

The Names of Jesus

by E.W. Bullinger

So little attention has been paid to these titles of the Lord Jesus Christ, that few imagine there is any significance in their choice or order. But enough has already been said to convince us of the importance of accuracy in noticing and studying every detail. So numerous are these variations, that in Paul's epistles alone there are seventeen different combinations of the words "Lord", "Jesus" and "Christ". This includes the article, and in three cases the word "our".

Unless these words are used at random, there must be a reason why, if certain words are used, no other words would have answered the same purpose. For example, if it says "Jesus Christ" we must believe that "Christ Jesus" would not have been appropriate. Whether we may ever discover a reason, or whether the reason I now submit may be the right one, does not alter the fact.

I was led to the conclusion at which I have arrived from the circumstances of counting the number of occurrences of each name and the various combinations. When I discovered that the Resurrection was the great line of demarcation, the reason was not far to seek. When I found that in the Gospels "Jesus" occurs alone 612 times, and in the other books only 71 times (out of which 38 are in the transitional book of the Acts); while in all the four Gospels "Christ" occurs alone only 56

times, and in the other books 256 times, the reason was clear. But let us look at the names in order:

"Jesus"

"Iesous". It means not merely "a saviour" because there is another word for that. It means really Jehovah our Saviour. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). It was therefore, the name of His earthly life, and was associated with Him as the sinner, the sufferer, the man of sorrows. It was the name of His humiliation and shame. It was the name under which He was crucified. "This is Jesus" was the inscription on the Cross.

Notice then, that though it occurs alone some 683 times, it never occurs with an adjective. Let us learn to observe accurately what is omitted as well as what is written, and never say with sentimental Christians "blessed Jesus", "dear Jesus", "sweet Jesus". Nothing can add to the perfection of His person, His works or His ways; He needs no adjective to set Him forth.

Let us also be accurate in our use of scripture expressions. If we were all more careful in this matter, there would not be so many and great differences between us. Again, the expression "in Jesus" is not a scriptural expression. It does occur once in the English version in I Thessalonians 4:14, but following the Greek, this should read "by" or "through Jesus." "Yours in Jesus" is written in epistolary correspondence because the writers have not noticed that we are never said to be "in Jesus": but, as we shall presently see, we are always said to be "in Christ".

Jesus was His earthly name; and suffering, sorrow, and death were His earthly lot. But God raised Him from the dead, and then all was changed. "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). God has now ordained that the scene of His suffering shall be the scene of His glory, and "that at the name of Jesus (not the

Lord or Christ) every knee shall bow... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10,11).

Whenever, therefore, you meet with the word "Jesus" alone, it bids you think of "the man of sorrows" who humbled Himself to death for you.

"Christ"

"Christos". This word means "anointed". It speaks of Him as the Anointed One. Anointed and appointed to carry out the gracious covenant of Jehovah as the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel.

As I have said, it occurs only about 56 times in the four Gospels, and then it is generally with the article, the Christ, His official title. The Christ who came unto His own, and was set for the blessing of Israel. But Israel knew not the day of their gracious visitation. They saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. But now, as raised from the dead, He is made the Head of His body — the church, anointed for blessing to His people.

In the other books therefore, we have this title 256 times, setting Him forth as the risen and glorified One, defining the believer's position as justified and accepted in Him. And hence, believers are always said to be "in Christ", quickened with Him, raised with Him, sitting together in the heavenlies with Him, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him. We connect our position with Him as Christ, but we connect our responsibility to Him as —

"Lord"

"Kurios". This title, according to its meaning, sets Him forth as the One who owns, and therefore as one having power and authority. Whenever we find this title, this is the thought connected with it. It is a title connected with the privileges and responsibilities of our position and standing "IN Christ". All

the various conditions of life are associated with Him as "Lord" —

Marriage: "Marry only in the Lord" not merely "in Christ". That would mean you must marry only a Christian, but this means more, — not only that you are to marry a Christian, but, in doing so, you are to say "If the Lord will": you are to recognize His authority, whom you are to acknowledge in all your ways.

Wives: "As it is fit in the Lord" (Colossians 3:18).

Children: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord" (Ephesians 4:1).

Servants: "Do it heartily as to the Lord" (Colossians 3:23).

Believers: It is "the Lord's supper", "the cup of the Lord", "the body and blood of the Lord", "the Lord's table" (1 Corinthians 11). He, therefore, has a right to command, and say "Do this in remembrance of me".

Unbelievers: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost". He may say He is Jesus or Christ, but to say that He is "Lord" is to take Him for our Master as well as our Saviour, it is to bow our wills to His, and take His yoke upon us. That is the work of the Holy Ghost.

"Jesus Christ"

When we have this combination, the emphasis is on the first word, and our thoughts are conveyed from what He was to what He is, from His humiliation to His exaltation. You may translate it in your own minds as you read, "The humbled one who is now exalted" or "The suffering one who is now glorified". In every instance you will find the most remarkable accuracy.

"Christ Jesus"

"Christ Jesus" conveys just the opposite thought. The glorified one who was once humbled. The exalted one who once suffered and died.

I must not stop to give you many examples. The whole New Testament is one vast example. You will not find however, each passage equally clear. Sometimes you will see it at once, and it will give you the thought of the context; at another time, the context will tell you why the titles are used in a particular order.

Look at Philippians 2:5: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". Why "Christ Jesus"? Why not "Jesus Christ"? Because the thought of the context is — from what He was to what He is. The next verse explains, "Who being in the form of God... made Himself of no reputation". Philippians 1:1,2: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of JESUS CHRIST, to all the saints IN CHRIST JESUS... Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father, and from the LORD JESUS CHRIST". Here the Apostles were servants of Jesus (now exalted) servants of the One who sent them forth even as He was Himself sent forth, as a servant: but they wrote to the saints who were "in Christ" (once humbled) and they prayed that, as Lord and Master He would send forth to them grace and peace.

"Son of Man"

This title sets Him forth in His human nature, as the "second man", and as the "last Adam".

"Son of God"

This title reveals Him in His divine nature, and in His relation to God. Hence, in Him all who believe are "called the sons of God".

There is an important difference to be observed in the use and choice of these names. Sometimes they occur in close proximity. Notably in John 5:25. The hour is coming "when the dead shall hear the voice of the SON OF GOD and they that hear shall live". It is as Son of God that He is the quickener of the dead, as is explained in the next verse: "For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son

to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the SON OF MAN". It is as Son of Man that He will judge, as it is written: "God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by THAT MAN whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

In conclusion, let me exhort you to be accurate, not merely in your reading and in your study of the Bible, but in your quotation and interpretation of it. Do not sit down to interpret it, but sit down before it that it may interpret to you the will and purposes of God. It is too often assumed that God never means exactly what He says; and persons go to His word not simply to learn what He says, but to tell us what He means, which is very often something quite different. But may we not ask: If the Holy Ghost meant just that, why did He not say just that ? For example, if He says Jerusalem or Zion, why must we suppose that He meant the church? If He says Euphrates, why are we to assume that He meant to say Turkey?