

IS THE NAME OF OUR MESSIAH JESUS?

In a previous article we've looked at the Name of our Father and found that Scriptures clearly indicate that his Name, YAHWEH, should be remembered from generation to generation and that it was a gross error to remove this name from our Bible Translations. Our next subject is closely linked to the previous and deals with a question of equal importance. If the Father's Name wasn't translated correctly in most Bible's, what about the Name of the Son? Is his Name "Jesus" or "Christ" or "Jesus Christ" or "Lord Jesus"? And is it so important that we use his correct Name?

We have already established why it is absolutely essential for us to use the correct Name of the Father (YAHWEH). The same applies to the Name of the Son. In the eyes of the Father and from the viewpoint of the Word, the Name of our Messiah is extremely important. I know that there are people who may think that it is unnecessary to make a big issue about names. There is one thing though that we need to understand very well: This is not a question of language or translation or spelling or personal preferences. We are not talking about any name. This is about the Name that is above every other name (Phil 2:9). It's this Name that every tongue will confess, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth (Phil. 2:10). Those who are of the opinion that it doesn't really matter in which Name we believe or on which Name we call for our salvation, must go and think again...

Let's start with the announcement of the Messiah's birth. The angel told Joseph the following about Mary: "...She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). This is more or less how this verse is translated in most Bible translations. We know that the oldest available manuscripts of the New Testament were written in the Greek language and after that translated in other languages. The vast majority of these "original" manuscripts were actually written more than 3 centuries after the earthly ministry of the Messiah. All Biblical scholars today realize that there must have been older manuscripts, used by the earliest believers, but up to this day these original texts have never been discovered. It is almost certain that at least some of the books in the New Testament were originally written in Hebrew. There are proof for this within the text of the New Testament itself (the use of Hebrew and Aramaic words and expressions), as well as external proof, for example the following statement by Papias, one of the early church fathers: "Matthew (i.e. the writer of the first gospel) composed the Logia (a Greek word that normally means "oracles" or "prophecies") in the Hebrew tongue and everyone interpreted them as he was able".

Whatever the case may be, there is absolutely no doubt that the language the Messiah used in his teachings and conversations was Aramaic and/or Hebrew (cf. Mark 5:41; Mark 15:34; Acts 26:14). He was a Jew, born in a Jewish family and heard and spoke the Jewish language since childhood. It was also the language His earthly parents knew and used. When the angel spoke to Joseph, he would naturally have spoken in Joseph's mother language, Hebrew. So, the Name Joseph had received from the angel for his son that would be born, was a Hebrew Name. The oldest available texts, however, contain a very inaccurate Greek modification of the original Hebrew Name, namely "Iesous", and this name (once again) was roughly transliterated into English as "Jesus". There is no other Greek word like "Iesous" and the word on its own has no dictionary meaning in Greek. It is clear that the writer(s) of the Greek text tried to convert the original Name into a Greek name containing more or less the same letters, but sadly the result was a name that sounded totally different and, more importantly, didn't convey the original meaning ("the salvation of Yahweh") at all. The problem is that there are certain Hebrew letters for which the Greek language has no equivalent and therefore an exact transliteration becomes impossible. It all sounds very technical, but the important thing for us to know is that when the Messiah lived and walked on the earth, nobody ever called Him "Jesus" or "Iesous", because it was (and is) not His Name!

From the announcement of the angel we know that His Name had something to do with "save" or "salvation": "...because He will save His people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). A thorough study of the name "Jesus" in the New Testament and of the principles of translation clearly shows that

"Iesous" is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew name "Y'shua" or "YAHUSHUA". Grammatically and historically the name "Y'shua" is also the most correct way to pronounce and spell the name of the well known Old Testament figure, Joshua. Acts 7:45 and Hebrew 4:8 contain the Greek word "Iesous" but in both cases it is clear that the person being referred to is not the Messiah, but Y'shua (or Joshua), the successor of Moses. Some of the older translations incorrectly used the name "Jesus" instead of "Joshua" (or more correctly: Y'shua) in these two verses. This proves that the name rendered as "Jesus" throughout the New Testament, should really be "Y'shua" or "Yahushua", the correct name for Joshua according to Num 13:16 and many other Old Testament passages.

