

What's All This about the NAME of God?

Some people claim that pronouncing the exact name of God is necessary for salvation. They put great emphasis on the “name” of God, in the Hebrew – yet it seems like each group has its own “pronunciation” and spelling, and they each differ from one another! How important is it that we use the ancient, original Hebrew name of the Creator and Hebrew name of His Son?

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A man wrote to me recently, saying, “The word ‘LORD’ and ‘God’ is not a name, it’s a title. Even Baal is called ‘Lord Baal.’ The so-called name of ‘Jesus’ is wrong as there is no ‘J’ in the Hebrew or Greek. FACT. The Messiah was a Jew at birth and would not be given a Greek name. The word ‘Jesus’ has only come to be used in early 1500 A.D.. Fact also: His true name is Yahshua.”

What is the truth about the holy name of God the Father and Christ the Messiah? Does it make any difference that there was no letter “J” in ancient Hebrew? Why all this consternation and confusion and controversy over the name of God, and “Jesus Christ”?

Let’s understand this!

Origin of the Letter “J”

I am writing this article in the English language. In English, the letter “J” is the 10th letter of the alphabet. Our first written records of English date to about 690 AD. Although people had spoken the language before then.

The Old English period lasted until about 1100 A.D. Middle English extended till about 1450 A.D. Modern English began about that time. Words borrowed from other languages became the chief source of vocabulary words. English borrowed thousands of words from other languages. Most of them were Latin in origin, but many came from French and Greek (the latter through Latin).

English began in England. Up until 450 A.D. England was not called England, nor was English spoken there. Before that time the people were known as Britons and most of them spoke Celtic dialects. The Romans, who conquered Britain in 43 A.D., spoke Latin and remained there until the 400’s. During the next hundred years, Germanic tribes conquered Britain – the Angles, Jutes, Saxons, and Frisians, and their language

formed the basis of the English language. In time, English and England was named for the Angles who had conquered the most land.

The letter “J” was the last letter to be added to the English alphabet. It developed from the letter “I” which was the tenth letter of the alphabet used by the Semites, or in Hebrew, the letter “Yod.” The ancient Greeks used the letter and passed it on to the Romans. In the late Middle Ages, when two or more “i’s” were written together, scribes often added a long tail to the last one. During the 1600’s an “i” at the beginning of a word was written with a tail. The “j” developed from these forms, and became a symbol for the consonant “j,” as in “joy,” or “Jesus.”

In Hebrew, the name “Jesus” is “Yeshua,” the “Y” sound coming from the letter “yod,” the tenth letter of the alphabet – even as “J” is the tenth letter of the English alphabet! The one is substituted for the other!

In English, sometimes the letter “j” is even pronounced like a “Y” (or “Yod”), as in “Hallelujah” (pronounced “HalleluiaH” or “Halleluyah.”

The letter “J” then is equivalent to the Hebrew “yod,” and although it is sometimes pronounced differently (as a soft “g” sound), it still represents the first letter of the name “Jesus,” or “Yeshua,” the Christian Messiah (“Anointed One”).

Why then do some people get all cattywompered and their faces out of joint because of the difference in pronunciations? Why do some make an impassible, impossible MOUNTAIN out of a tiny molehill?

The name “Jesus” is merely the ENGLISH form of the Hebrew name “Yeshua” or Yehoshua.” The English name “Jacob” in Hebrew is “Yacob.” The English “Joseph” is in Hebrew “Yoseph,”

So is it wrong, or a sin, to use the name “Jesus,” which is the modern English form of the Hebrew name “Yeshua,” meaning the Messiah, the Saviour?

Of course not! Let’s not get our knickers in a twist over mere pronunciations of letters in languages!

These sort of self-righteous accusations hurled by people of shallow learning and obstinate opinions is not conducive to good spiritual health! As the apostle James wrote, “For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13).

The apostle Paul added, “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. . . So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way” (Rom.14:10-13).

Perhaps a little humility, searching inward, would be better than finger-pointing!

The Greek Language

Holy Names advocates also generally condemn the GREEK usage of *Iesous* for “Jesus” and *Theos* for “God.” They do this despite the fact that the whole New Testament was written in and preserved through the centuries in the GREEK language!

