

# **What's All This Business about the SACRED NAMES of God?**

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## **Chapter One --**

### **What Is God's True NAME?**

Much controversy has arisen over the name of God. Some claim that only the Hebrew names of God may be used -- any other name in any other language, they claim, is rank paganism! Even the name "God" is suspect as a form of Baalism, they claim, and "Jesus" is supposed to be a corruption of the pagan god "Zeus"!

What is the truth? WHAT IS GOD'S NAME? What is the ONLY "name" by which we may be SAVED? There are untold numbers of "gods" in the world, worshipped by different peoples around the world -- gods of stick and stone, wooden carved figures, and even gods of metal and plastic. But, according to the Scriptures, there is only one true God, who is the God of Creation, the One who made the entire Universe -- the God of "Israel"!

Almost two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who was born of the virgin Mary, and conceived by the Holy Spirit of the Father, came among us. He also was "God" -- God in human flesh. The apostle John says of Him, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

"Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:1-3). John continues, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (verse 14). The Word of God, the One who participated in all Creation, and who became the human Jesus Christ, was also God. He and the Father, then, have existed from the beginning -- for all time, eternally.

The apostle Paul writes of this as follows: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the UNIVERSE. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining ALL THINGS by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the NAME he has inherited is superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'? Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son'? And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels WORSHIP him'" (Heb.1:1-6).

Jesus Christ, now at the right hand of the Father in heaven, is very divine GOD! By physical analogy, we can speak of the mineral kingdom, the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom, and even the angelic kingdom. Christ is far above all of them -- He is a divine member of the GOD KINGDOM! Or, we also speak of the various "families" on the earth; Jesus, as a literal, divine Son of God is therefore a member of the GOD FAMILY! This should be obvious to all, since the Scriptures plainly call the other member of the God "Family" His "Father," and He is referred to as the "Son." A Father-Son relationship is none other but a FAMILY RELATIONSHIP!

### **Who Is the CREATOR of the Universe?**

Speaking of the supremacy of Christ, the apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For BY HIM ALL THINGS WERE CREATED: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; ALL THINGS were created BY HIM AND FOR HIM. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col.1:15-17).

The One who became Jesus Christ, then, was with the Father in the very beginning. He is the One who did the actual CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE! It was the power of His Word that brought all things into being from nothing! Paul gives us insight into this creative process when he writes, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Heb.11:3).

In the book of Genesis we read, "In the beginning GOD created the heavens and the earth" (Gen.1:1). The original word translated "God" in this verse is "Elohim" in the Hebrew. In the time of Abraham, God appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless" (Gen.17:1). In this verse God reveals Himself to Abraham the patriarch by the name of "El Shaddai" in the original Hebrew. Translated into English, it means "God Almighty." "El" is a shortened form of "Elohim," and "Shaddai" means "all mighty, all powerful" in Hebrew. However, when God began to call Moses to bring His people out of captivity in Egypt, He revealed Himself to Moses by an altogether different name. Notice! When Moses went over to investigate a mysterious burning bush that would not burn up, God said to him, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). This is the same word for "God" used in Genesis 1:1, "Elohim."

Is "Elohim" God's actual name? The Scriptures often use the word "Elohim" to refer to the true God, the Creator, the Almighty God. But this same word is also used in other places where it is used of "gods," false gods, pagan deities, and is also translated sometimes as "judge," "judges," or even "angels." Literally, it simply describes the essence of POWER as applied to individuals, whether the true God, idols, angels,

or human magistrates or judges. It means, "that which is strong." Thus the term "Elohim" is not used as the "name" of God, for there are many kinds of "elohim," including false gods. It is a generic term, and sometimes refers to the true God, and at other times to pagan gods. In English, we differentiate between the two by spelling "God" with a capital "G" and "gods" with a small "g." In Hebrew, there is no such manner of distinguishing between the two, and context supplies the correct rendition.

In Exodus 3, however, Moses goes on to say to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" (Exo.3:13). God responded, saying:

"I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you."

God went on, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the 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, the name by which I am to be REMEMBERED FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION" (Exodus 3:15).

The Hebrew word here translated "LORD" is actually the word "YHVH," called the Tetragrammaton. It is composed of the four consonants YHVH and is usually translated as "LORD," in capital letters, in most English translations. The Moffatt translation, however, renders it, "The Eternal." The God of the Scriptures says that THIS NAME is the real, personal, definitive name by which He is to be remembered. There are many "gods" in the world, but only one true "God." His name is YHVH -- not Jupiter, Zeus, Baal, Tammuz, Thor, Odin, or any other of the names of the pagan gods!

But how should this original, true name of the One and Only True God be pronounced? What do the letters YHVH in Hebrew signify? In this passage of Scripture God Himself defines the name, saying it means, "I AM WHO I AM," or the great "I AM." This expression gives the essence of the meaning of the name. God is the One who "Is," the "Self-existent One," the One who supremely "Is What He Is" or "Is Who He Is." Thus He stands alone and apart from all other objects, beings, or persons called "god." He alone is the "I AM WHO I AM."

### **The NAME of the True God**

Says the *Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon* of this name,

"pr. name of the supreme God amongst the Hebrews. The later Hebrews, for some centuries before the time of Christ, either misled by a false interpretation of certain laws (Ex.20:7; Lev.24:11), or else following some old superstition, regarded this name as so very holy, that it might not even be pronounced . . . Whenever, therefore, this nomen tetragrammaton occurred in the sacred text . . . they were accustomed to substitute for it [Adonai], and thus the vowels of the noun [Adonai] are in the Masoretic text placed under the four letters [YHVH] . . . This custom was already in vogue in the days of the LXX translators . . ."

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 *Jewish Universal Encyclopedia*, the first syllable of the divine name was clearly "Ya," 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:

"Overwhelming scholarly opinion holds that [YHVH] was in Moses' time pronounced. . . (Yahveh). There is also a shorter form of the Name, Yah . . . which may represent the original from which Yahveh was expanded or may, contrariwise, be a contraction of the longer ascription" (p.426).

The name "El" is applied to God 217 times in the Old Testament. It is the general Semitic term for a god. It most probably comes from a root meaning "to be strong." The use of "El" as a divine name is confined almost entirely to poetry; otherwise, it occurs generally in the generic sense rather than as a proper name. The term "ha-el" means "the true God," while "eli" means "my God," "el 'abicha" means "the God of thy fathers," and "ha-el hakadosh," "the holy God."

The name "Elohim" occurs 2,570 times in the Bible, and is found with two principal meanings -- as a designation for heathen gods in general, and as a name for God.

The Tetragrammaton, or four-lettered Name, YHVH, occurs 6,823 times, and is by far the most frequent name of God used in the Scriptures. The Samaritans pronounced it as "Iabe" and Origen transcribes it as "Iae," both pointing to an original vocalization of "Yahveh."

These names and titles for God were known by the ancient world. The knowledge of the Tetragrammaton was known to mankind as early as the second generation after Adam. Speaking of that period of history, the book of Genesis relates, "At that time men began to call on the NAME of the LORD [YHVH]" (Gen.4:26). The first usage of the name for God in the Scriptures occurs in Genesis 2:4 -- "When the LORD [YHVH] God made the earth and the heavens . . . the LORD [YHVH] God formed the man from the dust of the ground . . ."

The name Yahveh occurs frequently in the book of Genesis, proving that this name WAS KNOWN to the world before the Flood, and before the time of Moses! Although Moses was the author of the book of Genesis, it is obvious that he used many historical records that came down from the pre-Flood world, and from the time of the patriarchs. God inspired him to write Genesis as a record of the ancient world

and God's dealings with it. If God has not revealed His name Yahveh to that world, then Moses would not have used it in the book of Genesis.

Says the *New Dictionary of the Bible*:

"Strictly speaking, Yahveh is the only 'name' of God. In Genesis wherever the word sem ('name') is associated with the divine being that name is Yahveh. When Abraham or Isaac built an altar he called on the name of Yahveh' (Gen.12:8, 13:4, 26:25).

"In particular, Yahveh was the God of the Patriarchs, and we read of 'Yahveh the God (Elohim) of Abraham' and then of Isaac and finally 'Yahveh, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,' concerning which Elohim says, 'this is my name for ever' (Exo.3:15). Yahveh, therefore, in contrast to Elohim, is a PROPER NOUN, the name of a Person, though that Person is divine. As such, it has its own ideological setting: it presents God as a Person, and so brings Him into relationship with other, human, personalities. It brings God near to man, and He speaks to the Patriarchs as one friend to another" (p.478).

### **God's Name More Fully Defined**

Although the name Yahveh was known to the patriarchs, and men before the Flood, it was not fully comprehended or understood. After God had called Moses, and sent him to Pharaoh, with His message to let His people go, and Pharaoh obstinately refused to listen, Moses himself complained to God, "Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all" (Exo.5:23).

God replied to Moses: "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of the country."

"God also said to Moses, 'I am the LORD [Yahveh]. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by my name The LORD [Yahveh] I did not make myself known to them'" (Exo.6:1-3).

The Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35). It does not contradict itself. God was known to the patriarchs by the name Yahveh, as Genesis clearly shows. What, then, does He mean here?

Let us continue, reading this statement in context. God goes on, telling Moses, "I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. Moreover I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have REMEMBERED my covenant.

"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD [Yahveh], and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will FREE you from being slaves to them, and I will REDEEM you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. THEN YOU WILL KNOW that I am the LORD [Yahveh] your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD [Yahveh]'" (Exo.6:4-8).

Obviously, the patriarchs were not totally ignorant of the name Yahveh. But also obviously God had not revealed to them the FULL IMPLICATIONS or MEANING of the name Yahveh! They did not know Him as the One who would RESCUE His people, FREE them from slavery, and REDEEM them from tyranny and oppression! This aspect of His Name could only be comprehended by the generation of Israelites who would experience and see the intervening God Yahveh IN ACTION, destroying Egypt and its people and power, and rescuing them and bringing them through the Red Sea waters by a divine miracle, and providing for them in the wilderness by His supernatural, divine power!

In a sense, the patriarchs knew of God as "Yahveh" by name -- but not by the insight provided by personal, deep EXPERIENCE! Thus God, Yahveh, made Himself KNOWN to His people, and to the Egyptians, more and more as He poured out each plague upon Egypt. Each time they got a new respect for His power and authority. When God smote the waters of Egypt so they became blood, He said to them, "By this you will KNOW that I am the LORD [Yahveh]" (Exo.7:17). See also Exodus 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29; 10:2; 11:7; 14:4, 18; 16:6, 8, 12; 18:11). Each time God specifically intervened for His people, He revealed more intimately and more powerfully HIS NAME and its meaning and attributes.

Says *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*,

"Moses and the people had since patriarchal days known the name YHVH as God's name, but in the centuries since then this knowledge had hardly been more than a customary appellation. At the first revelation, at the bush, Moses is charged with his mission but -- despite being provided with access to the divine name Ehyeh -- he does not come radically closer to the essence of the God he seeks to know. Now, however, after his first trials and failures, Moses confronts the Deity again, and this time God reveals His name more fully, which is to say that Moses glimpses the Divine more clearly than before" (page 425).

This authority goes on, "Moses, however, begins to see God in a new light: He is faithful, merciful, and compassionate; He remembers His people and -- this is most important -- He will redeem them because He will be shown to be superior to all the powers in heaven and on earth. Beside Him, as the second commandment will state specifically, there is none else, and any adoration of other gods will therefore be an idolatrous enterprise, useless for the nations and illegitimate for Israel" (*ibid.*).

### **Who Was the Yahveh of the Old Testament?**

In Isaiah we read, "A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the LORD [Yahveh]; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God'" (Isa.40:3). John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy, preparing the way for Christ Jesus, the Messiah. In Matthew's gospel we read, "In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.' THIS IS HE who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: 'A voice of one calling in the desert, "Prepare the way for the Lord"' (Matt.3:1-3).

Who did John the Baptist come preparing the way for? An angel told his father Zecharias, that he and his wife would have a son, and to name him John. He went on, "Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on BEFORE THE LORD, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous --

to make ready a people PREPARED FOR THE LORD" (Luke 1:16-17). John came preparing the way for Jesus Christ, the Messiah! This proves, then, that Jesus Christ is none other than the "LORD," Yahveh, the one mentioned in Isaiah 40! He is the One generally and often referred to as "Yahveh" in the Old Testament, except in those Scriptures where "Yahveh" refers to the Father. This name clearly applies to both of them!

The fact that "Yahveh" refers both to Christ the Son, and God the Father, is evident from the Psalms. David wrote plainly, "I will proclaim the decree of the LORD [Yahveh]: He said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have become your FATHER. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.' Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD [Yahveh] with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him" (Psalm 2:7-12).

Clearly, it is the Father who gives Christ the Son possession of all the kingdoms of the earth at His return to this earth. Therefore, in this passage of Scripture, both of them are called "Yahveh" (verse 7, 11)!

#### **What Difference Does It Make?**

Is the correct knowledge of the name of God really all that important? Some today teach that it is wrong, sinful, to use any name for God BUT the original Hebrew! They even claim that the Greek names for God, found in the New Testament, are PAGAN! And, furthermore, they claim that the names for God in the various languages around the world are all pagan and idolatrous! To them, only the original Hebrew name is right! What is the truth? Is the name "Jesus" derived from a pagan god, merely another name for "Baal"? Is the name "God" also pagan in origin? Is it wrong to use the Greek names for God?

The fact is, there is no Biblical evidence that God must be called only by His Hebrew names and titles. There is no Biblical or linguistic evidence that prohibits the use of English names and titles for God.

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."

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 one language is not necessarily any "holier" than another, and that it is NOT wrong to use the forms of God's name as they would translate from the Hebrew or Greek.

Those who insist on using only the Hebrew names of God are straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel! Nowhere does the Bible tell us that it is wrong to use the names of God in Aramaic, Greek, or any other language of the earth.

On the other hand, however, there is rich meaning and significance in the original Hebrew names and titles of God. They are very important, and we should know them and use them, whenever it seems appropriate and desirable to do so. The proper name of God in the Old Testament is "Yahveh," and it does have a special meaning and significance that we should always remember.

Since Almighty God has preserved the New Testament Scriptures in the Greek language, and many if not all of them were originally written in Greek, it is obvious that God Himself INSPIRED the usage of Greek to write and to maintain and preserve HIS HOLY WORD! Therefore, it is self-evident that the Greek forms of God's names and titles are perfectly all right for us to use, and translations of those forms and names into other languages, including English.