Now we know - without any doubt - what Name the angel had announced to Joseph: Y'shua, or YAHUSHUA which means: YAHWEH SAVES or YAHWEH IS SALVATION. Now we can understand why Y'shua MESSIAH says in John 5:43: "I have come in My Father's Name..." Not only did He come in the authority and as a representative of His Father, but literally with the Name of the Father secured in His own Name! In the Hebrew culture a Name was too important to just translate (or even change) it, thereby stripping it of its proper meaning. In John 5:46 Y'shua explain to some of the Jews listening to Him: "If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me." To what part of the Scriptures does the Messiah refer here? Could it perhaps be that He was specifically thinking about Exod 15:2 where it is written: "...YAH has become my salvation (yeshua) ..." or even Exod 14:13 that states: "Stand firm and you will see the deliverance of YAHWEH" (yeshua Yahweh)? The word translated in both cases with "deliverance", comes from the Hebrew word "yeshua" - of which the second part (shua) is combined with "Yah" (the short form of Yahweh) to convey the meaning of "the deliverance of Yahweh".

Which name did the Messiah Himself use when He introduced Himself to others? How did He introduce Himself to Paul; how would He introduce Himself today to people around the world who have a need for the message of salvation? In Acts 26 we have Paul's own story about his conversion. Here he tells Agrippa that on the day of his conversion he, and everybody that was with him, saw a light shining from heaven on the earth. Then he heard a voice (the voice of the exalted Messiah) that spoke to him in the Hebrew language (verse 14): "I am 'Jesus' whom you are persecuting..." (verse 15). Even the most unlearned among us will be able to tell that "Jesus" is not the correct rendering of the Name Paul heard at this momentous occasion. Neither could the name have been "Iesous". The Messiah had absolutely NO reason to speak to Paul in the Hebrew language, using a name for Himself which is neither Hebrew, nor conveys the meaning of "the salvation of Yahweh"!!

Joel 2 prophetically speaks about the time of the Messiah and we read in verse 32: "And everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh will be saved". This verse is quoted twice in the New Testament and in both cases Y'shua is seen as the fulfillment of this prophecy. In both cases the supposition is that it is Y'shua's Name that needs to be called upon (cf. Acts 2:21 and Rom 10:13). In order for us to grasp the full strength of these verses, we need to reckon with the two "halves" of Y'shua's Name: the Name of YAHWEH ("YAH" - the shortened form of YAHWEH that is sometimes used in the Psalms) and the SALVATION that He brings. In the light of this one can understand what the Messiah meant when He prayed in His famous prayer: "I have revealed Your name to the men whom You gave to Me..." (John 17:6) and "I have made known to them Your name..." (John 17:26). Thank you, Father, for Your Son, Y'shua, who has revealed Your Name to us so clearly ...

What about Christ? Is it not part of Y'shua's Name? The answer is: No. "Christ" is not a Name - it is a describing title and it's the ordinary Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Mashiach" (English: Messiah) which means "anointed one" (cf. John 1:41). Those who prefer to use the correct Hebrew Name, Y'shua, can just as well use the Hebrew title, Mashiach, or the English transliteration, Messiah, instead of the Greek translation, Christ. Or, those who insist to "speak English" may just read "Y'shua, the Anointed One" where their Bibles speak about "Jesus Christ". In these end times we should remember the warning of our Master: "At that time if anyone says to

you, 'Look, there is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible." (Matt. 24:23-24).

What about the word "Lord" which we find linked with the Name of the Messiah in the majority of today's translations? The word "Lord" in the New Testament is almost always a translation of the Greek word "kurios". This Greek word is normally used for people who stand in places of authority and is usually translated into English as "ruler" or "master". Once again we should understand that "kurios" is not the Messiah's Name, but a title describing His position of authority in the eyes of His followers. "Kurios" is also the word that the Roman emperor preferred as a title for himself. It should be noted, however, that "kurios" was also used in heathen religions and Greek mythology as a reference to their so-called "gods" and in earlier times "kurios" was the name of a pagan deity!! It is possible that this word was utilized in the Greek text of the New Testament primarily as a "translation" of the Hebrew title "Rabbi" (which still appears in some places in the New Testament) and simple means "Master" or "my Master". In the light of the doubtful origin of "kurios", however, and the fact that Y'shua's (Jewish) followers probably never called Him "kurios" during His earthly ministry, it would be safe for us to address Y'shua as "Rabbi" or "My Master".

The question is finally: Is it really that important to use the correct Name of the Messiah? Let there be no doubt in our minds: The Scriptures plainly state that His Name is of extreme importance to us! We are being baptised in His Name (Acts 2:38); we are being forgiven in His Name (Acts 10:43); we are being justified in His Name (1 Cor 6:11); we get together as a congregation in His Name (Matt 18:20); we drive out demons in His Name (Mark 9:38); we receive life in His Name (John 20:31); we pray to the Father in His Name (John 14:13); yes, we do everything in His Name (Col. 3:17), because there is power and authority and meaning in His Name! Is this not enough reason for us to make absolutely sure that we honor our Messiah using the name that has been revealed to us clearly and unambiguously?

"I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no-one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept My word and have not denied My Name" (Rev. 3:8).