

Glen Park Gospel Church
Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

Rev. Chris Tringham

Called By a New Name No1

14th August 2001

‘Christian’

Scripture Readings: Acts 11.19-26, Acts 26, 1 Peter 4.12-19

There are many names, terms, pronouns and expressions used in the New Testament to describe the nature and relationships of the Christian. This series examines some of them so that we can better learn what it is to be a Christian. No one word fully defines what it is to belong to God through Jesus Christ. They are word pictures. We should not overstress any one word, but seek to understand it in its context and setting.

The name Christian goes back to the first century. It describes the essential relationship of the believer with his Lord and also the world in which he lives. Here we examine each of the three uses of the name in Scripture

It is a Missionary Word for One Who Belongs to Christ. Acts 11.19 - 26.

Up to this point Christians may have been called disaffected Jews, for it was a Jewish phenomena, although Jesus did not intend that it would be so. See Acts 1.8. The disciples were a little slow obeying His instruction, and it wasn't until persecution moved them on that they got down to business. Even then the leaders were slow to be led! See Acts 8.1, and note the last three words.

The name was coined not by the believers for they it seems, saw themselves as ‘belonging to “the Way”’, see Acts 9.2, nor the Jews who also tended to talk of them in public as Nazarenes, Acts 24.5, but the Romans in Antioch; not the Greeks, for the word has the Latin ending form of ‘Christiani’ The Emperor Julian (361AD) wrote that the then residents of Antioch tended to invent satirical

nick names.

The name includes the essence of the Gospel. They were called Christians, not Jesus-ites. The word ‘Christ’ is Greek for ‘anointed’ (Matthew 16.16-17) and thus sheds light on the effectiveness of their witness.

The name ‘Christians’ was likely invented as a stinging tag by unbelievers to describe the first truly multicultural group who proclaimed that Jesus was God’s Anointed.

It is an Evangelistic Word for One Who Witnesses for Christ. Acts 26.28.

What Paul here was supposed to be doing was making a legal defence, but he was, as he always did, took the opportunity to tell someone about Jesus Christ. How did Paul conduct this defence. If we carefully examine each segment we will discover his format for a witness encounter.

He acknowledged the standing, expertise and authority of the dignity before him. v1-3

He identified with Agrippa in matters of race and humanity. v4&5.

He anchored his appeal to their common history, tradition and beliefs. v6&7

He used the Jewish belief in resurrection as a bridge to Jesus Christ.v8&9

He told his own testimony and in it testified of the saving power of Jesus Christ. v10-23

He appealed to Herod’s knowledge of events in Jerusalem. v25-27

He affirmed his earnest desire that all should trust in Jesus Christ.v29

King Agrippa’s Response v28

Could be sincere

Could be longing

Most probably as derision,

But it tells us that the name was in circulation at this time

Notice these elements: Personal respect, cultural identification, working from an agreed point, smooth transition, linking to the death and resurrection of Christ, the use of undeniable first hand experience, strong appeal for decision, his call for recognition of fact, allowing Agrippa to reject or defer a response.

The name ‘Christian’ in Bible times carried a stigma which polite society usually only used in derision and distaste.

To really be a Christian is to be truly Christlike

It is an Encouraging Word for One Who Shares the Reproach of Christ 1 Peter 4.12-19

We should not be astonished if suffering comes our way because of identification with Jesus Christ. ‘To be forewarned is to be forearmed’ says Peter.

Look up these verses: 1 Peter 4.1-2 & 5.8&9, 2 Timothy 3.12, John 15.20-24, 1 Thessalonians 2.14&15. There are others.

From them we learn:

- Jesus Himself told us it would be so.
- Suffering has a purifying effect.
- We are drawn closer into fellowship with God and one another.
- Satan is active to spoil all who belong to the Lord.
- People do these things because they do not know the Lord.
- People hate those who expose their own evil.
- All Christians everywhere experience suffering, not just us.

We must be careful to do nothing to stir up the anger and opposition of others due to our own ineptitude: because of our wrongdoing or sin, because we become objectionable by an inconsiderate witness (copy Paul’s model), because we are hypocritical saying one thing but doing another, by sharpness or selfishness; in the home, in business, in the church or the world.

Welcome Glen Park Gospel Church
Lower Road, Eltham North
Sundays 10.30 am

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