Luke the physician, who wrote the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, was a highly trained physician who evidently was trained in his craft at Alexandria, Egypt. He addresses his gospel to the "most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3), as he does also the book of Acts (Acts 1:1). Theophilus, from his name, was undoubtedly a Greek. The gospel of Luke and book of Acts were undoubtedly written by Luke in the Greek language. Says the New Bible Dictionary: "It is generally admitted that Luke is the most literary author of the New Testament. His prologue proves that he was able to write in irreproachable, pure, literary Greek" (p.758). He was a Gentile. Says this same source, "From the literary style of Luke and Acts, and from the character of the contents of the books, it is clear that Luke was a well-educated Greek."

This evidence, of course, provides further proof that God does not take exception to the Greek forms of His name and titles. He inspired Luke to use the Greek language! And Luke was writing primarily for the Greek-speaking, Gentile world!

The apostle Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. He spoke Greek fluently, and used it continually as he went throughout the Roman world preaching the gospel. Only when he was in Judea, and Jerusalem, did he generally use Hebrew (Acts 22:2).

In writing his epistles to the churches throughout the region -- Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, Philippi -- undoubtedly he also wrote in the Greek language. There is no evidence whatsoever that he originally used Hebrew names for God instead of the Greek forms, as they have been preserved through the centuries. Of all the revelations of archaeology in Biblical lands, and the massive discoveries amongst the Dead Sea scrolls, doesn't it seem strange that if the original monographs, and first copies of the New Testament manuscripts were written in Hebrew, that NOT ONE COPY has ever been found?

#### **The Language of the New Testament**

Did God Himself inspire the New Testament to be written and preserved in the Greek language, instead of Hebrew? What was the original language of the books of the New Testament?

*The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, by Eusebius, provides us with greater insight into the writing of the New Testament. Eusebius records that after Peter first went to Rome, and preached the gospel there, that the people were so enthusiastic that they wanted a written record of the gospel he preached. Writes Eusebius: "So brightly shone the light of true religion on the minds of Peter's hearers that, not satisfied with a single hearing or with the oral teaching of the divine message, they resorted to appeals of every kind to induce Mark (whose gospel we have), as he was a follower of Peter, to leave them in WRITING a summary of the instruction they had

received by word of mouth, nor did they let him go until they had persuaded him, and thus became responsible for the writing of what is known as the Gospel according to Mark" (p.88).

This occurred in Rome. The request was made by Romans. The language Mark wrote in was Greek, which was commonly understood by all learned Romans, as Greek was the universal language of that time.

Eusebius tells us more about the original writing of the gospels. "Matthew," he records, "had begun by preaching to Hebrews; and when he made up his mind to go to others too, he committed his own gospel to writing IN HIS NATIVE TONGUE, so that for those with whom he was no longer present the gap left by his departure was filled by what he wrote. And when Mark and Luke had published their gospels, John, we are told, who hitherto had relied entirely on the spoken word, finally took to writing for the following reason. The three gospels already written were in general circulation and copies had come into John's hands. He welcomed them, we are told, and confirmed their accuracy, but remarked that the narrative only lacked the story of what Christ had done first of all at the beginning of His mission" (p.132).

It is obvious that Mark, Luke and John, therefore, were written in Greek. John's headquarters, at this time, was undoubtedly Ephesus, where he finally died. Ephesus was in the middle of a Greek-speaking region, and John was writing for the entire Church, not just the Jews at Jerusalem.

Eusebius quotes Irenaeus also concerning the writing of the gospels, as follows: "Matthew published a written gospel for the Hebrews in their own tongue, while Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel in Rome and founding the church there. After their passing, Mark also, the disciple and INTERPRETER of Peter, transmitted to us in writing the things preached by Peter. Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by him. Lastly, John, the disciple of the Lord, who had leant back on His breast, once more set forth the gospel, while residing at Ephesus in Asia" (p.211).

Obviously these three gospels were written in Greek, as their audience was Greek-speaking, and only the gospel of Matthew is singled out as having been written in Hebrew!

Irenaeus is also quoted concerning the writing of the book of Revelation, and the mysterious number "666," the number of the Antichrist. Irenaeus writes: "Such then is the case: this number is found in all good and early copies and confirmed by the very people who was John face to face, and reason teaches us that the number of the Beast's name is shown according to GREEK numerical usage by the letters in it. . . ." (p.211).

Again, here is further evidence that even the book of Revelation was originally written in Greek.

### **The Books and the Parchments**

The distinguished scholar F. F. Bruce, in *The Books and the Parchments*, tells us that Greek was undoubtedly the language of the New Testament. He asserts, "Although Aramaic appears to have been the common language of our Lord and of the earliest Christians, it is not the language of the New Testament. . . ."

"The language most appropriate for the propagation of this message would naturally be one that was most widely known throughout all the nations, and this language lay ready to hand. It was the Greek language, which, at the time when the gospel began to be proclaimed among all the nations, was a THOROUGHLY INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE, spoken not only around the Aegean shores but all over the Eastern Mediterranean and in other areas too. Greek was no strange tongue to the apostolic church even in the days when it was confined to Jerusalem, for the membership of the primitive Jerusalem church included Greek-speaking Jews as well as Aramaic-speaking Jews. These Greek-speaking Jewish Christians (or Hellenists) are mentioned in Acts 6:1, where we read that they complained of the unequal attention paid to the widows of their group by contrast with those of the Hebrews or Aramaic-speaking Jews. To remedy this situation seven men were appointed to take charge of it, and it is noteworthy that (to judge by their names) all seven were Greek-speaking" (p.49).

Bruce discusses the differences in style of writing in the Greek language that are found in the New Testament books. He declares: "Paul, we may say, comes roughly half-way between the vernacular and more literary styles. The Epistle to the Hebrews and the First Epistle of Peter are true literary works, and much of their vocabulary is to be understood by the aid of a classical lexicon rather than one which draws upon non-literary sources. The Gospels contain more really vernacular Greek, as we might expect, since they report so much conversation by ordinary people. This is true even of Luke's Gospel. Luke himself was master of a fine literary style, as appears from the first four verses of his Gospel, but in both Gospel and Acts he adapts his style to the characters and scenes that he portrays" (p.55-56).

All scholars of repute, today, admit that the original language of the New Testament was Greek, although the writers sometimes drew upon Hebraisms to be translated into the Greek.

Says the *New Bible Dictionary*: "The language in which the New Testament documents have been preserved is the 'common Greek' (koine), which was the lingua franca of the Near Eastern and Mediterranean lands in Roman times" (p.713).

This same authoritative source adds the following information: "Having thus summarized the general characteristics of New Testament Greek, we may give a brief characterization of each individual author. Mark is written in the Greek of the common man. . . . Matthew and Luke each utilize the Markan text, but each corrects his solecisms, and prunes his style. . . . Matthew's own style is less distinguished than that of Luke -- he writes a grammatical Greek, sober but cultivated, yet with some marked Septuagintisms; Luke is capable of achieving momentarily great heights of style in the Attic tradition, but lacks the power to sustain these; he lapses at length back to the style of his sources or to a very humble koine. . . ."

"Paul writes a forceful Greek, with noticeable developments in style between his earliest and his latest Epistles. . . . James and I Peter both show close acquaintance with classical style, although in the former some very 'Jewish' Greek may also be seen. The Johannine Epistles are closely similar to the Gospels in language. . . . Jude and II Peter both display a highly tortuous and involved Greek. . . . The Apocalypse, as we have indicated, is sui generis in language and style: its vigour, power, and success, though a tour de force, cannot be denied" (p.715-716).

There is no evidence at all to suppose that the New Testament was originally written in anything but ancient Greek! Concludes the *New Bible Dictionary*, "In summary, we may state that the Greek of the New Testament is known to us today as a language 'understood of the people,' and that it was used with varying degrees of stylistic attainment, but with one impetus and vigour, to express in these documents a

message which at any rate for its preachers was continuous with that of the Old Testament Scriptures -- a message of a living God, concerned for man's right relation with Himself, providing of Himself the means of reconciliation."

Now consider this. The evidence all shows that Almighty God INSPIRED Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and the rest of the writers of the New Testament -- even including Peter and James -- of having written their gospels and epistles IN GREEK! Only Matthew's gospel was apparently written first in Hebrew or Aramaic. The other New Testament writers, in using the Greek language, also used the GREEK FORMS of God's name, and the name of Jesus Christ, repeatedly and consistently! Clearly, therefore, God Himself does not disapprove of His name being translated into different human languages!

It is a spurious, specious argument to claim that the New Testament had to have been written in Hebrew, and had to contain only the Hebrew names for God. All the evidence of the manuscripts points otherwise.

Those who deny that the Old Testament faithfully preserves the knowledge of God's name, and who claim the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew, utilizing the Hebrew names for God, don't know what they are talking about. They don't have a leg to stand on. They have placed their personal theological beliefs before the record of history. They have denied the facts in order to keep their own cherished beliefs. Those who claim that the original manuscripts were not properly preserved in the language in which they were written, seem to think that God Almighty is UNABLE or UNWILLING to faithfully preserve and protect HIS WORD from the corruption and perversion of men!

### **God's Word Is Eternal**

God says His Word endures FOREVER! "Your word, O LORD [Yahveh], is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens" (Psalm 119:89). God is able to preserve His Word flawlessly! David was inspired to write, "All your words are true" (Psa.119:160). He wrote also, "As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is FLAWLESS" (Psa.18:30).

Furthermore, the apostle Paul declared, "ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-BREATHED and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Tim.3:16-17).

God preserved the New Testament and the Old Testament flawlessly. The whole Bible is the inspired Word of Almighty God. Although there have been a few scribal errors or copyists errors, in various manuscripts, over the centuries, as a whole by comparing and checking with the faithfully preserved Hebrew manuscripts copied by the Jewish scribes, and the Greek manuscripts preserved by the Greeks, we can ascertain those few areas where some manuscripts contained errors.

The fact is that GOD'S WORD IS FAITHFUL! It is a reliable witness. It is the very essence of truth. Jesus said of the Scripture, ". . . the Scripture CANNOT BE BROKEN" (John 10:35). He also prayed to God for His disciples, "Sanctify them by the TRUTH; YOUR WORD IS TRUTH" (John 17:17). We can TRUST the Word of God! Through His Word, then, we can know that it is not wrong to use the names of God translated into English, Russian, German, Greek, Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, French, or any other language on the face of the earth! Contary to the assumptions of some, the name "Jesus" does not come from the Greek word Zeus. Although they are similar, the name "Jesus" comes from the Greek Iesou, which derives from the Hebrew "Joshua," or "Yehoshua" meaning "salvation," or "Yahveh saves." The name "Christ" comes from the Greek Christos, meaning "Anointed." Thank GOD for His inestimable, wonderful, perfect TRUTH! And thank God for the wonderful knowledge He has revealed to us concerning His name!

### **Chapter Two --**

#### **Did Jesus and the Apostles Speak Greek?**

Several sects and churches claim that Jesus Christ and the apostles only spoke Hebrew or Aramaic, and that the original monographs of the New Testament were all written in Hebrew, and later translated into Greek. They consider Greek to be a pagan language. What is the real truth of the matter? Did Jesus speak Greek?

The September-October 1992 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* contains several fascinating articles which bear heavily on the questions posed for this article. For centuries, scholars have believed -- assumed -- that very few Jews of the first century spoke Greek. They have believed, and taught, that ancient Judea was a "backwater" area of the Roman Empire, and the people were ignorant as a whole of the Greek language, although it is admitted that Greek was the "lingua franca" and "language of commerce" throughout the Roman Empire.

Today, however, new archaeological discoveries have undermined the speculations of scholars and brought into clear light the fact that Greek was well known among the Jews, especially the priesthood, leadership class, and the merchant class. In particular, Greek was well understood in "Galilee of the Gentiles," the region where Jesus Christ of Nazareth was raised, and grew up as a young lad. There is no doubt, therefore, that Jesus and the original apostles all spoke Greek -- commonly, as a "second language."

#### **Evidence from Caiaphas' Tomb**

First, let us explore the recent findings in Jerusalem of the actual tomb of Caiaphas, the high priest who condemned Christ. Astonishing as it seems, the burial cave of the Caiaphas family was found, in Jerusalem, by "accident" -- the family of one of the priests who presided at the trial of Jesus. Workers building a water park in 1990 accidentally uncovered an ancient burial cave, underneath what is now a stretch of road in Jerusalem's Peace Forest. The surrounding area was used as an ancient necropolis during the late Second Temple period (first century B.C.- first century A.D.). In the burial cave, archaeologists found twelve ossuaries, including one decorated with two six-petaled rosettes within concentric circles. The bone box displays a fluted column on a stepped base and topped by an Ionic capital. Inscriptions on two of the ossuaries found here indicate that this was the burial chamber of the Caiaphas family, and one of the ossuaries may well have contained the bones of the high priest who handed Jesus Christ over to the Romans and Pontius Pilate, after interrogating Him (see Matt.26:57-68).

Writes Zvi Grenhut, archaeologist involved in the discovery and identification of the site, "Reburial in ossuaries appears mainly at the end of the first century B.C.E. and in the first century C.E. Reburial in an ossuary was rare in Jewish tombs after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E." The archaeologist continues:

"But the most exceptional and significant finds were the two ossuaries that, for the first time in an archaeological context, contained a form of the name Qafa', or Caiaphas, a name known to us from both the New Testament and from the first century Jewish historian Flavius

Josephus . . . Suffice it to say that the form(s) of the name Caiaphas inscribed on these ossuaries is probably the same as that of the well-known family of high priests, one of whom presided at Jesus' trial" ("Burial Cave of the Caiaphas Family," *BAR*, Sept.-Oct. 1992, p.32-35).

One of the ossuaries is simply inscribed "Qafa" (ka-FA). On one the name is more complete -- "Yehosef bar Qayafa" and "Yehosef bar Qafa" (Joseph son of Caiaphas). The ossuary with the more complete forms of the name is the most beautiful one, decorated with a rare and intricate pattern. Says Greenhut: "There is no doubt that this ossuary is special. Its elaborate decoration must have something to do with the name(s) inscribed on it. Could this be the ossuary of the high priest who presided at Jesus' trial? "Inside this ossuary, we found bones from six different people: two infants, a child between two and five, a young boy between 13 and 18, an adult woman -- and a male of about 60 years!" (*ibid.*, p.35).

