11:13–14).

## HAGGADAH AND SEDER

*Passover* is English for *Pesach*. Therefore, the Passover meal could be called the *Paschal* meal. Unleavened Bread is also referred to as *Matzah*, so the English rendering Feast of Unleavened Bread is also correctly rendered Festival of *Matzah*. *Matzah* and *Pesach* in their various uses are terms that readers will find in most Jewish Bibles—in both the Tanach (old) and New Testaments.

*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 not just

to be eaten; it was to be explained in detail annually at its appointed time (Ex. 13:14–15). A messianic Haggadah is the order of the service the way Messiah and His apostles ate Passover with all of its teachings and symbols thoroughly explained and its historical stories retold. This is distinct from the form of Passover that has been adopted by many Christian churches. When understood, it is also a term that reflects the way the original church of God continued to keep the Passover service for many years. 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 Passover was kept in ancient times will recognize Jesus kept the same Passover Seder in perpetuity while He explained to us the deeper understanding of the symbols of the bread, wine, and the foot-washing attitude that is to accompany them. May God bless your Passovers with grace, truth, hope, and peace through God's incredible gift to us all—the Lamb of God.