God has preserved the *New Testament Scriptures in the Greek language*, with the ALIEN Greek forms of His name and titles. Christ spoke Greek as well as Hebrew and Aramaic. The apostles wrote most of the New Testament in Greek, because they were primarily reaching out to a Greek-speaking world. The Jews had essentially rejected the message of Christ (see Rom.1:16; 11:7-24).

So what’s wrong with the message going out in Greek? Nothing at all! Jesus Christ grew up in the region of Galilee, “of the nations,” where it was very common to speak Greek in His time! In Isaiah 28, God says, “Truly, with stammering lip and with ALIEN TONGUE he will speak to this people” (Isa.28:11, NRSV). God speaks to His people in “another” language, and different tongues. Hebrew is not the only language in which God speaks to His people. His own Word, in fact, is written in THREE LANGUAGES – Hebrew, Aramaic (Ezra, Nehemiah, and portions of Daniel), and Greek (the whole New Testament)!

The *whole Bible* is the *inspired* Word of Almighty God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). That must of necessity include the Aramaic and Greek portions of recorded Scripture!

We can trust the Word of God (John 17:17), and thru His Word we can know that it is not wrong to use the names of God translated into other languages, because God Himself did so in His very own Word!

Therefore, God’s name and titles may be used as they are translated into English, Russian, German, Greek, Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, French, or any other language on the face of the earth.

New Testament Written in Hebrew First?

Some of the so-called “Holy Names” people also insist that the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew, not in the Greek language.

In what language was the New Testament originally written? Greek? or Hebrew? or Aramaic? Does it make any difference? Is our modern Greek New Testament a forgery and a fraud, foisted upon an ignorant world by clever and devious religious charlatans of the fourth and fifth centuries?

Why is our modern New Testament written in Greek?

If Almighty God only wanted us to use the HEBREW names for God, then we would expect that the writers of the New Testament would have inserted the Hebrew names for God whenever they mentioned Him! But they do not do so. Instead, throughout the New Testament they use the Greek forms of God's names and titles. They

call God *Theos* instead of *Elohim*.

The Evidence of Preservation Itself

Furthermore, even if some parts of the New Testament were written in Hebrew (such as the gospel of Matthew), as some suggest, isn't it amazing that God did not preserve those manuscripts -- instead He chose to preserve His New Testament Scriptures in the GREEK LANGUAGE, with the Greek forms of His name and titles!

Not one book of the New Testament has been preserved in Hebrew -- only in Greek. This is prima facie evidence that it is NOT wrong to use the forms of God's name as they would translate from the Hebrew or Greek.

FACT: There is NO evidence whatsoever that the New Testament was written in Hebrew first. We look at the earliest manuscripts in the New Testament, and they are found to be in the Greek language.. The only book in the New Testament written in Hebrew of which there is any evidence is the gospel of Matthew. Paul wrote in Koine-Greek which is the common man's language in Greek. Luke wrote in Greek, a physician who was very fluent in Greek who wrote in classical hi-style Greek. The AntiNicene fathers point out that originally Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew and then in Greek.

The disciples went out to the world to preach the gospel to the world and they preached in Greek – the official universal language in that day. The Romans spoke Greek as well as Latin. The early Ossuaries of the Jewish priests were in Greek. The “holy names” people allow their theories and BELIEFS to cloud their reasoning and judgment and therefore believe a fantasy, a myth, which they themselves have concocted! For shame!

We have a booklet entitled *New Insight into the Sacred Names of God* which shows that Greek was commonly used throughout Judea during the time of Christ, and even the ossuaries of the Jewish high priests, like Caiaphas, were inscribed with Greek – including the ossuary of James, the son of Joseph, brother of Jesus. Greek! Not Hebrew!

I know that some churches and religious groups believe that we all have to exclusively use the original Hebrew name of God – YHVH, *Yahshua* or some form of the Hebrew language even though one's native language is not Hebrew. The Bible does not say we have to use the Hebrew name exclusively. The New Testament is written in Greek and the name of the Son of God is *Iesous* (pronounced Yesu – the “s” was silent at the end of a name), in Greek.

Earliest New Testament Fragments in GREEK!