Very few of the people mentioned in the pages of the Bible have been proved to have existed by means of archaeological evidence. Therefore, the discovery of the name of Caiaphas, the high priest who lived in Jesus' time, is of astonishing and paramount importance. It verifies a vital element of the story of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ -- the very existence of the high priest who was the head of the Sanhedrin at that very time. Though the New Testament refers to the high priest by the single name "Caiaphas," the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus refers to him as "Joseph who was called Caiaphas of the high priesthood."

A person named Joseph with the nickname Caiaphas was the high priest in Jerusalem between 18 and 36 C.E.," writes Ronny Reich, in a companion article in the same issue of *BAR* (see "Caiaphas Name Inscribed on Bone Boxes," p.41). In the New Testament he is simply called "Caiaphas" (Matt.26:3, 57; Luke 3:2; John 11:49, 18:13-14,24,28; Acts 4:6).

### **Most Jewish Funerary Inscriptions in GREEK!**

In the next article in the same issue of *Biblical Archaeological Review*, the author, Pieter W. Van Der Horst, points out that no less than 1,600 Jewish epitaphs -- funerary inscriptions -- are extant from ancient Palestine dating from 300 B.C. to 500 A.D. The geographical spread of these inscriptions reveal that Jews were living all over the world at that time, especially the Roman period. In other words, when Jesus' brother James said in Acts 15, "Moses has been preached in every city for generations past and is read in the synagogues on every sabbath" (v.21), he was simply stating the truth. Peter, in his first sermon, enumerates a list of the countries from which Jews came to worship on that first Pentecost of the newly formed Christian Church (Acts 2:9-11).

Van Der Horst goes on: "One of the most surprising facts about these funerary inscriptions is that most of them are IN GREEK -- approximately 70 percent; about 12 percent are in Latin; and only 18 percent are in Hebrew or Aramaic.

"These figures are even more instructive if we break them down between Palestine and the Diaspora. Naturally in Palestine we would expect more Hebrew and Aramaic and less Greek. This is true, but not to any great extent. Even in Palestine approximately TWO-THIRDS of these inscriptions are in GREEK.

"APPARENTLY FOR A GREAT PART OF THE JEWISH POPULATION THE DAILY LANGUAGE WAS GREEK, EVEN IN PALESTINE. This is impressive testimony to the impact of Hellenistic culture on Jews in their mother country, to say nothing of the Diaspora.

"In Jerusalem itself about 40 PERCENT of the Jewish inscriptions from the first century period (before 70 C.E.) ARE IN GREEK. We may assume that most Jewish Jerusalemites who saw the inscriptions in situ were able to read them" ("Jewish Funerary Inscriptions -- Most Are in Greek," Pieter W. Van Der Horst, *BAR*, Sept.-Oct.1992, p.48).

These are shocking statements to all who have believed, and taught, that the Jews as a whole were ignorant of Greek during the time of Christ! Obviously, Judea was not a "backwater" and "boorish" part of the Roman Empire, but a most sophisticated and cultivated part. In fact, the Jewish Temple was acknowledged to be the finest building structure throughout the whole Empire! The Jewish people, because of their widespread dispersion in the Empire, for business and commercial purposes, mainly, spoke Greek rather fluently -- and this knowledge and usage of Greek was also common throughout Judea, as this new "funerary inscription" evidence attests!

This really should not be surprising at all. The Greek influence in Judea had grown very significantly since the days of Alexander the Great, circa 330 B.C. By the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, circa 168-165 B.C., Hellenism had become very strong, and many of the high priests had become "Hellenists," leading to the Maccabean revolt. In successive generations, the Greek influence never abated, particularly among the business, commercial and priestly crowd. Many of the priests, being Sadducees, were greatly influenced by Greek culture and contact.

Writes Van Der Horst further: "The great rabbi Judah ha-Nasi, the compiler of the Mishnah (a collection of Jewish oral law) in about 200 C.E., was buried in Beth She-arim; the majority of pious Jews who wanted to be buried with him at Beth She-arim had their funerary inscriptions written in Greek. "This is not to say Hebrew and Aramaic ever died out completely as languages for the Jews. Especially in the eastern Diaspora, Jews continued to speak a Semitic language. But IN THE FIRST FIVE CENTURIES OF THE COMMON ERA, exactly the period when rabbinic literature was being written in Hebrew and Aramaic, A MAJORITY OF THE JEWS IN PALESTINE and the western Diaspora SPOKE GREEK" (*ibid.*, p.48-54).

All of this is very interesting, of course. But what about Jesus Christ, and the disciples? Did Jesus also use Greek, commonly, in speaking to the people of Judea? For centuries, theologians and scholars have assumed that He only spoke Hebrew or Aramaic. However, this assumption now seems to be far off the mark!

### **Jesus and the Disciples Spoke Greek!**

Another article in the very same issue of *BAR* discusses this very issue. The author, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, points out that there is no doubt Jesus spoke Aramaic. He shows that although a form of Aramaic was "the dominant language, it was not the only language spoken in Palestine at that time." He continues:

"The Dead Sea scrolls reveal that a TRILINGUALISM EXISTED IN PALESTINE in the first and second century of the Christian era. In addition to Aramaic, some Jews also spoke Hebrew or Greek -- or both. Different levels of Jewish society, different kinds of religious training and other factors may have determined who spoke what" ("Did Jesus Speak Greek?", same issue of *BAR*, p.58). During the

Babylonian captivity, many Jews came to use Aramaic as their first language, a sister language closely akin to Hebrew. Although Hebrew continued in use in the Temple, and the emerging synagogues, Aramaic was the common language of the people during the time of Christ. The majority of the people apparently did not fully understand Hebrew, for the custom arose to have an Aramaic translation read of the Hebrew Scriptures, following the reading in Hebrew, in all the synagogues. These readings and interpretations were done by a person called the meturgeman. In time, they were written down and were called targumim.

But what about Greek? Says Fitzmyer: "Greek, of course, was in widespread use in the Roman empire at this time. Even the Romans spoke Greek, as inscriptions in Rome and elsewhere attest. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that **THAT GREEK WAS ALSO IN COMMON USE AMONG THE JEWS OF PALESTINE**. The Hellenization of Palestine began even before the fourth-century B.C. conquest by Alexander the Great. Hellenistic culture among the Jews of Palestine spread more quickly after Alexander's conquest, especially when the country was ruled by the Seleucid monarch Antiochus IV Epiphanes (second century B.C.), and later under certain Jewish Hasmonean and Herodian kings" (p.59).

A reference to Greek-speaking Jews is found clearly in the book of Acts. In Acts 6:1 certain early Christians in Jerusalem are spoken of as being "Hellenists." The King James Version says, "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians (Hellenistai) against the Hebrews (Hebraioi), because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration" (Acts 6:1). Who were these Hellenists or "Greeks"? The term applies to Greek-speaking Jews, in whose synagogues Greek was spoken, and where undoubtedly the Septuagint Scriptures were commonly used. This is verified in Acts 9:29 where we read: "And he (Saul, whose name was later changed to Paul) spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians . . ." The "Grecians" or "Hellenists" were the Greek-speaking Jews, who had their own synagogues, even in Jerusalem.

Says Fitzmyer: "Such Hellenistai may have spoken very little, if any, Hebrew or Aramaic. This is suggested by a reference in Philippians 3:5 where Paul stoutly refers to himself as 'a Hebrew of the Hebrews.' Paul also spoke Greek. Thus Hellenistai as C. F. D. Moule has suggested probably is the designation of those Jerusalem Jews or Jewish Christians who habitually spoke only Greek (and for that reason were more affected by Hellenistic culture), whereas Hebraioi designated those Greek-speaking Jews and Jewish Christians who also spoke a Semitic language, probably Aramaic, which they normally used" (*ibid.*, p.60).

What about Jesus Christ, and the apostles? Did they, too, commonly speak Greek as a "second language"?

"The answer is almost certainly yes. The more difficult question, however, is whether he taught in Greek. Are any of the sayings of Jesus that are preserved for us only in Greek nevertheless in the original language in which he uttered them?

"That Aramaic was the language Jesus normally used for both conversation and teaching seems clear. Most New Testament scholars would agree with this. But did he also speak Greek? The evidence already recounted for the use of Greek in first-century Palestine provides the background for an answer to this question. But there are more specific indications in the Gospels themselves.

"All four Gospels depict Jesus conversing with Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect of Judea, at the time of his trial (Mark 15:2-5; Matthew 27:11-14; Luke 23:3; John 18:33-38). Even if we allow for obvious literary embellishment of these accounts, there can be little doubt that Jesus and Pilate did engage in some kind of conversation . . . In what language did Jesus and Pilate converse? There is no mention of an interpreter. Since there is little likelihood that Pilate, a Roman, would have been able to speak either Aramaic or Hebrew, the obvious answer is that **JESUS SPOKE GREEK** at his trial before Pilate" (p.61).

Similarly, when Jesus conversed with the Roman centurion, a commander of a troop of Roman soldiers, the centurion most likely did not speak Aramaic or Hebrew. It is most likely that Jesus conversed with him in Greek, the common language of the time throughout the Roman empire (see Matt.8:5-13; Luke 7:2-10; John 4:46-53). A royal official of Rome, in the service of Herod Antipas, a Gentile, would most likely spoken with Jesus in Greek.

In addition, we find that Jesus journeyed to the pagan area of Tyre and Sidon, where He spoke with a Syro-Phoenician woman. The Gospel of Mark identifies this woman as Hellenes, meaning a "Greek" (Mark 7:26). The probability is, therefore, that Jesus spoke to her in Greek.

Even more remarkable, however, is the account in John 12, where we are told: "And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:20-21). These men were Greeks, and most likely spoke Greek, which Philip evidently understood, having grown up in the region of Galilee, not the back-water region many have assumed, but "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Matt.4:15) -- a place of commerce and international trade, where Greek would have been the normal language of business.

Having grown up in Galilee, it is evident that Jesus and His disciples must have spoken Greek, whenever it suited their purpose to do so. Declares Fitzmyer: "Moreover, these specific instances in which Jesus apparently spoke Greek are consistent with his Galilean background. In Matthew 4:15, this area is referred to as 'Galilee of the Gentiles.' Growing up and living in this area, Jesus would have had to speak some Greek. Nazareth was a mere hour's walk to Sepphoris and in the vicinity of other cities of the Decapolis. Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, was built by Herod Antipas; the population there, too, was far more bilingual than in Jerusalem.

"Coming from such an area, **JESUS would NO DOUBT HAVE SHARED THIS DOUBLE LINGUISTIC HERITAGE**. Reared in an area where many inhabitants were **GREEK- SPEAKING GENTILES**, Jesus, the 'carpenter' (tekon, Mark 6:3), like Joseph, his foster- father (Matthew 13:55), would have had to deal with them in **GREEK**. Jesus was not an illiterate peasant and did not come from the lowest stratum of Palestinian society; he was a skilled craftsman. He is said to have had a house in Capernaum (Mark 2:15). He would naturally have conducted business in Greek with gentiles in Nazareth and neighboring Sepphoris" (*ibid.*).

Did Jesus also, therefore, teach in Greek? Were many of His parables and saying actually uttered in the Greek language? If the answer is yes, as A. W. Argyle says, "We may have direct access to the original utterances of our Lord and not only to a translation of them."

### **The Language of Jesus**

In the time of Christ, three languages figured prominently in the lives of the people of Judaea -- the common language of Aramaic, the language of Hebrew, used in the synagogues, and the Greek language -- which was commonly spoken and understood throughout the Roman Empire.

Some Aramaic words and expressions are preserved in the Gospels, such as Talitha cum, which means, "Little girl, get up!" (Mark 5:41). Also, Abba ("Father"; Mark 14:36; Gal.4:6; Rom.8:15); Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me"; Mark 15:34); Cephas ("Peter"; John 1:42); Mammon ("Wealth"; Matt.6:24, RSV); Raca ("Fool"; Matt.5:22, RSV). In fact, we can be specific and say that Jesus spoke a Galilean version of "western Aramaic," which differed from that which was spoken in Jerusalem (Matt.26:73; compare Acts 2:7).

Jesus could also read and speak Hebrew. The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls has proved that Hebrew was used quite extensively in certain circles, especially for religious purposes. Jesus stood up and read the Hebrew Scriptures in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-20), showing He could also read and speak Hebrew. Some Hebrew words are also preserved in the gospels, such as, Ephphatha ("Be opened"; Mark 7:34); Amen ("Amen": Matt.5:26; Mark 14:30, RSV).

Writes Robert H. Stein, in *Jesus The Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ*:

"The third major language spoken in Palestine was Greek. The impact of Alexander the Great's conquests in the fourth century B.C. resulted in the Mediterranean's being a 'Greek sea' in Jesus' day. In the third century Jews in Egypt could no longer read the Scriptures in Hebrew, so they began to translate them into Greek. This famous translation became known as the Septuagint (LXX). Jesus, who was reared in 'Galilee, of the Gentiles,' lived only three or four miles from the thriving Greek city of Sepphoris. There may even have been times when he and his father worked in this rapidly growing metropolitan city, which served as the capital city of Herod Antipas until A.D. 26, when he moved the capital to Tiberias" (*Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ*, Robert H. Stein, InterVarsity Press., 1996, p.87).

Stein further tells us that the existence of "Hellenists" in the early Church (Acts 6:1-6) implies that from the beginning of the Church, there were Greek speaking Jewish Christians in the Church. The term "Hellenists" suggests their language was Greek, rather than their cultural or philosophical outlook. Remember, these were Jewish Christians whose primary language was Greek -- they were not Greek philosophers or their followers, but followers of Christ Jesus.

Stein goes on to explain, further: "Two of Jesus' disciples were even known by their Greek names: Andrew and Philip. In addition, there are several incidents in Jesus' ministry when he spoke to people who knew neither Aramaic nor Hebrew. Thus unless a translator was present (though none is ever mentioned), their conversations probably took place in the Greek language. Probably Jesus spoke Greek during the following occasions: the visit to Tyre, Sidon and the Decapolis (Mark 7:31ff), the conversation with the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30; compare especially 7:26) and the trial before Pontius Pilate (Mark 15:2-15; compare also Jesus' conversation with the 'Greeks' in John 12:20-36)" (p.87, emphasis all mine).

The fact that Jesus Christ and the disciples all knew and spoke Greek, as a "third language," in addition to Aramaic and Hebrew, is also indicated and supported by the fact that all the gospels and epistles of the New Testament are written and preserved in the Greek language. Stop and think! It is very significant that no early Christian documents are extant in Aramaic! ALL the earliest New Testament documents and fragments are in Greek! Papias, a second-century bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor stated that Matthew had put together the "sayings" of Jesus in the Hebrew dialect, Aramaic. But no one has ever seen them. All we have are GREEK manuscripts, and as far back as we go, GREEK is the language of the New Testament! Strange, isn't it, that not one manuscript in Aramaic or Hebrew predates the 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 the cherished theories 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."

