

In the Bible, God uses various names to describe things of importance to him, to illustrate various facets of those particular things. For example, Jesus is called a lamb, a lion, the Christ, a king, etc. The church also goes by several names. Sometimes it's called the bride of Christ. The term church itself, meaning "called out," refers to those called out of the world into a special relationship with Christ and God. The Bible also refers to the church as a body, at other times as a kingdom.

Some wonder why many names are used for important concepts. Wouldn't it be much simpler to understand the Bible if nothing was referred to by more than one name? However, a little reflection reminds us that we do the same thing. For example, I am referred to by many names. One lady addresses me as father; another as husband; others as son. Some recognize me as a physicist, a mathematician, a writer, and a preacher. One calls me Sweetie; another calls me brother. All these names describe various things of importance about me. They carry much more information about me than just one name could.

So it is in the Bible. Jesus is called a lamb because of his peaceable nature, his innocence, and the fact that he was a sacrifice. He's referred to as a lion, depicting his strength and power. He's addressed as the Christ because he's the anointed of God, a prophet, a priest, and a king, like those anointed in the Old Testament. He's honored as a king, because of the absolute rule he exercises over his kingdom, since he exercises all authority on heaven and earth.

The same is true with the church. It's called the bride of Christ because it is espoused to Christ, and it is to be pure and faithful to him. The name church refers to its relationship to the world as it is composed of those called out of the world by the gospel. The church is recognized as the body of Christ, which shows the relationship of those who compose it to Christ, its head, and to each other, as members of the same body. And the church is called the kingdom of Christ to describe the type of rule Christ exercises over his people. It's not a democracy, but an absolute monarchy.

Thus, God uses all these names to describe Jesus and the church, which are important to him, to give us a lot of information about them.

Likewise, the Bible gives various names for the people of God, such as saints, servants, brethren, Christians, disciples, priests, believers, children of light, etc. When we determine what each of these names means, what the New Testament teaches respecting it, what obligations befall us as a consequence of it; finally, we can examine ourselves to see whether we live up to that name as God desires.

(How to Study the Bible: A Practical Guide to Independent Bible Study by Samuel G. Dawson, Amarillo, Texas: Gospel Themes Press, 2005, 5-6)