Scholars have long denied the veracity of the New Testament Scriptures, claiming that the earliest gospels were not eye-witness accounts of Christ and His life, but were written some one hundred years afterward, or about the middle of the second century, and were based on hearsay, myth, fable, and oral stories which had been passed down. Thus many scholars have regarded the very words of Christ, as recorded in the gospels, as

“suspect.”

Astonishing as it may seem, however, bits of papyrus in an Oxford University library puts the lie to this cherished theory of unbelieving, skeptical scholars! Three scraps of text of the gospel of Matthew, *inscribed in Greek*, have traditionally been believed to have been written in the late second century. But German papyrus expert Carsten Thiede has published a paper arguing that these fragments kept at Oxford's Magdalen College *very likely represent an actual EYE WITNESS ACCOUNT of the life of Jesus!*

The London Times reported that the evidence on an early form of writing paper was a potentially “important breakthrough in biblical scholarship, on a level with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947” (*Los Angeles Times*, Dec.25, 1994, “Gospel Fragments in Britain May Be Contemporary Account of Life of Jesus Christ,” p.A42).

Some scholars have questioned the accuracy of the New Testament as historical, believing that the earliest texts were written long after the actual events described. However, careful new analysis by Professor Thiede has dated the fragments to the middle of the first century, thereby indicating that they are evidence that *the Matthew Gospel was written only a generation after the crucifixion, or even earlier!*

Says William Tuohy of the *Los Angeles Times*, “Parts of the New Testament may have been *written by men who actually knew Christ*, rather than authors recounting a 2nd-Century version of an oral tradition.”

The Magdalen fragments have been at the Oxford college since 1901. Little work has been done on them since 1953 when they were last edited by biblical scholars. But earlier this year, Thiede visited Oxford and inspected the papyrus. He concluded,

“The Magdalen fragment now appears to belong to a style of handwriting that was current in the 1st Century A.D., and that slowly petered out around the mid-1st Century. Even a hesitant approach to questions of dating would therefore seem to justify a date in the 1st Century, about 100 years earlier than previously thought.”

This new discovery by Professor Carsten Thiede, a papyrus expert, will provoke controversy among scholars, but it is strong evidence that the gospel accounts regarding the life of Jesus Christ are accurate, and reliable historical documents.

The Magdalene fragment from the Gospel of Matthew has been identified as coming from a document dated to the middle of the first century A.D. -- during the very lives of the apostles! This fragment, written in *GREEK*, could even be a fragment from an original monograph written by the apostle Matthew himself!

This amazing new discovery is powerful evidence, obviously, that the writer, the apostle Matthew, was very familiar with the Greek language and was capable of writing intelligently in it.

Translating Names

It is all right to use God's name or title in whatever language you speak – however it is translated in that language. Whether it is Greek, as the NT and Septuagint do, or Aramaic, as parts of the Old Testament itself do, or whatever language you speak.

Translation should be “no big deal.” King Nebuchadnessar translated the names of Daniel and his three friends – Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called “Meshach,” and Azariah he called “Abednego” (Dan.1:6-7). Daniel was given the name “Belteshazar” (Dan.2:26). The Babylonian names for Daniel's three friends are used of them in Scripture (Dan.3:12-14, 19-22, 26, 28-30). The Bible itself calls them by these new names – showing it is all right to give different names or translations in different languages!

Likewise in the New Testament we read where the apostle Paul was confronted by a Jewish false prophet by the name of “Bar-Jesus” (Acts 13:6). Luke's account in the book of Acts continues, “But the magician Elymas (for that is the TRANSLATION of his name) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith” (verse 8). Notice that in one language, his name was “Bar-Jesus,” but in the translated version his name was ELYMAS – a totally differently sounding name! Yet it was the true translation!

Names can sound very different, or similar, as the case may be, in different languages!

Some claim that proper names however cannot be translated. These verses show that is certainly not the case at all! Even common sense and a familiarity with languages shows us the truth. Yeshua in Hebrew = Jesus in English. Cephas in Hebrew = Peter in English, “Pedro” in Spanish, “Pietro” in Italian. Yohann in Hebrew = John in English, “Juan” in Spanish, etc. Jacob in Hebrew = James in English, and ‘Jaime’ in Spanish (pronounced “HY-may”).\

Translators centuries later translated the name from Greek and Latin into German and then into English, changing the “Y” sound into the “J” sound in English. The name in English is Jesus. In different languages, names have variations as a matter of translation. You know that Spanish for Paul is Pablo, Bill is Memo, William is Guillermo,, John is Juan, etc. Why make a big issue over such a small matter?