The lines on the fragments are from Matthew 26 and include the oldest written reference to Mary Magdalene and the betrayal of Christ by Judas. This fragment, written soon after the death of Christ, in the first century, is written in the Greek language, putting in the trash compacter once and for all the notion that the apostles did not speak or write Greek!

This new discovery by Professor Carsten Thiede, a papyrus expert, will provoke controversy among scholars, if not even dismay and consternation on the part of disbelievers and skeptics. His discovery 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 is written in GREEK, and 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, evidently the apostle Matthew, was very familiar with the Greek language and was capable of writing intelligently in it.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that some of the disciples of Christ had Greek names -- Andrew, Philip, Simon (a Grecized form of the Hebrew Sim on), Levi/Matthew, a tax collector. It is possible that many Greek terms preserved in the New Testament may be there because they were originally uttered in Greek. One such word is "Sanhedron," which comes from the Greek synedrion. It is of Greek, not Hebrew, derivation, and was the common term used for the Jewish high court.

A word often used by Jesus, "hypocrite," in describing the Pharisees and Sadducees, comes from the Greek word hypokrites, a compound word with the Greek preposition hypo for "under" and krites, meaning "judgment." This form is wholly lacking in Semitic languages. The word hypokrites basically means, "one who answers" (i.e., one who always has an answer, or excuse), but came to mean over time not only "expounder" or "interpreter," but "orator," "actor," stage actor, or one who spoke from behind a dramatic mask on stage. From this it came to mean "pretender," "dissembler." But this Greek word, so familiar in the denunciations of Christ, has no counterpart in Hebrew or Aramaic.

### **What Difference Does It Make?**

What difference does it make, anyway, what language Jesus and His disciples spoke? The answer becomes clear when we realize that there are churches, sects and cults today which make a great issue over the subject of "holy names." These churches will not use ANY name for God or Christ in ANY language except what they call the original "Hebrew" names for God and the Messiah.

According to these people, it is a SIN to mention on one's lips the word Adonai in Hebrew, translated "Lord" in the Old Testament! According to them, the word "Adonai" is a name for Baal the sun-god, and so "Lord" is a title for Baal, the sun-god! It does not seem to matter to them that the Scriptures themselves use this very word repeatedly in reference to the True God of Israel! Similarly, they condemn the use of the Hebrew name El, Elohim, Eloah, and all its derivatives as being PAGAN terms, used of the pagan gods of antiquity. They condemn the use of such words, including any and all translations from them, such as "God," "Most High God," etc. Any titles used for pagan gods they forbid to be used of the True God! Yet the Scriptures themselves repeatedly refer to the true God as El, Elohim, Eloah, etc., in the Old Testament, which translates into English as "God" (Gen.1:1, etc.).

Of course, the fact that God preserved the entirety of the New Testament in the Greek language seems to give these people "fits." They claim Greek is another pagan language, and that such terms as Iesous translated "Jesus," and Theos translated "God" are also pagan names and must not be used. They claim that a vast, overriding "conspiracy" in the first century destroyed all the "missing" Hebrew original documents, and that the New Testament we have today is essentially a forgery -- at least where the names of God are involved!

Proof or evidence of this conspiracy? There is none. Does God Almighty have the power to preserve His name in whatever language He chooses? Of course He does! And it is patently obvious that He choose to preserve the New Testament Scriptures in Greek -- not Hebrew! The fact that Jesus and the apostles all spoke Greek is another nail in the coffin of these "language-worshippers" and conspiracy addicts.

We need not worry about ancient conspiracies to destroy the word, or "name" of God. As Christ said, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17); "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

Peter wrote that the word of God "liveth and abideth for ever" (I Pet.1:23). The word of God, which He inspired to be preserved, is in all essential and crucial respects, inspired and correctly preserved, to all generations. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "ALL SCRIPTURE" -- and that includes the NAMES AND TITLES USED FOR GOD, in both the Old and New Testaments -- "IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD [Greek, "God-breathed"], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for CORRECTION, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim.3:16).

Wouldn't it seem awfully strange that if God only intended all mankind to use only the Hebrew names of God and the Messiah, that He Himself divided all mankind into many language groups at the tower of Babel? Wouldn't it also seem strange that this same God, who created mankind, and later gave him different languages (Gen.11), required that in order to receive salvation one would have to know, and pronounce "correctly," the Hebrew name of God and Christ -- and that ONLY THE HEBREW PRONUNCIATION WOULD SAVE ANYBODY?

What kind of God would that be? Generations of man have come and gone, and even the Jews say today that they have forgotten exactly how to pronounce the YHVH or Tetragrammaton of the Old Testament name of God! "Jehovah" is obviously in error, yet many use that name today. "Yahweh" is the more recently "scholarly" pronunciation suggested by many; yet historical evidence indicates that is just an "approximation" of the divine name, and "Yahveh" would be closer to the truth.

Others claim "Yahuveh" is more accurate. And on and on the argument goes -- where it will stop, nobody knows! Some claim "Christ" is a pagan (Greek) term, and that "Jesus" comes from the Greek god "Zeus." Both claims are patently false. "Christ" is merely the English form of the Greek word Christos, which merely means "Anointed" (just as the Hebrew word Moshiaich literally means "Messiah"). The name "Jesus" comes from the Greek Iesous, and means "Saviour," just as does the Hebrew original Yeshua. The important thing in God's sight is not whether we pronounce the syllables and consonants of His name in some precise manner directed by heaven. But rather, whether we love Him with all our heart, mind and soul, and love our neighbor as ourselves. As Jesus Christ said: "For this is the (whole) law and the prophets."

If you would like to study this subject further, then write for our article, *A New Look at the Divine Name.*

**Chapter Three –**

### **Was the New Testament Originally Written in Hebrew?**

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 unsuspecting world by clever and devious religious charlatans of the fourth and fifth centuries? Why is our modern New Testament written in Greek, anyway?

Some today teach that the Greek names for God, found in the New Testament, are PAGAN! And, furthermore, they claim that the names for God in the various languages around the world are all pagan and idolatrous! To them, only the original Hebrew name is right! What is the truth? Is the name "Jesus" -- Iesou in the Greek language -- derived from the name of the pagan god "Zeus"? Is the Greek name for God -- Theos -- merely another name for "Baal" and pagan in origin? Is it wrong to use the Greek names for God? These questions cut to the very heart of the controversy over the "divine names" sects and churches who insist that the names of God in all other languages are pagan in origin and blasphemous to use. Such sects claim that the New Testament itself was originally written in the Hebrew language, and that the Greek manuscripts are frauds -- deliberate attempts by apostates to corrupt the names of God and change the teachings of Christ.

### **What Is the Evidence?**

Is there any evidence to back up such sensational claims? Is the New Testament, as we have it today, a trustworthy document -- or a compilation of lies and forgeries, foisted upon the world by Catholic theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries?

What is the truth? If the Greek New Testament is a fraud, then we need to know it! Our salvation could be at stake -- and certainly it is, if we have believed a "lie"!

The fact is, there is no Biblical evidence that God must be called only by His Hebrew names and titles. There is no Biblical or linguistic evidence that prohibits the use of English names and titles for God.

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 one language is not necessarily any "holier" than another, and that it is NOT wrong to use the forms of God's name as they would translate from the Hebrew or Greek.

Those who insist on using only the Hebrew names of God are straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel! Nowhere does the Bible tell us that it is wrong to use the names of God in Aramaic, Greek, or any other language of the earth.

Since Almighty God has preserved the New Testament Scriptures in the Greek language, and many if not all of them were originally written in Greek, it is obvious that God Himself INSPIRED the usage of Greek to write and to maintain and preserve HIS HOLY WORD! Therefore, it is self-evident that the Greek forms of God's names and titles are perfectly all right for us to use, and translations of those forms and names into other languages, including English.

### **Luke the Beloved Physician**

Luke the physician, who wrote the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, was a highly trained physician who evidently was trained in his craft at Alexandria, Egypt. He addresses his gospel to the "most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3), as he does also the book of Acts (Acts 1:1). Theophilus, from his name, was undoubtedly a Greek. The gospel of Luke and book of Acts were undoubtedly written by Luke in the Greek language. Says the *New Bible Dictionary*: "It is generally admitted that Luke is the most literary author of the New Testament. His prologue proves that he was able to write in irreproachable, pure, literary Greek" (p.758). He was a Gentile. Says this same source, "From the literary style of Luke and Acts, and from the character of the contents of the books, it is clear that Luke was a well-educated Greek."

This evidence, of course, provides further proof that God does not take exception to the Greek forms of His name and titles. He inspired Luke to use the Greek language! And Luke was writing primarily for the Greek-speaking, Gentile world!

The apostle Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. He spoke Greek fluently, and used it continually as he went throughout the Roman world preaching the gospel. Only when he was in Judea, and Jerusalem, did he generally use Hebrew (Acts 22:2). In writing his epistles to the churches throughout the region -- Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, Philippi -- undoubtedly he also wrote in the Greek language. There is no evidence whatsoever that he originally used Hebrew names for God instead of the Greek forms, as they have been preserved through the centuries.

### **The Language of the New Testament**

Did God Himself inspire the New Testament to be written and preserved in the Greek language, instead of Hebrew? What was the original language of the books of the New Testament?

The *History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, by Eusebius, provides us with greater insight into the writing of the New Testament. Eusebius records that after Peter first went to Rome, and preached the gospel there, that the people were so enthusiastic that they wanted a written record of the gospel he preached. Writes Eusebius:

"So brightly shone the light of true religion on the minds of Peter's hearers that, not satisfied with a single hearing or with the oral teaching of the divine message, they resorted to appeals of every kind to induce Mark (whose gospel we have), as he was a follower of Peter, to leave them in WRITING a summary of the instruction they had received by word of mouth, nor did they let him go until they had persuaded him, and thus became responsible for the writing of what is known as the Gospel according to Mark" (p.88). This occurred in Rome. The request was made by Romans. The language Mark wrote in was Greek, which was commonly understood by all learned Romans, as Greek was the universal language of that time.

Eusebius tells us more about the original writing of the gospels. "Matthew," he records, "had begun by preaching to Hebrews; and when he made up his mind to go to others too, he committed his own gospel to writing IN HIS NATIVE TONGUE, so that for those with whom he was no longer present the gap left by his departure was filled by what he wrote. And when Mark and Luke had published their gospels, John, we are told, who hitherto had relied entirely on the spoken word, finally took to writing for the following reason. The three gospels already written were in general circulation and copies had come into John's hands. He welcomed them, we are told, and confirmed their accuracy, but remarked that the narrative only lacked the story of what Christ had done first of all at the beginning of His mission" (p.132).

It is obvious that Mark, Luke and John, therefore, were written in Greek. John's headquarters, at this time, was undoubtedly Ephesus, where he finally died. Ephesus was in the middle of a Greek-speaking region, and John was writing for the entire Church, not just the Jews at Jerusalem.

Eusebius quotes Irenaeus also concerning the writing of the gospels, as follows: "Matthew published a written gospel for the Hebrews in their Rome and founding the church there. After their passing, Mark also, the disciple and INTERPRETER of Peter, transmitted to us in writing the things preached by Peter. Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by him. Lastly, John, the disciple of the Lord, who had leant back on His breast, once more set forth the gospel, while residing at Ephesus in Asia" (p.211).

Obviously these three gospels were written in Greek, as their audience was Greek-speaking, and only the gospel of Matthew is singled out as having been written in Hebrew! Irenaeus is also quoted concerning the writing of the book of Revelation, and the mysterious number "666," the number of the Antichrist. Irenaeus writes: "Such then is the case: this number is found in all good and early copies and confirmed by the very people who was John face to face, and reason teaches us that the number of the Beast's name is shown according to GREEK numerical usage by the letters in it. . . ." (p.211).

Again, here is further evidence that even the book of Revelation was originally written in Greek.

### **The Books and the Parchments**

The distinguished scholar F. F. Bruce, in *The Books and the Parchments*, tells us that Greek was undoubtedly the language of the New Testament. He asserts, "Although Aramaic appears to have been the common language of our Lord and of the earliest Christians, it is not the language of the New Testament. . . ."

"The language most appropriate for the propagation of this message would naturally be one that was most widely known throughout all the nations, and this language lay ready to hand. It was the Greek language, which, at the time when the gospel began to be proclaimed among all the nations, was a THOROUGHLY INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE, spoken not only around the Aegean shores but all over the Eastern Mediterranean and in other areas too. Greek was no strange tongue to the apostolic church even in the days when it was confined to Jerusalem, for the membership of the primitive Jerusalem church included Greek-speaking Jews as well as Aramaic-speaking Jews. These Greek-speaking Jewish Christians (or Hellenists) are mentioned in Acts 6:1, where we read that they complained of the unequal attention paid to the widows of their group by contrast with those of the Hebrews or Aramaic-speaking Jews. To remedy this situation seven men were appointed to take charge of it, and it is noteworthy that (to judge by their names) all seven were Greek-speaking" (p.49).

Bruce discusses the differences in style of writing in the Greek language that are found in the New Testament books. He declares: "Paul, we may say, comes roughly half-way between the vernacular and more literary styles. The Epistle to the Hebrews and the First Epistle of Peter are true literary works, and much of their vocabulary is to be understood by the aid of a classical lexicon rather than one which draws upon non-literary sources. The Gospels contain more really vernacular Greek, as we might expect, since they report so much conversation by ordinary people. This is true even of Luke's Gospel. Luke himself was master of a fine literary style, as appears from the first four verses of his Gospel, but in both Gospel and Acts he adapts his style to the characters and scenes that he portrays" (p.55-56).

All scholars of repute, today, admit that the original language of the New Testament was Greek, although the writers sometimes drew upon Hebraisms to be translated into the Greek.

Says the *New Bible Dictionary*: "The language in which the New Testament documents have been preserved is the 'common Greek' (koine), which was the lingua franca of the Near Eastern and Mediterranean lands in Roman times" (p.713).

This same authoritative source adds the following information: "Having thus summarized the general characteristics of New Testament Greek, we may give a brief characterization of each individual author. Mark is written in the Greek of the common man. . . . Matthew and Luke each utilize the Markan text, but each corrects his solecisms, and prunes his style. . . . Matthew's own style is less distinguished than that of Luke -- he writes a grammatical Greek, sober but cultivated, yet with some marked Septuagintisms; Luke is capable of achieving momentarily great heights of style in the Attic tradition, but lacks the power to sustain these; he lapses at length back to the style of his sources or to a very humble koine. . . ."

