

## There's Something in a Name After All

By Joe Price

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) are making a concerned effort to de-emphasize “Mormon” as the name of their church and the use of “Mormons” to identify the members. Last year, church President Russell M. Nelson urged members, media, scholars and the public at large to cease using ‘Mormon’ and ‘LDS’ as shortened nicknames for the faith and its members. Using those nicknames, Nelson said during October’s General Conference is a “major victory for Satan.” (“LDS Church, de-emphasizing those three letters, unveils a new internet address with more changes on the way.” **The Salt Lake Tribune**, Nate Carlisle and David Noyce, March 5, 2019). Since Nelson announced this new emphasis in October, 2018, work has been underway to unify their websites and remove these now offensive terms (such as Mormon.org to ComeuntoChrist.org). (ibid). (See their Style Guide for an extended list of preferred usages regarding “The Name of the Church.”)

It has never been my intention to offend when using “Mormon” or “LDS.” It should be pointed out that for well over 150 years their apostles and prophets have consistently used “Mormon” and “LDS” to identify themselves and their faith. For example, I have a book in my library published in 1958 by general authority Bruce R. McConkie, who would later be an apostle, entitled “Mormons Doctrine.” We observe that “Latter Day Saint authorities attempted a similar name campaign just before Salt lake City hosted the 2002 Winter Olympics. That drive ended about a decade later. In fact, the church then embraced the term ‘Mormon,’ launching its ‘I’m a Mormon’ ad campaign and releasing a ‘Meet the Mormons movie.’ (ibid)

So, why are church members (and non-members) being told not to use “Mormon” and “LDS” when their leaders have used it for generations. The answer is found in what President Russell M. Nelson told his flock at General Conference, October 6, 2018. He said the name of the church, ‘The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,’ was a matter of revelation, and therefore should be used as the proper and consistent name of the church. (It is believed the Lord gave this name to the church in a revelation to Joseph Smith, Jr., April 25, 1838, Doctrines and “Covenants 115:4). “Nelson launched this latest name push in August, stating that God had ‘impressed upon my mind the importance of the name he has revealed for his church.” (ibid).

Nelson “acknowledged from the start that it will take time to fully implement. ‘It’s going to be a challenge to undo tradition of more than a hundred years,’ he told a congregation of Latter Day Saints in Montreal last summer.’ ...it’s not Mormon’s church, its not Moses’ church. It’s the Church of Jesus Christ.’ He went on to say this name revival ‘is the command of the Lord.’” (ibid).

Names are important. We know this from experience, since very few (if any) parents name their new born daughters “Jezebel.” For generations, brethren have labored to impress the importance of the name of the church on our denominational friends (who name churches after men, theologies and other things). The churches of men are not the church of Christ!

Man-made churches (like The Church of Jesus Christ of Later-day Saints) have entitled their churches many things. In the New Testament, local churches are called “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16), not as a title, but as a description of assemblies or congregations of Christians

“Church of Christ” is a statement of possession that describes to whom the church belongs. Jesus said “I will build My church,” therefore, “church of Christ” is the assembly of the redeemed who belong to Christ (Matt. 16:18). His church was built by Christ through gospel

preaching, by which God called (and continues to call) sinners to salvation (Acts 2:37-41,47).

The “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” is found nowhere in the New Testament. It is the figment of Joseph Smith, Jr.’s imagination, 18 million souls have been deceived into believing it is the true church — the restored church in these “latter days.”

What we find in the New Testament are local churches of Christ, arranged independently of each other (Acts 14:23; I Pet. 5:2). They had no over-arching hierarchy, no inter-congregational linkage of oversight and administration. These independent assemblies of Christians met to worship God and to accomplish the spiritual work given the churches by apostolic teaching (to preach the gospel, I Thess. 1:8; to edify the faithful, Acts 11:23,26; and to relieve needy saints, Acts 11:27-30; I Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:1-5).

The “Church of Christ” in the New Testament is not composed of churches of Christ. That is an unscriptural, denominational view of the church. The church of Christ is composed of Christians, not churches: “*And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*” (Acts 2:47). The Lord does not add churches to His church; He adds Christians to His church. Christians, not churches, are members of the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:12-14,27).

The name of a church does not automatically legitimize it. The church must follow the teachings of Christ to be His (Matt. 7:21-23). The LDS Church fails miserably to do so. Its name, its organization, and its doctrines are against the New Testament of Jesus. It is Not His church. Let us be sure we belong to Christ’s church, not a church named and arranged by men.

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### **“Is Christ Divided?”**

Bible students will recall the above question to be the one asked by the apostle Paul in his letter to the “*church of God*” at Corinth. After admonishing the brethren to “*speak the same thing,*” to prevent any “*divisions among you,*” so as to “*be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment,*” he then wrote, saying: “*For it has been declared unto me of you, my brethren...that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul.*” (I Cor. 1:10-13).

Contention was present. Various church organizations (denominations) were unknown then, but parties seemed to be forming within the church. Some claimed to be “*of Paul,*” others “*of Apollos,*” others “*of Cephas,*” and others “*of Christ.*” Different and differing religious parties were as unscriptural and as strife-producing as different religious Denominations are now.

Paul said, “*Is Christ divided.*” Is it proper for Christ’s body, the church (Eph. 1:22,23; Eph. 4:4), to be cut into parts and these parts assigned to human leaders? In these few verses, he showed that one should not be “*of Paul*” unless: (1) Christ was “*divided,*” (2) Paul was “*crucified*” for them, and (3) unless they had been “*baptized in the name of Paul.*” These questions were designed to put to naught the division then present, and to encourage all who had been baptized in the name of Christ to wear His name and to submit themselves completely to His will while refusing to wear human names or follow human leaders in spiritual affairs.

But Paul's injunction is largely unheeded today! The religious world seeks to divide Christ! Some are of John the baptizer, others of Martin Luther, others of John Wesley, others of Joseph Smith, others of John Calvin, or of other men, equally as fallible and uninspired

Furthermore, the religious world refuses to "*speak the same thing*" (v. 10), and is now parroting tradition, the "voice of the church," the voice of the pope," and the various creeds, manuals, disciplines, etc., which are considered law for the many man-made churches.

Members of the church of Christ (the church of which you can read in the Bible) are baptized "*in the name of Christ*" (Acts 2:38); if they are faithful they submit to His authority (Col. 3:17), and wear His name even as did the disciples at Antioch, who were "*called Christians*," Acts 11:26.

Kind reader, why "divide Christ" when we could (if we would) unite upon the Lord's plan. Of course, this would necessitate the discarding and casting off of all man-made laws and accepting only a "*thus saith the Lord*" in religious matters. But think of the wonderful benefits this would provide — both now and hereafter!

\*\*\* —B. Witherington