The Tower of Babel

Remember, it is God Himself who gave the nations different LANGUAGES, and different PRONUNCIATIONS, at the tower of Babel! God divided the language of the people at the Tower of Babel into 70 different languages and each spoke their own language.

When Christ returns, at that time God will restore one pure, unsullied language to mankind – and not until then! God says, “For THEN I will restore to the peoples a PURE

LANGUAGE, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord” (Zeph.3:9).

Exact Pronunciation a Matter of Controversy

The exact pronunciation of the original name of God known as the Tetragrammaton (YHVH) is not known today, because the Jews who are the keepers of the oracles of God have varying opinions. Many scholars say it should be “Yahweh,” others “Yahveh” or “Yabeh,” still others “Yahuah,” and Nehemia Gordon of the Karaite Jews says it is “Yehovah.” What a constellation of opinions! Who is right? Who can “prove” their pronunciation is the most accurate? Is God really so concerned about technicalities when He leaves the evidence so foggy and controversial? Rather, as Micah the prophet puts it, “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

The *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* adds the following information:

“YAHVEH. 1. The Word. **Yahveh is the most probable transliteration of the ancient Hebrew name for God.** It is frequently, especially among German scholars, written Jahweh, Jahveh, Jahve or Yahweh; but these forms call either for the German pronunciation of j as y, or of w as v, or both. The oldest traditions as to the pronunciation of the name Yahveh are found in the church fathers. Of these, Clement of Alexandria (about 215 C.E.; *Stromata* 5, 6:34) writes Iasuai = Iaove [Yahveh], while Theodoret (about 386-457 C.E. . .) gives IaBe [Yahbeh] as the Samaritan pronunciation and Ia [Yah] as that of the Jews . . .” (p.584).

This authority adds, “That the divine name was frequently shortened is clear from the occurrence of the short form Yah, which frequently occurs at the end of Hebrew personal names, such as Elijah and Jeremiah, and in the word Hallelujah; Yah also occurs a few times independently, as in Ex.15:2; Isa.12:2; Ps.68:5; 118:14.”

In the light of these and other facts, says the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, the first syllable of the divine name was clearly “Ya,” or “Yah,” and the only possible uncertainty would involve the second syllable.

“Was the name originally Yah, Yahu, Yaho or Yahveh? . . . the reading [YHVH] IS VERY OLD, being found in line 18 of the Moabite Stone, the inscription of King Mesha of Moab, written in the 9th century B.C.E. This goes far toward establishing the priority of the four-lettered name (Tetragrammaton). IT IS THE OLDEST KNOWN DATABLE INDEPENDENT OCCURRENCE OF THE DIVINE NAME” (ibid.).

The Torah: A Modern Commentary, adds that: “How the Name was originally vocalized is no longer certain. Its pronunciation was in time restricted to the Temple service, then to the High Priest intoning it on the Day of Atonement . . .” (p.425).

This authority continues: “Overwhelming scholarly opinion holds that יהוה [YHVH] was in Moses’ time pronounced יהוה (Yahveh). There is also a shorter form of the Name, Yah

(**ἡ**) which may represent the original from which Yahveh was expanded or may, contrariwise, be a contraction of the longer ascription” (p.426).

Paul's Example

The apostle Paul and his companions, while in prison in Philippi, a city in Greece, were singing hymns when a great earthquake occurred, all their chains fell off, and the prison doors swung open. The jailor, fearful, was about to take his own life, when Paul told him not to fear – the prisoners were all still there. Astonished, the jailor then asked Paul – in the *GREEK language* – “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

And they responded, *in the GREEK language*, as they were speaking with the Greek-speaking jailer – “Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST [*Kurion Iesoun Christon*], and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:30-31, NKJV).

In the Greek language, the very words he spoke, in reference to the Saviour and Messiah, were pronounced *kurion Iesoun Christon* – which means, “Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul did not use this opportunity to teach the jailer about the so-called “Hebrew names” of God – it wasn’t necessary for his salvation. All he had to do was BELIEVE on the true Messiah and Saviour – and give his life to Him in heartfelt repentance and obedience (Acts 2:38; 5:32; Rom.2:11; 3:31; Gal.2:20).