"Paul writes a forceful Greek, with noticeable developments in style between his earliest and his latest Epistles. . . . James and I Peter both show close acquaintance with classical style, although in the former some very 'Jewish' Greek may also be seen. The Johannine Epistles are closely similar to the Gospels in language. . . . Jude and II Peter both display a highly tortuous and involved Greek. . . . The Apocrypha, as we have indicated, is sui generis in language and style: its vigour, power, and success, though a tour de force, cannot be denied" (p.715-716).

There is no evidence at all to suppose that the New Testament was originally written in anything but ancient Greek! Concludes the *New Bible Dictionary*, "In summary, we may state that the Greek of the New Testament is known to us today as a language 'understood of the people,' and that it was used with varying degrees of stylistic attainment, but with one impetus and vigour, to express in these documents a message which at any rate for its preachers was continuous with that of the Old Testament Scriptures -- a message of a living God, concerned for man's right relation with Himself, providing of Himself the means of reconciliation."

Now consider this. The evidence all shows that Almighty God INSPIRED Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and the rest of the writers of the New Testament -- even including Peter and James -- of having written their gospels and epistles IN GREEK! Only Matthew's gospel was apparently written -- first in Hebrew or Aramaic. The other New Testament writers, in using the Greek language, also used the GREEK

FORMS of God's name, and the name of Jesus Christ, repeatedly and consistently! Clearly, therefore, God Himself does not disapprove of His name being translated into different human languages!

It is a spurious, specious argument to claim that the New Testament had to have been written in Hebrew, and had to contain only the Hebrew names for God. All the evidence of the manuscripts points otherwise.

Those who deny that the Old Testament faithfully preserves the knowledge of God's name, and who claim the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew, utilizing the Hebrew names for God, have no evidence or proof whatsoever to back up their claims. Should we believe them when they have no evidence, but only a "theory"? Should we take their speculations as "fact"? Of course not! The apostle Paul cautions true Christians, "PROVE ALL THINGS; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess.5:21). We must not allow men to wrap us around their little fingers, and make mincemeat of us, just because they sound convincing and positive in their writings and arguments. The truth is, they don't know what they are talking about. They don't have a leg to stand on. They have placed their personal theological beliefs before the record of history. They have denied the facts in order to keep their own cherished beliefs.

Those who claim that the original manuscripts were not properly preserved in the language in which they were written, seem to think that God Almighty is UNABLE or UNWILLING to faithfully preserve and protect HIS WORD from the corruption and perversion of men! God is not prejudiced against the Greek language, or Russian, Italian, German, Chinese, Spanish, French, or English. But, as Peter declared: "Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35). Amen to that!

#### **Chapter Four --**

#### **God's Real Name Revealed!**

Few questions excite more controversy, and interest among many Christians, than the correct and real name of God. Some believe it is Jehovah, others, Yahweh, and many other names have been proposed. Are any of these correct? Is it important that we know the REAL name of God? And what about the name "Jesus"? Is it pagan, as some claim? Was the New Testament originally written in Hebrew? Or did Christ and the apostles actually speak Greek? Did the apostles use Greek to write the New Testament? Was this very thing "prophesied"?

Amongst the most self-righteous people I have encountered, in my passage upon this earth, are various groups which are known as the "Holy Names" sects or churches. They profess that unless one accepts THEIR definition and pronunciation of the name of God, then they are LOST, without salvation, and in deep spiritual error! But these "Holy Names" groups, interestingly enough, all disagree among themselves as to the exact pronunciation and form of the name of GOD!

They despise such English names or titles for God, such as the very word "God," itself, which is from the German language, meaning, "The Good." They claim it is pagan, coming from the ancient name of the god of fortune or luck. They offer no real proof of this however, merely noting the similarity in pronunciation as if that itself were proof enough.

They also despise the name Jesus Christ, claiming "Jesus" in the original Greek language is derived from "Zeus," the pagan chief of the gods! Again, for proof, they offer none. But since the Greek form of Jesus is clearly found throughout the New Testament, they further claim that all the Greek texts and manuscripts of the New Testament were either forgeries or a FRAUD, tampered with and altered by devious scribes, soon after the death of the apostles. Proof? They have none. But, of course, they reason, it "MUST" be so, because the New Testament is in GREEK, which to them is a PAGAN language. So they assume, with no evidence at all to back them up, that the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew, not Greek!

These various theories all discount, are ignorant of, or simply ignore the fact and growing body of evidence, from archaeology, that the GREEK language was spoken commonly among the people of Palestine, and was well known throughout the region of Galilee, where Jesus came from, and His disciples! In fact, the Bible calls Galilee, "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Matt.4:15). The region was very cosmopolitan, rich with Gentile influence, a trading and commercial region, with such noted worldly cities as Capernaum. Greek was the common lingua franca of the day, and there is great reason to believe that the primary reason the entire New Testament is written in Greek, and recounts the story of Christ in Greek, is because THAT IS THE COMMON LANGUAGE WHICH JESUS AND THE APOSTLES SPOKE! Although they also knew Hebrew and Aramaic, of course, for everyday conversation they most likely used Greek!

#### **Jesus the Messiah Spoke Greek!**

As proof of this, notice that when Jesus was on the cross, dying, the gospel of Matthew records the enigmatic statement,

"And about the ninth hour [3 PM] Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTANI? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt.27:46).

If Jesus and His disciples were commonly conversing in Hebrew, and everybody spoke Hebrew, or Aramaic, a very close sister language, then why would Matthew put this strange statement in his gospel? Why would he have bothered to "interpret" it? If Jesus always spoke in Greek, however, and then reverted to Hebrew only on rare occasions, as this one, then it becomes easily understood why Matthew would have "interpreted" the statement and words for his readers.

But if Jesus always spoke in Hebrew, then why didn't Matthew use similar phraseology, saying, everytime Jesus spoke, "this is by interpretation," or, "this means," etc.?

Further evidence that Greek was commonly spoken amongst Jesus and His disciples, is the passage in John, where we read:

And there were certain GREEKS among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:20).

These Greek speaking people came to Philip, who also spoke Greek, being from Galilee, and asked to see Jesus. There was no language or communication problem. They did not need translators. The whole thrust of this passage is that they carried on a normal conversation, IN GREEK, obviously, because they were Greek!

All this goes to show, my friends, that God Himself endorsed the New Testament to be written in Greek, not Hebrew, and that He also PRESERVED IT IN GREEK, not Hebrew, throughout the centuries! Both facts prove without doubt or question that it is not wrong to use

other names for God and Christ, besides HEBREW names! The Greek names, as preserved in the New Testament, for both of them, are perfectly all right -- otherwise God would not have allowed HIS ETERNAL, INDIVISIBLE, INVIOABLE WORD to be preserved in Greek -- He would have used Hebrew instead!

Why did God use Greek, to preserve the New Testament, instead of Hebrew? I suspect it is because of this very problem we are discussing! God says the gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; TO THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO TO THE GREEK" (Rom.1:16). Furthermore, Isaiah the prophet, who lived about 700 B.C., prophesied,

"Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and ANOTHER TONGUE [LANGUAGE] will he speak to this people" (Isaiah 28:11).

The fact is, archaeological evidence supports the conclusion that many educated Jews throughout Judea spoke Greek during the time of Christ. Greek language is found on the majority of tombs and related objects dating from the time of Christ -- even in and around Jerusalem itself! Recent articles in *Biblical Archaeology Review* attest to this fact. For example, recently even the burial chamber of Caiaphas, the High Priest (see Matt.26:3, 27), during the time of Christ, has been found in Jerusalem, with burial artifacts containing Greek, not Hebrew, letters! The inscriptions on the family ossuaries (receptacles for the bones of the dead) were all in the GREEK LANGUAGE! And, remember, this was the very High Priest who condemned Jesus!

Likewise, ostraca -- fragments, usually of pottery, containing inscriptions -- found in Jerusalem, and other cities of the period, often contain Greek letters and writing, showing the pervasive influence of the Greek language throughout the region. Many scarabs, small ancient seals carved to resemble beetles, also have been found with Greek writing on them.

### **WHY Did God Use the Greek Language?**

Why should it be thought a think remarkable that God, in His infinite wisdom, would use GREEK, "another tongue," or language, to write the New Testament, to show that language itself is not holy, or to be worshipped, and to show that national, spiritual, or linguistic PRIDE and arrogance are not of God, but of the Devil?

Historically, the Jews have been proud -- proud of the fact that they have been entrusted with the oracles, words, of God, to preserve, and interpret (Rom.3:1-2). This pride caused a division between them and Gentiles around them -- an "enmity" (Eph.2:15). This "enmity" was due to the many laws and customs the Jews developed which in some cases appeared to be racially motivated, and seemed to show a "holier than thou" attitude (Isa.65:5). This enmity was compounded on both sides, as the Jews hated the Romans who were ruling over them, and the Romans hated the Jews because of their "different ways," their stubbornness, and latent hostility. The scorn and distrust was mutual. It created a "barrier" between Jews and Gentiles.

However, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, came to break down this artificial barrier, to remove it, as Paul wrote:

"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh, made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made OF BOTH ONE, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh THE ENMITY, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances [Greek, dogmas -- Jewish and Gentile laws and customs based on racial pride and superiority, contrary to God's laws and commandments!]; for to make in himself of twain ONE NEW MAN, so making PEACE; and that he might reconcile BOTH unto God in one body by the cross, having SLAIN THE ENMITY thereby" (Eph. 2:11-16). Christ has reconciled both Jew and Greek, Jews and Gentiles, making all ONE IN CHRIST! So, as Paul also wrote, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither JEW NOR GREEK, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS" (Gal.3:27-28).

To show there is no respect of persons with God, that that Jews are not better than other people, even though they were given the laws of God to preserve and protect, whereas God used Hebrew for the Old Testament, for its writing and preservation, He decided to use GREEK for the New Testament, and its writing and preservation!

This clearly means, therefore, that God doesn't care whether we address Him, in our speech and in our prayers, in the Greek language, or some other language of the world, or in the Hebrew language! MERE SYLLABLES THEMSELVES ARE NOT "HOLY"! It is the thought, meaning, and significance BEHIND the syllables, the Name, that is the vitally important thing!

Some people falsely believe that merely by invoking the name of God, the sacred "Tetragrammaton," they become somehow "holier," more righteous, and more powerful spiritually. It gives them a sense of superiority to others, whom they regard as "ignorant."

But it is THEY who are the truly ignorant and deceived ones!

### **No Respect of Persons with God**

"There is no respect of persons with God" (Rom.2:11). God has called Jews and Greeks to His truth. He called many to His Word using the Hebrew language. Others He called using the Greek Scriptures, including the Greek Septuagint which was commonly used by the Greek speaking world during the time of Christ, and which Jesus and the apostles themselves OFTEN quoted from! And in our day, today, God has used many OTHER languages and translations of His Word to call people to His Truth! He used English, and English-language Bibles, to call MOST of us, today, who are in His Church! English is, in many respects, a fine, wonderful language, rich with meaning, definitions, nuances of thought and expression. God has used English, the language of Ephraim, the leading tribe of the "lost tribes" of Israel -- to preserve and protect His Word, today!

I hope sincerely that these truths, some of them no doubt being new truths, to many of you, will cause you to rethink your concepts about the names of God, and the purposes of language, and I hope you will see that there is far more to knowing God than merely esoteric pronunciation of a few mere vocal sounds. Having said these things, then, if we were to strive to understand the true name of God, in the original Hebrew, what would it be?

## The REAL Name of God Revealed

The Scriptures show that God Almighty has many names. Among them are Elohim, a uni-plural word, usually translated "God" in the English, but which literally means, in Hebrew, "The Mighty Ones." Its singular form is El, meaning, "God," or "Mighty One."

The word is similar to the Hebrew cherub and cherubim. The cherubim were a high ranking order of angels whom God created (Ezek. 1, 10). There were at least four of them, that we know of, which guard and transport the throne of God in heaven, two of them stretching their wings over the mercy seat (Exodus 25:18-20). The word "cherub" is singular, but the plural form is "cherubim." Even so, we have "El," and "Elohim."

However, as God is ONE, the plural form "Elohim" shows God as a Family, or as a perfect UNITY-- one in purpose, thought, mind, spirit, totality! The Shema of Israel says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deut.6:4). Or, "The LORD our God, the LORD is ONE." The Hebrew word for "one" is echad. It means a perfect UNITY. For example, God told Adam and Eve, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be ONE [echad ] flesh" (Gen.2:24). They become united, in God's sight, as ONE FLESH, a perfect unity. But GOD is "One" in perfect body, soul and SPIRIT -- a divine UNITY.

Jesus Himself alluded to this truth. He prayed to the Father, with these words, "That they all may be ONE; as thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be ONE IN US . . . And the glory which thou hast gavest me I have given them; that they may be ONE, EVEN AS WE ARE ONE: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be MADE PERFECT IN ONE . . ." (John 17:21-23).

Notice these very profound words, which express the true UNITY of God. There is NO DIVISION, no rivalry, no schism, no splitting off, NO COMPETITION, no pulling apart, in the body of God, but there is PERFECT UNITY -- ONENESS!

Now let's turn to the place where God -- Elohim -- identifies himself to Moses. Although there is evidence that the patriarchs also knew God by this name, in the book of Genesis, it is evident that Israel lost the knowledge of God's name while in slavery to the Egyptians for two hundred years and more. By the time of the Exodus, they had lost the knowledge of the true Sabbath, and when the weekly cycle occurs (Exodus 16), and God had to reveal His Sabbath to them once again. They had become mired in Egyptian customs and pagan rites and beliefs, and the knowledge of the true God had become dim in their eyes.

Therefore, during this time of apostasy and slavery, God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush in Sinai. When God began speaking to Moses, He said, "I am God [Elohim] of thy father, the God [Elohim] of Abraham, the God [Elohim] of Isaac, and the God [Elohim] of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). Moses, knowing that the term Elohim meant "God," and was more a form of a title, than a distinct name, as there are many "gods" including pagan gods, then asked God,

"Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM [Hebrew, EHEYEH asher EHEYEH ]; and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (verses 13-14). God continues, "The LORD [YHVH] God of your fathers . . . hath sent me unto you: THIS IS MY NAME FOR EVER, and this is my memorial to all generations" (Exodus 3:15).

