

MUST WE USE GOD’S “SACRED NAME”?

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Over the years since the demise of the Worldwide Church of God ... a number of NOVEL TEACHINGS have come along — causing some confusion.

The Calendar! Was Passover to be kept on the 14th or the 15th? On the Day of Atonement ... Azazel Goat represents Jesus ... not Satan. And other things as well.

One that pops up on occasions is the “Sacred Name” teaching.

Generally the story goes along the line that God has a personal name — and that we should use it!

You’ve got a personal name. And me. Even the angels (?) — Gabriel and Michael. Also God ... it is said!

Some dogmatic people say that if we don’t use that personal name — we are being disrespectful to God — and won’t be in His Kingdom! Also — that’s why your prayers aren’t being answered!

The teaching is that we have been deceived! We are only using God’s titles — not His proper name.

The most popular name for God is said to be “Yahweh”.

Let’s examine!

We certainly don’t want to be disrespectful! It is the third commandment of the “Big 10”! Don’t take God’s name in vain. The allegation is that most of us are totally ignoring the name!

Popular Passages:

Psalms 83:13, 16-18

13 O my God, make them like the whirling dust,
Like the chaff before the wind!

16 Fill their faces with shame,

That they may seek Your name, O LORD.

17 Let them be confounded and dismayed forever;

Yes, let them be put to shame and perish,

18 That they may know that **You, whose name alone is the LORD,**

Are the Most High over all the earth.

“Your name alone is LORD”. (KJV of 1611: “whose name alone is Jehovah”).

It doesn't say: “Your only name is Jehovah” — as some suggest. It means that God alone is entitled to the name Jehovah ... no one else can claim it.

The NKJV and many translations use “LORD”. The KJV is “Jehovah”.

The Hebrew is 4 consonants — the Tetragrammaton — often shown as JHVH ... YHVH ... YHWH.

I will come back to this later.

Exodus 3:13-15

13 Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?”

14 And God said to Moses, “**I AM WHO I AM.**” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, **I AM** has sent me to you.’ ”

15 Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘**The LORD** God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. **This is My name forever,** and this is My memorial to all generations.’

Some suggest “This is my name forever” means we must always use the Hebrew name translated “LORD” — JHVH. Though verse 14 — “I am” = EHYEH!

So the common teaching is that God has a name — wrongly translated as “LORD” — and that believers should only use that original Hebrew name — and it applies forever.

The sacred name teaching is not all that “new”. Mr HWA first encountered it back in 1937 ... and spoke at length to one of its early promoters — Elder C O Dodd of the Church of God 7th Day.

It cropped up in the early 1970’s ... so nearly all of “The Good News” magazine of November/December 1972 was devoted to it.

Back to today!

Much of the debate is around the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton. “JHVH” appears around 6,500 times in the Hebrew Old Testament.

Mostly shown as “LORD” ... though the Church of God tend to replace the term with “The Eternal”. ☺

Sacred name devotees say it shouldn’t be translated — but pronounced.

First big problem. No agreement as to how!!

?? YAHWEH ... YAHVEH ... YAHUWAH ... YAHU ... YAHVAH.

Traditionally: Jehovah (it appears 7 times in the KJV ... where the translators believed the personal name was being emphasised).

So — if we must use God’s personal proper name: Which one??

Most scholars today say: “Yahweh”.

But — that is just a guess!

The Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 volumes ... over 7 million words ... costing about \$600) ... says: “The pronunciation of YHWH as **Yahweh is a scholarly guess**”!

The preface to the NASB 1997 edition says: “**No complete certainty attaches to this pronunciation (Yahweh)**”.

So if it’s vital for salvation that we use the correct personal name ... oops!! ☹

Quite a variety ... and each has its devotees ... its own students ... with (alleged) proofs.

If I want to refer to the original ... I generally use “Jehovah”.

Traditional. Everyone understands who you are talking about!

Some ridicule this name— including Dr Hoeh.

Some say there was no letter “J” till the 1,400’s. You don’t need a letter to make the sound! Two year olds talk about friends Johnny and Jenny ... and a glass of orange juice.

There is no reason to think the sound didn’t exist!

What about Jerusalem ... Jeremiah ... Jonah ... Job ... Judges ... Jezebel ... Judah??! Or ... Jesus?!

Jehovah is rejected for another reason. It’s said that the Jews would not pronounce the name (because it is too holy) ... and wherever it appeared ... they would exchange the word “Adonai” (LORD).

Alleged that as a reminder to readers they inserted the vowels of Adonai among the consonants of the Tetragrammaton. So the actual word you see now isn’t a real word — it’s a fabrication.

But there is no documentary evidence of this — it’s a myth.

Alleged that ignorant and foolish people think it says Jehovah ... but it’s a made-up meaningless word.

But: it’s just a theory. Not a shred of documentary evidence! It’s written 6,500 as to be pronounced Jehovah.

It’s as good a pronunciation as any!

And it has 3 syllables —which many scholars believe is necessary.

If you want to choose one of the variety of names — fine. But don’t get too aggressive or critical of others.

And — there is another way to look at this.

When you get to the New Testament — how did Peter ... Paul ... Luke — even Jesus — apply JHVH when they referred back to the Old Testament?

If you must use the true personal name.

