

There Is Nothing in a Name?

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There is more to Christianity than wearing a certain name. I could put a “Ford” nameplate on a Chevrolet, but that wouldn’t make it a Ford. I could call a worldly person a “Christian,” but that wouldn’t make him one. Likewise, a church building may have the name *Church of Christ* on its building, but that doesn’t make it so by Biblical definition. Such obviously accurate observations give rise to the question, “Is there anything in a name?” Sometimes it is positively stated, “There’s nothing in a name.”

While other things in this world and in religion are important, one flies in the face of reason and Scripture to say a name has no importance. Why does any car have *Chevrolet* instead of *Ford* or no name at all on it? Because there **is** something in a name. That name is important to the manufacturer who advertises, to the customer who buys, and to the state that registers said vehicle. If there is nothing in a name, why not sign someone else’s name when you write a check or borrow money? When you buy insurance, why not put Benito Mussolini’s name in the beneficiary blank? No need to make a will if names are unimportant. Obviously, names of people, places, and things are the most basic and universal forms of identity among us human beings. There would be no order or civilization without them.

Is God concerned about names? He had an angel tell Joseph to “call His name Jesus” before Mary gave birth to our Lord (Mat. 1:21). Later, Jesus taught the apostles, “Whatsoever ye shall ask **in my name**, that will I do” (John 14:13, emph. DM). Peter preached repentance and baptism unto remission of sins “**in the name of Jesus Christ**” (i.e., by His authority) (Acts 2:38, emph. DM). Peter later stated that in **Jesus’ name alone** could/can anyone be saved (Acts 4:12). Isaiah had promised that God’s people would be called by “**a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name**” (Isa. 62:2, emph, DM). The fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded in Acts 11:26 where we read that “the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”

With such emphasis on the sacred name, can we imagine that God has no concern for the name of His church? If we are truly concerned with honoring the name of Christ and being only His church, we will wear only His name. Every designation applied to the church in the New Testament reflects honor on the name of its owner. This is why Paul speaks of “the churches of Christ” in Rom. 16:16. While a church can be wrong while wearing the right name, it cannot be right while wearing the wrong name. **There is something in a name.**

[**Note:** I wrote this article in 1976 for, and it was published in the *Granbury Gospel*, weekly bulletin of the Granbury Church of Christ, Granbury, Texas, of which I was editor. Exact date of publication is unknown].

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