In these verses, when God says "I AM THAT I AM," He is saying to Moses, according to the Septuagint, "I am he who exists." The Syriac, Persic, and Chaldee preserve the original words without a gloss. The Arabic paraphrases them, "The Eternal, who passes not away."

The *Targum of Jonathan* and the *Jerusalem Targum* paraphrase the words: He who spake, and the world was; who spake, and all things existed." The original words, Adam Clarke points out, signify "I will be what I will be." The words seem to suggest the eternity of God, and His self-existence, His absolute independence and complete control and power.

When God says, "This is my name for ever," He is referring to the expression in verse 13, "The LORD [YHVH] God." This, in the Hebrew, is a compilation of the two names YHVH and Elohim. This is the name by which God had been known from the creation of the world (Genesis 2:4). The pagan, heathen nations corrupted this name into their own forms, such as Jao, Jeve, Jove, Jupiter. Says the *Critical-Experimental Commentary*, "I AM THAT I AM. God here proclaims his name to Moses by an expansion of the title Jehovah, or Jahve." However, there was no letter "J" amongst the Hebrews, and the first letter should be our "Y." Thus, "Yehovah," or "Yahveh," would be more correct, for us today. But what should the real pronunciation of this name be?

### The Pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton

Most Bible Dictionaries, today, say it should be pronounced "Yahweh," with a "w" sound at the end of the name or title. However, the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* declares unequivocally of this ancient name or title of God

"YAHVEH. 1. The Word. Yahveh is the MOST PROBABLE TRANSLITERATION of the ANCIENT HEBREW NAME OF 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, 6:34Z0 writes Iasuai = Iaoive [Yahveh], while Theodoret (about 386-457 C.E. . . .) gives IaBe [Yahbeh] as the Samaritan pronunciation and 'Ia [Yah] as that of the Jews (cf. also Epiphanius, Adversus haereticos 40:5, who also has IaBe). The earliest post-Biblical Hebrew reading of the name known to us is YHYH, which is found in an old incantation bowl from the 6th or 7th century C.E. (Montgomery, J.A., in Museum Journal of the University of Pennsylvania, 1910, pp.28-30). This was evidently VOCALIZED AS YAHBEH. . ." (p.584).

YAHVEH and YAHBEH should very similar, almost the same exact sound. YAHWEH, with the typical English "w" sound, is quite different. "V" and "B" are both explosive consonants, formed by closing the teeth to the lips, or the lips together. However, the English "W" sound is formed by merely closing the lips part way and blowing through them as you vocalize. Thus the "V" and "B" sounds are much more explosive, powerful, caused by a build up of pressure against the teeth and/or lips.

The Askenazi Jews, who migrated through Russia and Europe, and settled in Germany and other regions of Europe, tend to use the letter "v" for the final consonant of God's name. When many commentaries, or authors, refer to "Yahweh," we need to remember that they have

been heavily influenced by the German "w" which sounds like an English "v." The "w" should be pronounced as a "v," just as in the word "Volkswagen," which in German is literally, "Volks VAGON." Says the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, once again:

"In the light of these facts, it is clear that the first syllable of the name was Ya-, and the only possible uncertainty attaches to the second syllable. Was the name originally Yah, Yahu, Yaho or Yahveh? If the original pronunciation was Yahveh, then Yahu is most easily explained as a contraction . . . In this case the old for Yahveh and the new for Yahu continued side by side. If Yah or Yahu was original, then YAHVEH is a later theologizing expansion.

"However, the reading YHVH [Yahveh] 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 to establishing the priority of the FOUR-LETTERED NAME (Tetragrammaton). It is the oldest known datable independent occurrence of the divine name. . . . Unfortunately, the Moabite form, being unvocalized, gives us no help in pronunciation. The prevailing opinion is in favor of the reading YAHVEH . . ." (*The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, "Yahveh," p.584-585)

In another article, "God, Names of," this same authority goes on to elaborate on the names of God as found in the Scriptures. We read: "The Tetragrammaton or Four-Lettered Name [YHVH], which occurs 6,823 times, is by far the most frequent name of God in the Bible. It is now pronounced Adonai; but the church father Theodoret records that the Samaritans pronounced it IaBe, and Origen transcribes it as Iae, BOTH POINTING TO AN ORIGINAL VOCALIZATION YAHVEH" (p.6).

Another authority, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, edited by W. Gunther Plaut, and published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York, tells us more about this name of God. Commenting on the pronunciation of the name, it says:

"A large literature exists which deals with the proper pronunciation of the Name as well as its etymology, and much of this is of a highly technical nature. The following represents a brief summary: "VOCALIZATION. 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, and after after the destruction of the Temple it received a substitute pronunciation both for the reading of Scripture and for its use in prayer.

"The Masoretes who vocalized the Hebrew texts took the vowels from the word Adonai and put them with YHVH to remind the reader not to pronounce the Name but to substitute Adonai. . . .

"OVERWHELMING SCHOLARLY OPINION HOLDS THAT YHVH WAS IN MOSES' TIME PRONOUNCED YAHVEH. There is also a shorter form of the Name, Yah, which may represent the original form from which YAHVEH was expanded or may, contrariwise, be a contraction of the longer ascription. . . ." (p.425-426).

Judging by the available evidence at hand, it seems most probable and likely that the correct pronunciation of the divine name represented by the Tetragrammaton, YHVH, is simply YAHVEH, and not the "Yahweh" that so many today amongst the "Holy Names" sects insist upon using. One such sect, in Texas, has now even discarded the name "Yahweh," and instead simply refers to God as "Ha Shem," meaning, "The Name" -- just as many Orthodox and Conservative Jews do, also, today, because they are fearful of misusing the divine name.

However, the truth is that God WANTS us to use His Name -- properly, reverently, and worshipfully. It is not a name which we should cringe before, in terror and fear. It is a name by which we should REVERENCE AND WORSHIP the Most High God! Therefore, we should not be afraid to speak the name of God, and to use it, so long as we are very respectful. However, we should always and only use it with respect, reverence, and love -- in true worship.

We should avoid false names, or weak imitations, and strive to remain as faithful to the original Name as we possibly can, with the knowledge we have today. This means, if we use the Tetragrammaton, in worship, or speech, we should use YAHVEH ) pronounced YAW-VAY).

As an important fact to remember, there is no letter "w" in the Hebrew language. The correct pronunciation of the Hebrew letter "vav" is just as it appears -- the "v" sound in English. I suspect that the reason the Jewish people don't make an issue of the fact that scholars often spell the name of God "Yahweh" is that since it is a wrong pronunciation -- an incorrect name -- that they believe its common usage by many does not "profane" the name of God as the misuse of the correct name and pronunciation would. Therefore, many would just as soon leave the Gentile world in ignorance, rather than give them the correct name, lest they pervert, misuse, abuse, and desecrate the holy Name.

However, I believe it is important to understand this point of truth, and that it is not wrong for us to USE the name of God, today, in worship and adoration of the Divine Creator and Holy One of Israel. We should not abuse this knowledge, or begin to take God's name for granted. Nor should we use it "in vain," or to no good use or purpose (Exodus 20:7).

A "name" expresses the character, qualities, and intrinsic nature of a person or individual. God's Names tell us just who and what He is, and define for us His very character and nature. It is, therefore, very important that we should know them, and use them, in Greek and Hebrew, and their English translations. God's Name represents WHO AND WHAT HE IS -- not a magical "potion" to perform magical "tricks."

Let us therefore worship the Most High God, Yahveh, as He Himself directs and commands. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

"O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name. . . Glory ye in his holy name" (Psalm 105:1-3). "Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the NAME of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name is to be praised" (Psalm 113:1-3)).

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord YHVH [YAHVEH] is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD [Yahveh], call upon his NAME, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his NAME is exalted" (Isaiah 12:2-4).

"I am the LORD [YHVH]: that is my name" (Isa.42:8). "As for our redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel" (Isa.47:4). "But I am the LORD [Yahveh] thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: the LORD [YHVH] of hosts is his name"

(Isa.51:15). "Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I" (Isa.52:6). "Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer" (isa.56:6-7).

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:22; see also Rom.10:13). "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD [YHVH -- Yahveh] shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call" (Joel 2:32).

## **Chapter Five --**

### **The Name of God Revisited**

What is the correct pronunciation of the name of God in the Old Testament -- the "YHVH" or Tetragrammaton? This is an area of great controversy -- and great confusion. Some make a major issue of the exact pronunciation of God's name. Can we really know with certainty His exact name at this time? Does it really matter?

When I was first converted, largely through reading the New Testament, in the English language, I worshiped God and Jesus Christ by those very names. I knew no other names for either of them. I knew God the Father as "God," "Lord," "Almighty God," and also as "Father." I knew Jesus Christ by that name, as well as His titles "Saviour," "Redeemer," "Lord," and "Master."

Years later I learned some basic Hebrew, and studied the subject further. I learned the Hebrew names for "God," such as "Elohim," and learned the so-called "Jehovah titles" for God, as revealed in the Old Testament -- and then learned that the word "Jehovah" itself is incorrect. Like many others, I assumed from reading Bible Dictionaries and other sources that the correct pronunciation of the YHVH Hebrew consonants of the name of God, called the Tetragrammaton, was "Yahweh."

But the *Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon* says of this name: "pr. name of the supreme God amongst the Hebrews. The later Hebrews, for some centuries before the time of Christ, either misled by a false interpretation of certain laws (Ex.20:7; Lev.24:11), or else following some old superstition, regarded this name as so very holy, that it might not even be pronounced. . . Whenever, therefore, this nomen tetragrammaton occurred in the sacred text . . . they were accustomed to substitute for it [Adonai], and thus the vowels of the noun [Adonai] are in the Masoretic text placed under the four letters [YHV] . . . This custom was already in vogue in the days of the LXX translators . . ."

Some think that this means the Jews gradually forgot the proper pronunciation of the name of the Most High God! But is that necessarily true? Can we know God's real name, today? What are the facts?

### **The Original Name of God**

The *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* says of God's name: "YAHVEH. 1. The Word. Yahveh is the MOST PROBABLE TRANSLITERATION OF THE ANCIENT HEBREW NAME OF GOD. It is frequently, especially among German scholars, written Jahveh, 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, 6:34Z) 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).

"Yah" is the shortened form of "Yahveh." 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."

This authority shows us clearly that at least back to 215 A.D. the Church fathers still knew the name of Almighty God. They recognized His name as YAHVEH. Clement and Theodoret both give us this information.

The *Jewish Universal Encyclopedia* adds that the first syllable of God's name, Yah, is certain, with no doubt. The only possibility of any doubt would involve the second syllable. It declares: "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 Mesh 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.*).

Another Jewish authority, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, declares unequivocally:

"OVERWHELMING SCHOLARLY OPINION HOLDS THAT [YHVH] WAS IN MOSES' TIME PRONOUNCED . . . (YAHVEH). There is also a shorter form of the Name, Yah . . . which may represent the original form from which Yahveh was expanded or may, contrariwise, be a contraction of the longer ascription" (p.426).

The consonants in the Hebrew name of God, YHVH, or Yod, He, Vav, He, are well known and this name occurs almost 7,000 times in the Old Testament. In the King James Version of the Bible it is translated as "LORD," in all capital letters. However, it does not mean "Lord," but rather "I AM THAT I AM," or the "I AM" (Exodus 3:14). Moffatt translates it as "The Eternal." This name means that God IS, WAS, and IS TO COME -- the Eternal, Self-Existing One.

From these reputable sources, it seems quite clear that the pronunciation of the Hebrew name for God should be "Yahveh," and not the commonly used "Yahweh." How did the "w" get inserted in this name instead of the original "v" sound?

The simple truth of the matter is that the Hebrew alphabet did not have the letter "w," at all. The "W" was developed BY ROME from the Greek double "U." Thus the "w" sound is a Hellenized version of the original Hebrew "v" sound and is incorrect. Thus, Yahweh is a hybrid name with a Hellenized early "w" instead of the Hebrew "vav."

Likewise, the "J" sound was developed in the 16th century with the printing press, from the Greek "I," which in turn was developed from the Hebrew "Y."

### **Early Hebrew Predated Phoenician**

The early Hebrew-Phoenician alphabet had a "w," and some think this was the original Hebrew sound for "vav," calling it "waw." However, the PHOENICIAN period of history followed the period of MOSES by about 500 years. Moses led Israel out of Egypt about 1491 B.C. The apogee of the Phoenician period was from about 1000 B.C. to 600 B.C., from the time of David and Solomon till the time of Nebuchadnezzar. The Hebrew-Phoenician alphabet was developed at least 500 years AFTER Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible! Thus the Phoenician "w" came at least 500 years too late and was NOT the consonant Moses used in the Tetragrammaton!

The *World Book Encyclopedia* states under the heading "The Earliest Alphabets": "The Semites [Hebrews] who lived in Syria and Palestine, knew something of the Egyptian writing system. They worked out an alphabetic writing sometime between 1500 [the time of Moses] and 1000 BC. They used signs to show the consonants of syllables, just as the Egyptians did. But historians can find no instances where the Semites borrowed the characters from Egyptian writing. THEY INVENTED THEIR OWN SET OF CHARACTERS to stand for the consonants in their language. The oldest Semitic alphabet comes from the SINAI peninsula" ("Alphabet," vol.1, page 367).

But of course! This oldest Semitic alphabet was that used by the children of Israel when they were captives of Pharaoh, and when they came out of Egypt through the SINAI peninsula! This occurred between 1491 and 1441 B.C. The Israelites invented their OWN alphabet, and did not borrow from the Egyptians -- and the Phoenician alphabet was even thought of yet!

The *World Book Encyclopedia* continues, concerning the Phoenicians:

"The Phoenicians, who lived along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, developed a system of 22 signs about 1,000 B.C. Their alphabet was structurally related to Semitic and Egyptian, with signs for consonant sounds, not vowel sounds."

Interestingly, the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, "vav" or the variant "waw," which is the third consonant of the YHVH, according to *Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary*, ought to be pronounced "vav." The *World Book Dictionary* concurs. The "vav" is number 2053 in *Strong's Concordance*. There is no "U" or "W" in Hebrew.

The Hebrew letter "vav" without a vowel point is the "V" sound, as in vine, victory, or valor. It requires a vowel point with it to give it a "u" sound, as in "Uriah" (number 223 in *Strong's*) or a "w" sound, as it "owl" in Hebrew which means "yoke" (*Strong's* number 5923). There are no vowel points with the "v" pronunciation, as in Vah (number 1933), or "Tsav" (number 6673). This fact alone should demonstrate to an open, unprejudiced mind that the ORIGINAL pronunciation of this consonant had to be the "V" sound! The added or variant pronunciations required a vowel point!