Psalms 34:11-16

11 Come, you children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of **the LORD**. (JHVH)
12 Who is the man who desires life,
And loves many days, that he may see good?
13 Keep your tongue from evil,
And your lips from speaking deceit.
14 Depart from evil and do good;
Seek peace and pursue it.
15 The eyes of **the LORD** are on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their cry.
16 The face of **the LORD** is against those who do evil,
To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

JHVH used 3 times.

What name did the Apostle Peter use when he was quoting from this?

1 Peter 3:10-12

10 For "He who would love life
And see good days,
Let him refrain his tongue from evil,
And his lips from speaking deceit.
11 Let him turn away from evil and do good;
Let him seek peace and pursue it.
12 For the eyes of **the LORD** are on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their prayers;
But the face of **the LORD** is against those who do evil."

LORD ... twice (KJV: Lord)

The Greek word he used is "Kurios". Peter hasn't used the sound of the name — God's personal name. Not a transcription of JHVH!

Kurios is a common word for Lord or Master. Not a specially “Holy Word”.

Peter didn't carry forward the sound of Hebrew. Did he make a mistake here? Everybody knew who Peter was referring to.

So. If Peter didn't seem to need the personal name — what about Luke?

Deuteronomy 18:15

15 “**The LORD** your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, (**LORD = JHVH**)

Here's an example here in the temple.

Acts 3:22-23

22 For Moses truly said to the fathers, **The LORD** your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.

23 And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'

Lord (KJV: Lord) = Kurios.

Peter may have spoken Aramaic — but Luke recorded it as Kurios.

What about the Apostle Paul? Paul — a rabbi ... taught at the feet of Gamaliel ... a Pharisee. You would think he would use the personal name?

Isaiah 1:9

9 Unless **the LORD of hosts**
Had left to us a very small remnant,
We would have become like Sodom,
We would have been made like Gomorrah.

“JHVH” of hosts (Hebrew word for “armies” —Tsabaoth). The JHVH of Tsabaoth.

Let's see what Paul ... quoting Isaiah ... says to the people of Rome.

Romans 9:29

29 And as Isaiah said before:

“Unless **the LORD** of Sabaoth had left us a seed,
We would have become like Sodom,
And we would have been made like Gomorrah.”

Lord = Kurios.

Note also “Sabaoth” is Hebrew. If Paul had wanted to keep the Hebrew name of God — it would have been easy because he had just used the Hebrew word for hosts/armies.

So ... Paul ... writing to “Gentile” converts is happy to exchange Kurios — the common word for Lord ... master ... boss — rather than bring forward the Hebrew of JHVH.

So ... if it is good enough for Peter ... Paul ... Luke — it is good enough for us?

However ... the come-back (for those who “buy into” the Sacred Names)... is they claim that the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew. That it used the proper Hebrew name ... then it was translated wrongly in the Greek. The Greek is a corrupt translation.

One big problem: There is no evidence of any Hebrew originals. They don't exist. But ... there are thousands of Greek manuscripts.

Greek was universally spoken in New Testament times. Nearly everyone spoke Greek. Paul was the “Apostle to the Gentiles”! 😊

If the nearly 6,000 Greek manuscripts are corrupt translations of a totally lost Hebrew New Testament — we're in serious trouble!

But all of the evidence is that the New Testament was written in Greek (with the possible exception of Matthew and Hebrews? Although the weight of the evidence is against that).

What about Jesus' name?

Some say Jesus would only have been known by His Hebrew/Aramaic name. And believers today should only use His original personal name.

Of course — disagreement. 😊

Y'shua ...Yeshua ... Yahshua ... Yahushua ... Yehoshua? And on it goes.

All have supporters with various “proofs”.

But — if the New Testament was indeed written in Greek — then none of these were used. Just as Greek swapped Kurios for JHVH — so swapped Jesus for whatever the original was.

In the Greek New Testament ... “IESOUS” occurs 975 times. That’s 975 times that they did not use Y’shua or whatever!

Luke 1:30-33

30 Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall **call His name Jesus**. (*Greek: IESOUS*)

32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

The angel may have spoken Aramaic? But Luke records it in Greek.

Luke 2:21

21 And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, **His name was called Jesus**, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

So ... thousands of new converts — reading Luke’s gospel — would only know the name Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on **the name of Jesus** Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul is writing to “Gentiles”. He uses: “IESOUS” — not Y’shua etc!

Philippians 2:5-11

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

9 **Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,**

10 **that at the name of Jesus** every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

11 and that every tongue should confess that **Jesus** Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The name that is above every name — Jesus!

Or ... look at the Apostle John:

1 John 3:21-23

21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.

22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

23 And **this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ** and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

Believe on the name — Jesus Christ!

English: Jesus. French: Jésus. Spanish: Jesús. Italian: Gesù.

In our language we use the nearest equivalent. Most are long-standing. Everyone knows who we are referring to. And of the need to be respectful of the Being concerned!

I’m fairly relaxed about others using Yahweh ... Y’shua. I know who they mean!

However ... it's not necessary. And wrong of such people to criticise and condemn others for not using their choice of Hebrew name.

Finally ... the basic requirement for the Sacred Names group is — that the New Testament must have originally been written in Hebrew.

Currently ... we have 5,000–6,000 Ancient Greek manuscripts. But no Hebrew manuscripts. That's their missing link. It's not been found yet!

Peter ... Paul ... James ... Jude ... John ... all used "Lord" — and Jesus. So can we!