

THE LOWER LIGHTS

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**"Brightly beams our Father's mercy
from the lighthouse evermore;
But to us He gives the keeping
of the lights along the shore."**

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OUR AUTHORITY: THE NEW TESTAMENT

As Jesus was ready to ascend to His Father in heaven, He told His apostles, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you..." (Mt. 28:18-20). Since Jesus was obedient to death, even death on a cross, the Father raised Him from the dead and highly exalted Him as Lord and Christ (King) (Acts 2:36, Phil 2:8-11).

Jesus' exercises His authority as King through the "word of the Kingdom" (Mt 13:19), the collection of books which makes up His new covenant or testament which went into effect when He shed His blood on the cross of Calvary (Lk 22:20). In His gospel, we find the commands that all His disciples are to observe. This is the "one faith" for Christians to follow (Eph 4:5), "the standard of sound words" (2 Tim 1:13). Paul told the church at Thessalonica to "stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us." (2 Thess 2:15). As Christians faced teachers who taught doctrines contrary to the word of the King, Jude exhorted them to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints." (Jude 3)

In His New Testament, Jesus warned that those who professed to be His disciples would reject Him and His word as the authority and would follow men instead. Paul tearfully warned the elders of the Ephesian church that from among themselves men who arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them (Acts 20:30-31). He solemnly charged the young preacher Timothy to preach the word in season and out of season because the time would come when men would not endure sound

doctrine, but would find teachers who would teach what they wanted to hear and they would turn aside from the truth (2 Tim 4:1-4).

The situation we find in "Christianity" is exactly as Jesus predicted it would be. Men profess to be followers of the King, but pay no attention to His law, following their religious leaders instead. Numerous creed books have been written (and continue to be re-written) as the standard of faith and practice for various denominations. Councils, conventions, and synods meet on a regular basis to determine Church teaching.

Important questions call for answers now as they did in the time of the early church: "What must I do to be saved?", "How should I live- what is wrong and what is right?", "How should I worship?", "How should a congregation of disciples be organized and what is the work which they should be doing?" So many different and conflicting answers to these questions have been given by the councils and creeds of men. Many are confused, wondering if there are any answers. Others have accepted that one answer is as good as another- it doesn't really matter- Jesus doesn't care what His disciples do, He will accept them and take them to heaven.

However, the right answers to the above questions and to all questions are in the King's book, the New Testament. Once a preacher was speaking on the creeds of men. He had several stacked on the pulpit. One fell off. Someone in the audience said, "They all fall!" "That's right," said the preacher, as he knocked the rest of the creeds to the floor. Let Jesus and His word be your only authority. Do not reject Him and His word, for His word will judge you at the last day! (John 12:48)

OUR NAME: CHRISTIAN

The disciples of Jesus were first called "Christians" in Antioch. It is no wonder that disciples of Jesus came to be called "Christians". The Lord was preached, people turned to the Lord, were added to the Lord, and were encouraged to remain true to the Lord (Acts 11:19-26). It was very evident that these individuals had allegiance to the Christ (King) and so were called by His name.

Later, King Agrippa told Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." He recognized that Paul's intentions were to make him a follower of Christ. Paul then expressed that he didn't care how long it took, but he wished that not only Agrippa, but that all who heard him that day would become like he was (a Christian), except for his chains (Acts 26:26-29).

Finally, the third and final mention of the name "Christian" in the New Testament was by Peter when he wrote, "If anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name." (1 Pet 4:16). Evidently the name "Christian" had become a very despised name in society, a name used to mock and belittle Jesus' followers. But though persecutors had so misused and abused the name "Christian", Jesus' disciples were to wear it with pride, for it reflected their allegiance to Jesus, the Christ, and so glorified God.

Today, the name "Christian" has come to mean so many things that it means nothing. Several years ago, I was asked to give a name to a Bible

study group in a prison where I was teaching. I said to call us the "Christian" study group. The response was that this name was too "generic". Now when people hear "Christian", they want to know, "What kind?"- Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, etc., as men, because of their peculiar doctrines (see page 1), have given themselves names to identify their belief and their allegiance to a certain group of churches (denomination). These names also serve to distinguish one belief and denomination from another among "Christians". These names do not glorify God and foster and perpetuate division among believers, who Jesus said should be one (Jn 17:20-21).

Barton Stone said of these "party" names, "A party name is a strong bond of union in all the sects, by which a person wearing it is judge, friend or foe, approved of or disapproved, loved or despised, received or rejected, by those who wear a different name. All these party bonds must be broken and forgotten, or Christian union will never be known on earth and party union will stand as a mountain in the way of the world's salvation".

If you have not done so already, why not lay aside your denominational name at the same time you lay aside your allegiance to your denominational organization and its teaching? As you take the word of King Jesus, the New Testament, as your only creed, signify that your allegiance is only to Him by wearing His name. Wear the name "Christian" and in this name glorify God.