#### **Why So Much Confusion?**

Why do many scholars insist that the "w" sound preceded the "v" sound in early Hebrew? Some scholars deny the plain statements of Jewish authorities, and the evidence of the early Church fathers, in favor of their own theories concerning language development in the Middle East. In their reconstruction of ancient history -- for which they have no basis of truth whatsoever -- they claim that Moses did not come out of Egypt until about 1200 B.C., and that he left during the "New Kingdom" in Egypt, which they date hundreds of years earlier than they should. Thus they claim the Hebrew "vav" was influenced by the Phoenician "waw" or "w" sound and came later than the Phoenician consonant.

The confusion is evident even today. The *World Book Encyclopedia* says that BOTH the English "V" and "W" letters come from the Hebrew "vav" or "waw"! This fact, since there is no "w" in Hebrew, must be explained by the fact that the "vav" or "v" in Hebrew was used, with the proper vowel pointing, to also express the "w" sound. The Phoenicians gave the "w" formal existence by creating a separate letter for it.

However, Biblical chronology plainly shows that Moses and Israel left Egypt 500 years before the Phoenician alphabet was developed! And since Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, obviously the Hebrew alphabet preceded the Phoenician! Moses left Egypt at the END of the "Middle Kingdom" of Egypt, or 1491 B.C. However, modern Egyptologists place the end of the Middle Kingdom, which was destroyed in great catastrophe such as Scriptures states occurred leading up to the Exodus -- roughly 500 years too early in their attempts to reconstruct Egyptian history of the period. See Emmanuel Velikovsky's *Ages in Chaos* for the proper relationship of Egyptian and Israelite histories for the period in question. The Middle Kingdom of Egypt actually ended in a fiery holocaust, caused by the plagues of God upon the Egyptians! For the historical proof of this, read my article *Who Was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?*

#### **A Small Sect in Texas**

It seems strange, therefore, to read the amazing assertions of a small sect in Texas called the "House of Yahweh," which claims without citing any "proof" that the letter "v" is not an original Hebrew letter! Go tell that to any Jewish scholar or Orthodox Jew! In fact, the "House of Yahweh" claim that the letter "v" and the "v" sound was not known in any language prior to the 1200s A.D., and that this letter developed first among the German people! In a personal letter to a friend, this sect wrote, ". . . the letter v and its current pronunciation was not known in any language until no earlier than the 1200's of this current era (A.D.), and . . . this particular letter and its pronunciation developed first among the Germanic peoples . . ."

Says this sect, "the letter v and its pronunciation was UNKNOWN to the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin speaking peoples in the days of the apostles" (emphasis mine). Sound authoritative? What about this no-nonsense assertion, spoken with such elan and pomp? This is deliberate obfuscation and muddying of the issue at hand. Says the *World Book Encyclopedia*, "V is the 22nd letter of our alphabet. It came from a letter used by the Semites, who once lived in Syria and Palestine. They called the letter waw [or vav ], their word for hook" ("V," vol.20, p.199).

The *World Book* points out that the Semites called the letter "v" "waw" (and also called the "w" sound "waw"). The Egyptians used the symbol of a supporting pole, about 3,000 B.C., and the Semites adopted the symbol and called it "waw" or "vav." The Phoenicians also adopted it about 1,000 B.C.; the Greeks changed it about 600 B.C., calling it "upsilon." The Romans, about A.D. 114, gave the "V" its capital form. The small letter "v" was developed during the A.D. 500s from Roman writing. It changed slightly in the 800s, and by the 1500s had the form we use today.

Thus the "House of Yahweh," in their attempt to perpetrate their error of using the "w" sound in the name of God, has grossly fabricated a whole roll of tissue paper lies concerning the origin of the letter "v." They try to make it sound as if the "v" is of relative recent origin, and mislead people into thinking the ancients did not pronounce the "v" sound! This is pure, unadulterated HOGWASH! The Moabite stone, the writings of the early Church fathers such as Clement, put the LIE to this little fabrication! The naive and trusting souls who rely on the "House of Yahweh" concerning this matter should adopt a more "suspicious" approach and do as the apostle Paul said, and "Prove all things" (1 Thess.5:21), and take nothing for granted!

Misleading the gullible, the "House of Yahweh," claims the Creator's name should be written in Hebrew with the equivalent of YHWH, instead of YHVH, and then state dogmatically, as if they have proved their case, "YHWH phonetically can only be pronounced as Yahweh." This is reasoning in a circle. It is misleading and begs the question of what is their authority for rejecting the "vav" sound, other than their non sequitur claim that the modern "v" did not exist before 1200 A.D.!

Quoting Hebrew-English lexicons concerning this matter is no more helpful than quoting Bible Dictionaries which commonly use the English form "Yahweh." Most Bible helps today use the incorrect "Yahweh" because early German-speaking scholars used the German "w" to represent the "v" sound. The spelling intered into English texts, but the German pronunciation became largely forgotten, so most English readers automatically assign the letter "w" the English "w" sound, compounding the error. In German, the "w" sound is actually a "v" as in Volkswagen ("Volksvagon").

I think it strange that the "House of Yahweh" as they style themselves admit that they REJECT the Hebrew of the Massoretic Jews who ARE THE AUTHENTIC PRESERVERS OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES! The Massorettes are the Jewish scribes whom God used to maintain and preserve the sacred texts of Scripture -- the holy oracles of God!

Do you think, having been chosen to preserve the Scriptures, that they would fail to preserve God's very NAME?

The Jews preserved faithfully every word, every letter, of the Old Testament, from the days of Ezra the scribe till modern times! Is it reasonable to think they forgot God's Name?

### **The Oracles of God**

The apostle Paul wrote, "What advantage then hath the JEW? . . . Much every way: CHIEFLY, BECAUSE THAT UNTO THEM WERE COMMITTED THE ORACLES OF GOD" (Rom.3:1-2). Notice! This important responsibility of PRESERVING GOD'S WORD was given to the JEWISH authorities -- NOT to the "House of Yahweh"! Part of the task of preserving the WORD of God would logically be the task also of preserving the NAME of God! Therefore, when seeking to understand the NAME of God and its proper pronunciation, we should by all rights ASK THE JEWS -- not some dumb sect in Texas!

Says F. F. Bruce, a renown and respected Biblical scholar, in *The Canon of Scripture*: "Which form of the Old Testament text is canonical? If the question is put to orthodox Jews, their answer is not in doubt: it is the traditional form, the Masoretic text of the Hebrew scriptures. And many scholars, Jews and Gentiles alike, will agree that, of all the extant varieties of text, the Masoretic is most reliable. . . . no rival variety of Hebrew text . . . can hold a candle to it" (p.284-285).

The Jewish transcribers of the Old Testament were extremely scrupulous and punctilious in their copying the Scriptures. The Talmudists (from 100 to 500 A.D.) had a very intricate system for transcribing synagogue scrolls. The scrolls had to be written on the skins of clean animals; every skin had to contain a certain number of columns; each column had to be no less than 48 or more than 60 lines, with a breadth of 30 letters; the whole copy had to be first lined; if three words were written without a line, it is worthless; the ink had to be black, from a definite recipe; only authentic originals or "exemplars" could be copied, from which the transcriber could not deviate in the least; no word or letter, not even a yod, could be written from memory; between every consonant the space of a hair or thread had to intervene; the copyist had to sit in full Jewish dress, wash his whole body, and not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink; and if a king spoke to him while writing that name, he was to take no notice of him. Rolls where these regulations were not followed were condemned to be buried in the ground or burned, or banished to the schools to be used as reading books (see *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, McDowell, p.56-57).

The Talmudists were so convinced that when they finished transcribing a manuscript they had an exact duplicate that they would give the new copy equal authority with the old. When a manuscript had been copied with the exactitude prescribed by the Talmud, and had been duly verified, it was accepted as authentic and regarded as being of equal value with any other copy. Age gave no advantage to a manuscript, but rather was a disadvantage since it could become defaced or damaged by the effects of time and circumstance. A damaged or imperfect copy was at once condemned as unfit for use.

Please take note: Accuracy of a manuscript or copy has nothing whatever to do with its AGE! In fact, age could be looked upon as a disadvantage, because old copies could become smudged, defaced, torn, worn, or damaged by use or the elements. The Jews regarded the newest copies just as authentic as any other, they were copied so perfectly and painstakingly!

The Masorettes, from "massora" meaning "Tradition," from 500 to 900 A.D., were given the responsibility of copying and maintaining the Scriptures. They went at the task with a holy awe and devotion. They were incredibly well disciplined and treated the texts with the greatest imaginable reverence and devised a complicated system of safeguards against scribal slips. They even counted the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurs in each book; they pointed out the middle letter of the Pentateuch, and the middle letter of the whole Hebrew Bible, and counted virtually everything countable. They numbered the verses, letters and words of each book; they calculated the middle letter and middle word of each. Thus they maintained the Scriptures with an amazing degree of accuracy and perfection!

Thus the JEWS accurately preserved and transcribed the Word of God, just as He has commanded them to! In the process, they also maintained and preserved the HEBREW ALPHABET, and the correct pronunciation of the Hebrew letters, including the "vav" of the Tetragrammaton! They PRESERVED the Name of the MOST HIGH GOD!

Says archaeologist Sir Frederick Kenyon, of the inordinate lengths the Massorettes went to copy accurately the Word of God,

"These trivialities . . . had yet the effect of securing minute attention to the precise transmission of the text; and they are but an excessive manifestation of a respect for the sacred Scriptures which in itself deserves nothing but praise. The Massorettes were indeed anxious that not one jot nor tittle, not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter, of the Law should pass away or be lost." When we consider the enormity of this task, and its faithful completion, how can we believe that the Jews were so careless and negligent that they foolishly LOST the very pronunciation of the letter "vav" and lost the correct pronunciation of the Name of the Most High God? Is such a theory credible? Is it tenable? Doesn't such a hypothesis strike at the very roots of reason and common sense?

The "House of Yahweh" (properly named since they do not worship the TRUE God of Israel) claims that there are earlier Hebrew texts that show "Yahweh" is correct. The fact that there are other Hebrew manuscripts or portions or fragments that pre-date the Massoretic texts is meaningless and irrelevant. No manuscript shows a different pronunciation of YHVH than "Yahveh." However, what we must keep in mind is that the Massoretic texts are AUTHENTIC, OFFICIAL, and RELIABLE texts which official Judaism has pronounced as the accurate and authentic words of Scripture! Therefore, they constitute the OFFICIAL "WORD OF GOD" and not some document or scrap or parchment found in some cave near the Dead Sea! However, no such documents have ever been found that contradict or refute the official Massoretic text!

Where does this leave us, then? Should we listen to the rantings and ravings of some self-deluded sect in west Texas? Or should we believe the very Word of God (Rom.3:1-2)?

### **Beware of Fanatics Bearing Gifts**

The successors of the Massorettes, today, the Jewish rabbis and religious leaders and scholars, point out that Yahveh, not Yahweh, is the best pronunciation of the Divine Name. For the "House of Yahweh" or anyone else to call these facts "gross inaccuracies due to a lack of knowledge of the original Hebrew" is nothing but posturing and self-delusion. It is they who are grossly inaccurate and lacking in balanced wisdom and right knowledge. Their own doctrines have caused them to stumble at the Rock of offense, the Word of Jesus Christ Himself.

What about you? Will you, too, allow the ministers of Satan the devil to deceive, delude, and destroy your faith and knowledge of the truth of God? Will you let modern day spiritual deviants who in their pride and loftiness seek to make you their spiritual slaves deceive you and have their way with you?

If you already know that a particular group is NOT God's true church or work, and have proved to yourself that they are in serious errors on many things, then WHY, WHY, WHY should you go to them, or seek truth from them, for their "opinion" on such a subject as the Divine Name? Is that the way to settle doctrine? Is that the way to arrive at truth? Having proved them wrong on many other things, will you trust them when it comes to their "baby" -- the thing they make the greatest fetish over?

Let's not be so hasty, as some appear to be, to endorse the writings of Biblical Illiterates and deceivers and "rush to judgment" on their behalf! Rather, let's explore the issue ourselves, and not trust in self-styled spiritual "leaders" to give us the truth. Let's really get back to the faith once delivered to the saints!

### **How Important Are the "Sacred Names" of God?**

The "Sacred Names" movement stresses that we should only use the Hebrew names for "God," and "Jesus," such as Yahweh and Yehoshuah, or Yeshuah, or similar spellings. They claim the English word "God" is also pagan and say we should not use substitutes for the Hebrew original. Also, they claim "Jesus" is pagan and derives from the Greek God "Zeus." Is this truth or fiction? From time to time I receive letters from well-meaning and sincere individuals who assure me that I am wrong, and sinning, in using the names "God," "Jesus," "Christ," and "Lord" in reference to the Father and the Messiah. People has insisted that these words are pagan in derivation and that we should only use the HEBREW names for the Creator and His Anointed One. Is this true? Interestingly, the "Holy Names" people cannot seem to agree among themselves, either, as to the exact spelling and pronunciation of the Divine Names! The names for Jesus vary from "Yeshua," "Yashua," "Yehoshua," and the names for the YHVH rang from "Jehovah," "Yahweh," "Yahvah," "Yahveh," and so forth. These people often agree that "Sunday" observance is pagan, and the holidays of Easter and Christmas are pagan -- but that is not all, they insist -- that is just "small potatoes," as one person put it -- the very English words for "God" and "Jesus" are also pagan!

### **A Pagan Title?**

Jacob O. Meyer, one of the chief exponents of the Sacred Name movement, insists that the name "God" was the name of a pagan deity. One such verse he cites is Joshua 12:7 where we read of a Canaanite valley called "Baal Gad," which Meyer would interpret as "Lord God." The same place is mentioned in Joshua 13:5 and 11:17. Baal Gad was a valley west of Mount Hermon. The word "Gad" may mean "Fortune" as well as "Troop." Isaiah 65:11 may refer to the pagan gods "fortune," (Gad) and "Destiny" or "Fate" (from Meni, or "number"). Does this prove the very English word "God" is pagan in derivation? Not at all! One of the twelve sons of Jacob, and one of the twelve tribes of Israel, was named "Gad" also. Yet God nowhere said it was wrong to take this name into our mouths or to speak it! Somewhere there might be a pagan god called "Bill." Does that mean of itself that my name William, or "Bill" for short, is pagan? Nonsense! Mere similarity between names in different languages proves nothing at all. Such things are often mere coincidence.