Pronouncing “sacred names” was not the issue at all – but simply heartfelt repentance, contrition for sin, and accepting Christ as the true Messiah and Saviour, and giving one's life over to Him, in obedience and godly service.

What about “Jesus”?

What about the name “Jesus”? Does this name come from the Greek Zeus, the chief of the pagan pantheon of gods on Mount Olympus? Does the use of “Jesus” give unwitting homage to Zeus, the Greek form of Baal?

Unfortunately, at least for the sake of the Sacred Names Only people, there is absolutely no historical evidence or etymological documentation for this belief.

God caused *the New Testament* to be written in the Greek language, and in every case God inspired the apostles to use the Greek words for “God” (*Theos*) and “Jesus” (*Iesous*). If God did not intend for us to use these forms of Jesus’ name, He would not have inspired His apostles to use them.

All the first century writings of the church fathers show *Iesous* -- “Jesus” -- the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “Joshua” or “Yeshua” -- to have been commonly used. This was not a “great *invisible* conspiracy.” This is a sad story of the tail wagging the dog.

It is amazing to me how so many people can get so strung out over just a few syllables! There is undoubtedly a mystery and a power in the true Hebrew personal name

for God – *Yahveh* -- when used by a righteous man of God.

As James declared: “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jas.5:16). This same power is carried over in the New Testament in the meaning and authority of the name “Jesus” or “Yeshua” – when used by one of His saints, servants, true ministers and prophets! (See Acts 2:38; 4:17-18; 4:10-12; 9:14-15; 16:3; Eph.1:21, 5:20; Phil.2:9-10; I John 3:23.)

The Origin of the Greek Name for Jesus – Iesous

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It is a sad fact that some claim to be offended if one even speaks the name “Jesus.” Others use the names “Jesus” and “Yeshua” interchangeably, as we do at Triumph Prophetic Ministries. So what is the origin of the Greek name Iesous (“Jesus”)?

Is the name “Jesus” really of pagan origin? Although some claim Jesus is pagan because they believe it is a derivation of Greek god, Zeus, this is an appalling error. A careful study of Greek grammar, or Hebrew to Greek transliteration, shows there is no factual basis for this belief.

Almost 300 years before the birth of Christ, the Jewish translators of the Septuagint were commissioned to translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek for Ptolemy's library at Alexandria. They had great difficulty when it came down to transliterating Hebrew proper names into Greek names. Unlike Hebrew to English transliteration, which is easier because English offers most of the same sounds of Hebrew, Hebrew to Greek transliteration is not so easy.

Nevertheless, the Hebrew *Yeshua* became the Greek *Iesous*. The pagan name of Zeus, the chief pagan god of Mount Olympus, had nothing to do with it!

The New Galatian Problem

Some people get carried away by these ‘Holy Name’ sects and cultic groups. They insist their pronunciation is vital for eternal salvation! And they lead poorly grounded people astray, off the true path to salvation, and into heresy, self-righteousness,

and obstinate human opinions. God's people need to be very careful that they do not "listen" to false teachers, or a "sampler" of various sects, cults, and groups.

Some of us are like the Galatians, a church which began to go astray soon after they learned the true gospel from the apostle Paul. Paul was amazed at them. He wrote, "I marvel that you are turning away SO SOON from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed [Greek *anathema*]. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Gal.1:6-9).

Paul went on, "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth . . .?" (Gal.3:1). He declared, "You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump . . . he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he [or she] is" (Gal.5:7-10).

An attitude of stubbornness for the real truth of God is good, but trouble arises when one begins to stubbornly resist the truth, and becomes stuck on dogmas, ideas, and humanly contrived opinions and false teachings, which come from the mind of Satan and those whom he has deceived! He is the great deceiver (Rev.12:9), and he has his ministers who "are false apostles, DECEITFUL WORKERS, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ" (II Cor.11:13), but even though they appear as "ministers of righteousness," their "end will be according to their works" (v.15).

The opinions of men as to the "Holy Names" are of no account. Our real authority is the HOLY WORD OF GOD!