In the Bible, the term "Elohim" is used as the name of the true God in many places, such as Genesis 1:1. However, this term is also translated "god" in reference to pagan idols in many places, also. Does the fact that this term applies to PAGAN DEITIES mean that its usage for the true God is wrong? If so, then the Bible itself calls the true God by a pagan title over 2,500 times in the Old Testament. And if the Greek word "Theos," translated "God" in the New Testament, is also pagan, then the Bible once again ignores this and uses "Theos" in reference to the Father over 1,000 times!

Research shows there is no etymological relationship between the Germanic word "God" and the Semitic word "Gad." The fact that they sound similar is mere coincidence. Wrote Charles Tennyson Turner (1808-1879), "There is beauty in the name appropriated by the Saxon nations to the Deity, unequalled except by his most venerated Hebrew appellation. They call him 'God,' which is literally 'The Good.' The same word thus signifying the Deity and his most endearing quality" (quoted by Lothar Kahn, ed., *God: What People Have Said about Him*).

Those who claim "Jehovah" is the right name for God are also in for a surprise. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* points out, "The reading Jehovah is a comparatively recent invention. Jehovah is generally held to have been the invention of Pope Leo the 10th's Confessor, Peter Galatin, who was followed in the use of this hybrid form by Fagius Drusius. Van de Driesche, who lived between 1550 and 1616, was the first to ascribe to Peter Galatin the use of Jehovah, and this view has been taken since his day" (VII, p.88).

### **The Bottom Line**

The bottom line of the Sacred Names contention is that it is wrong to use "substitutes" for the Hebrew name for God, the Tetragrammaton or YHVH, which they contend should be pronounced "Yahweh." However, since the Bible itself frequently uses the name Elohim for God, a name also used for pagan gods, this fact alone blows the whole foundation of the Sacred Names movement out of the water! This fundamental fact stands out clear and salient and irrefutable. Other questions or issues are mere froth -- inessential details that prove nothing. This fact alone renders the Sacred Names contention baseless and void. But there is much more evidence. Notice the example of Jesus Christ, our Saviour Himself!

When Jesus Himself was on the stake, and cried out to God, He used the Aramaic language, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani" (Matt.27:46), which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Notice! The Messiah Himself did NOT use the Hebrew name "Yahweh" or "Yahveh" at this heart-rending moment! He addressed God the Father in the Aramaic, and used the term "El," which is the singular for Elohim! It is the same word for God as the Hebrew "El," often used in the Bible, and simply means "God." Since Jesus set us an example, that we should follow in His steps (I Pet.2:21, I John 2:6), it is not wrong for us also to use substitute words or expressions for "God," and we do not need to always address God by His proper name YHVH or "Yahveh."

### **Is The Name "Jesus" Pagan?**

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" people, there is absolutely no historical evidence or etymological documentation for this novel twist of a theory. Again, look at the basic facts. God caused most of 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" (Iesou). If God did not intend for us to use these forms of His name and the Messiah's name, He would not have inspired His apostles to use them. Furthermore, God PRESERVED His New Testament record IN THE GREEK LANGUAGE as well!

All the first century writings of the church fathers show "Jesus" -- the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Joshua" or "Yeshua" -- to have been commonly used. This was not a "great conspiracy." In Daniel 1:6-7 Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were given Babylonian names, which, unlike the name Jesus, did come from pagan deities -- and these Babylonian names were the names by which they are Scripturally known (Dan.4:13-30). Thus it is not wrong to use names transcribed in other languages. We use the name "Jesus," or Jeremiah, Joseph, Elijah, and James -- all these names are anglicized, as the Hebrews did not pronounce the "J" sound. We use them because they have become the conventional usage in the English language for the individuals in history who are known by those names. To insist on pronouncing those names with a "Y" sound instead of the "J" sound shows a fundamental ignorance of the purpose of language. I, personally, find literature which INSISTS on using Hebrew-ized forms of English names for the prophets, and personages in the Bible, acutely confusing, distressing, and a great hindrance! Imagine how MOST English-speaking people, who are even unfamiliar with the English forms of many Biblical names, must feel when they read long, run-on "Hebrew-ized" names! The very idea is a great "put off" to most people, as well as baffling, mind-boggling, and ridiculous.

When Paul was addressing the men of Athens, he said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD [Greek word Theos]. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. The God [Theos] who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands" (Acts 17:22-24).

Paul did not say his "God" was different from their "Theos." Rather, he said he was introducing to them their own "unknown Theos" -- as the true God, Creator of the heavens and the earth. Paul did not introduce here the Hebrew names for God and Christ! But if the Sacred Names people are right, then he should have. According to their theology, Paul made a grievous error here -- he was confirming them in their own idolatry! Of course, this very idea is ludicrous.

Sacred Names people contend, however, that the name "Elohim" was first used for the true Creator, and then was "stolen" by the pagans for their gods. Therefore, they do not object to the use of this term for God, but any other equivalent word or name for "God" in any other language they would have problems with. But is this not like arguing over which came first, the chicken or the egg? Is it not like arguing over how many angels can sit on the head of a pin? The point is that the Bible itself shows us it is all right to use other names for "God" than just YHVH, the Tetragrammaton. Other names used for the true God in the Bible are El, Eloah, Elyon, Shaddai, Adon, Adonai, Adonim. El is God the Omnipotent. Eloah is essentially the living God. Elyon is the "most high God." Shaddai is "the Almighty." Adon is the "Lord" as ruler in the earth. Adonai is the Lord in relation to the earth, carrying out His blessings. Adonim carries all the previous connotations of Adon and Adonai, only to a greater and higher degree, seeing God more especially as owner and proprietor of the earth. It is not wrong to use any of these names for God.

### **The Original "Conspiracy Theory"**

Today we hear a lot about various "conspiracy theories." Some people seem to see a worldwide conspiracy under every bush, just as in the days of Senator Joe McCarthy he saw a Communist under every bedsheet in Hollywood and Washington, D.C.!

Sacred Names people claim that the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew. Of course, this would have to be true in order for their theory to hold any water whatsoever. If the original manuscripts of the New Testament were written in Greek, their whole theory would be dissolved into thin air -- smashed into smithereens. Unfortunately for them, although some scholars will grant that Hebrew or Aramaic sources may have been used for the gospels and book of Revelation few would accept such an idea for the epistles of Paul, which were

written in Greek to people living in Greek cities where Greek was the common language. To get around this difficulty, the Sacred Names people have had to postulate that even if Paul did write in Greek, he must have (no proof offered!) used the Hebrew names for God, which later editors removed! That contention, of course, is pure assumption with no proof to back it up. They assume that this must have occurred thousands of times in the New Testament.

Unfortunately, this whole theory would indicate that Almighty God was completely UNABLE to preserve His Word ACCURATELY, and that He allowed man to tamper with, twist, edit, and rewrite portions of Holy Writ, and make deletions and substitutions -- thereby changing the meaning and faithfulness and reliability of the Scriptures!

Is God able not only to inspire the writing of His Word, but also the PRESERVATION of His Word, intact? The apostle Paul certainly believed so. He declared, "ALL Scripture [including the names of God and Christ!] is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Tim.3:16-17).

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For even if there are so-called gods [theoia, plural of theos], whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many gods [theoia] and many lords), yet for us there is but one God [Theos], the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live" (I Cor.8:5-6). In this passage Paul clearly contrasts the pagan "gods" and the true "God." He identified "Theos" as the "Father." Paul uses the definite article "the" in describing this true "God" as "the Father," thus distinguishing Him from all the pagan deities.

Since Sacred Names people generally use the name "Yashua" to refer to Jesus, they claim that early Christians could not have used the Greek name "Jesus" for the Messiah. They claim, therefore, that all of the instances where "Jesus" appears in the texts of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament must be the work of later editors and redactors. Since the substitution of "Theos" (God), "Kyrios" (Lord) and Iesous (Jesus) would have been such a massive undertaking, a wide and powerful apostasy and conspiracy must be postulated, which was entirely successful in erasing the original names from all copies of the texts and even from the oldest manuscripts! Yet, history records no example of such tampering, and no objections to such serious editing. Such a decision would hardly have escaped the attention of the early church fathers, the Jews, or early historians -- yet there is absolutely no mention of such a conspiratorial undertaking.

Certainly, such a massiver and sweeping alteration of New Testament documents would have been witnessed, challenged, and written about somewhere! But there is complete silence, in Europe, Africa and Asia. None of the Church fathers seemed privy to such an attempt. And, of course, if such tampering occurred to all the NAMES for God and the Messiah, in the New Testament, this brings up the question, what else did the "conspirators" change and get away with? Needless to say, such a theory completely denies God's ability to PRESERVE HIS WORD through the centuries unchanged and still inspired! Yet Jesus Christ declared: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but MY WORDS WILL NEVER PASS AWAY" (Matt.24:35).

Whom will we believe? Jesus Christ? Or the Sacred Names people?

The Sacred Names movement therefore rests upon weak, flimsy, unproved and unsubstantiated theories with no historical backing or evidence. It is based on highly revisionist theories of both history and scholarship and leaves much to the imaginings of mere men and their speculations. No true scholars support such a wide-ranging conspiracy theory except the same sort who claim Jesus was married and had children, smoked "pot," and that the resurrection was a drug-induced hallucination, and the early church was a drug-oriented secret society! Such imaginings are pure, unadulterated hogwash!

Unless at some future point in time some archaeological discovery should verify that a very ancient New Testament text used the Hebrew words for God and Jesus, with no uses of the Greek Theos or Iesous, or documents of protest are found from an early period commenting and decrying such a sweeping change, we must conclude that the basic foundations of the Sacred Names movement are built on shifting, desert sand and are completely unstable and unreliable.

In contrast with the Sabbath and Sunday issue, or Christmas and Easter, all scholars admit the origins of these pagan days and the original Biblical observances. The issue is not the facts themselves, but the emphasis one puts on the facts -- that is, what difference it makes.

However, it is the facts themselves which are called into question by the Sacred Names people -- they would rewrite all early church history and textual history to conform to their theory! This is a sad story of the tail wagging the dog. It is preposterous in the extreme. It is true that there is great significance to the Hebrew name for God, or "Yahveh," as the best Jewish scholars have said it should be pronounced. The form "Yahweh" carries over into the English the German "w" which in German is pronounced like a "v." Most English-speaking people, seeing this "w," however, immediately pronounce it like Elmer Fudd pronounces "wascally wabbit" for rascally rabbit, like the typical "w" sound in English, not realizing their error -- and the Sacred Names groups, by and large, make this same mistake, also! 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 -- the YHVH. This same power is carried over in the New Testament in the meaning and authority of the name "Jesus" or "Yeshua" (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).

#### **A Simple Proof for Those Who Truly Want to Know**

What the original pronunciation of God's Name, the Tetragrammaton, boils down to, then, is simply a matter of basic phonetics -- the pronunciation laws of consonants and syllables. The fact is, the three English letters U, V, and W, all come from from original Hebrew letter "vav." As I have shown, in Hebrew the consonant "vav" can be pronounced either like a U, W, or a V. The key to its original and basic usage and pronunciation, then, must be determined by phonetic rules. As the "vav" without any additional vowel pointing is considered the "v" sound in Hebrew, that would naturally be the original and basic pronunciation.

A simple illustration of this is the very first verse in the Bible, Genesis 1:1, where we read in Hebrew, "Bereshith bara Elohim vet ha shamayim va et ha eretz." In English, this translates as "Bereshith [In the beginning] bara [created] Elohim [God] ha shamayim [the heavens] va [and] ha eretz [the earth]." Now here is the simple Hebrew conjunction "va" which in English represents the word "and." Now if we try to say this Hebrew word as some suggest the name of God must be pronounced, as a "W" sound, it is virtually impossible to do so. Phonetically, a "wa" or "wu" sound in this verse for "va" would be swallowed up -- it is weak and ineffectual. But the "va" sound -- which



itself, throughout the Old Testament, in the Text which was preserved by the Jews, as the "oracles of God" (Rom.3:1-3), uses these words or titles for God hundreds if not thousands of times.

Was God's Word not preserved accurately? The apostle Peter wrote, "but the word of the Lord endures forever" (I Pet.1:25, NRSV). David wrote in the Psalms, "Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it" (Psalm 119:140). Solomon wrote: "Every word of God is pure" (Prov.30:5). The inspired words of God include the names and titles of God, including "Elohim," "El," etc. Isn't it about time we really got our "balance" on these matters? It is no more wrong to use the terms "God" and "Jesus" to refer to the Almighty, and to the Messiah, than it is to speak English!

May God help us not to go overboard, to fanatical extremes, as some have done, on this very issue, thinking they are superior to everybody else, and "more holy"! As Paul wrote so plainly, "Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are" (Rom.12:16, NRSV). And as he also wrote, "Knowledge puffs up; but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by him" (I Cor.8:1-2, NRSV).

Or, as the Modern Language Bible has it, "Live in harmony with others; do not aspire to eminence, but associate yourselves with humble people; do not be conceited" (Rom.12:16). And in I Corinthians we read, "If anyone fancies he knows anything, he does not yet understand as he should; but if anyone loves God, that person is known by Him" (v.2).

Do we get the point? Many make an "idol" out of the supposed exact pronunciation of the "vowels" of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton! Such foolishness is wearying to God, who seeks that we learn that the bottom line of His divine Law is that we learn to love Him, and show it by our fruits; and that we learn to love our neighbor, as ourselves!

As Jesus Christ the Messiah declared, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

Or as Micah the prophet wrote, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8).

Technical knowledge is not the important thing. In fact, sometimes it gets in the way of true conversion. Jesus Christ -- Yeshua -- had nothing good to say about the technically "superior" Pharisee who thought he was better than a lowly publican. Jesus gave this parable, showing how vital it is for us to get our priorities right:

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every man that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

Knowledge is important. For lack of true knowledge, God says, His people are destroyed (Hos.4:6). Those who reject true knowledge will themselves be rejected by God!

Nevertheless, as the apostle Paul wrote, "Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity [true love and genuine compassion] edifieth [is up-building]" (I Cor.8:1).

Paul goes so far as to say, "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could move mountains, and I have not charity [genuine love], I am nothing" (I Cor.13:2).

The knowledge of God's true name and its Hebrew pronunciation is a wonderful thing. But it is not the key to salvation. The love of God is the key to our salvation. And as John wrote, "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:4).

May Almighty God help us all to understand what really counts with Him! \_