The Holy Names Movement

I have researched the subject of Holy Names for years, and found that most holy name groups began in the 1950's, led by people who split off from the Worldwide Church of God and Herbert W. Armstrong. They began to call themselves "the Assemblies of Yahweh." Many of these groups also keep Pentecost on a Sunday every year, and Passover at the beginning of Nisan 14 – just like the errors of the Worldwide Church of God. Strong articles in the 1950s were written in *The Good News* magazine rebuking and refuting their heresy, by Herbert Armstrong and Herman L. Hoeh, and rather than repent of their egregious heresy, they left the church and began their own congregation, gathering followers who swallowed the "holy name" heresy.

Many of God's people stand at a crossroads. Are they going to follow these heretics, like House of Yahweh in Abilene, Texas, or Assemblies of Yahweh, or some similar group, like dumb, stubborn heedless sheep that think the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence?

Be Wary of False Brethren

The apostle Paul says, “PROVE all things” (I Thessalonians 5 :21)—that is, “Put them to the TEST!” The apostle Jude also warned the church, late in the first century, “I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to CONTEND EARNESTLY for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

For, Jude warns, “Certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation . . .” (v.4). Peter warns us, “There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies . . . And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of TRUTH will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words . . .” (II Pet.2:1-3).

How do we prove all things? Isaiah wrote, “To the law and to the testimony [the Scriptures]! If they do not speak according to THIS WORD [THE BIBLE], *it is because there is NO LIGHT in them*” (Isaiah 8:20).

The “Holy Names” people remind me of what God says of some of His people who are saddled with a tremendous sense of self-righteousness, despite their evil-doing.

“Holier Than Thou”

God declares, in Isaiah’s prophecy, “I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts; a people who provoke Me to anger continually before My face . . . Who say, ‘Keep to yourself, Do not come near me, for I am holier than you!’ These are smoke in My nostrils, a fire that burns all the day” (Isaiah 65:2-5).

The Jewish Tanach (Old Testament) translates, saying, “I constantly spread out My hands to a disloyal people, who walk the way that is not good, following their own designs; the people who provoke My anger . . . Who say, ‘Keep your distance! Don’t come closer! For I would render you consecrated.’ Such things make My anger rage, like fire blazing all day long. See, this is recorded before Me; I will not stand idly by, but will repay, deliver their sins into their bosom, and the sins of their fathers as well—said the LORD” (Isaiah 65:2-7).

Such teachers have an “I am holier than thou” attitude! God says He will repay them for their miserable self-righteousness!

The Real Key

We are to go to the Scriptures, not the opinions of self-styled “ministers” and of “scholars” of the world, or the writings of nefarious false teachers and false prophets, which spring up like mushrooms after a soaking rain!

The Scriptures are the inspired holy word of God given by divine revelation.

Do not take everything for granted or face value just because it is in an encyclopedia unless you are willing to be misinformed. That also goes for articles and

booklets written by various churches, sects, and cults. BEWARE! Don't be like the foolish Galatians! Do not believe every writer or scholar that comes across your path.

As the apostle John says, "TEST the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets [or false teachers] have gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). The New Jerusalem Bible has this, "My dear friends, not every spirit is to be trusted, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets are at large in the world."

Our standard of proof must be none other than the Bible, the Word of God. Not the mumbling of pseudo-intellectual misfits and self-anointed leaders and false prophets of every stripe and persuasion. "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking [or arguing over semantics and pronunciations of letters], but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another" (Rom.14:17-19).

Do not allow the "holier, I am more righteous than thou" spirit to infect your mind! Do not be like a stubborn mule or donkey, refusing to budge or to be corrected! Do not allow stubborn PRIDE and self-reliance to destroy your true, genuine spiritual character and humility before God!

Too many have misappropriated the "name" of God and used it, or some semblance thereof, to construct a self-righteous, devil-inspired RELIGION of "holy names" sectarianism – to their everlasting shame, disgrace and ignominy.

Are you one of them? God is much bigger than such people think He is. He is much more forgiving, patient, and compassionate.

It is time for God-fearing people to learn to LOVE one another, and not sit in dire judgment of one another! As Christ the Messiah said, whether you call Him "Jesus," or "Yeshua," or some other variation of His name, "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:1-5).

We all need to learn the way of moderation and "balance," and not go to extremes. Remember, as James said, "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:26-27).