

Chapter 15: WHAT *KYRIOS* MEANS TO ME

In the Overview, the ••193•• reader was told that this book began as a personal study. Explaining more now will help you understand why this book was written and the effect of the study on my life.

God sent two Witnesses

In 1983, two Witnesses came to our home. They were gracious and articulate gentlemen, well-informed and knowledgeable concerning their beliefs. They favorably represented the Watch Tower Society, and expressed a willingness to maintain contact through study.

At the time, I had been active in Christian churches for many years. However, I knew little of the Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrine. At first, I was primarily interested in learning about Witnesses. (Of course, as any Witness who has spent time in field service understands, I also wanted to defend my "evangelical Protestant" point of view.)

In our early discussions, we went through a familiar process of exchanging theological opinions, each of us attempting to persuade the other with our favorite verses. The conversations were enjoyable, but neither they, nor I, were convincing the other.

Two personal decisions

At this point, I made two decisions which completely altered the way I responded to these two Witnesses as well as the subject itself.

1. First, *I decided that I would learn from Witnesses themselves.* That meant that I would study from the *New World Translation*, I would read other Watch Tower publications, I would occasionally attend Kingdom Hall meetings, and, above all, I would not find my answers in books written to criticize the teachings of the Watch Tower Society.
2. Secondly, and most importantly, *I decided that I would be open to God and allow him to direct me into truth.* That was a frightening—yet liberating—decision. I decided that if, after my study, I discovered that Jesus was who the Watch Tower Organization claimed him to be, then I would acknowledge him as such.¹

The Tetragrammaton study begins

••194•• Through reading the Watch Tower literature given to me, I realized that the Society's teaching concerning the Tetragrammaton was of paramount importance. I obtained a copy of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* and began an exhaustive study of each occurrence of the word *Kyrios* (Κύριος) in the entire Christian Greek Scriptures. The initial study took almost two years. Much additional study on Tetragrammaton-related material was done after that.

The initial study from the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* was guided by its footnote references which are shown in Appendix A. I then located all the *Kyrios* (Κύριος) verses with the help of J²⁰. (Appendix G shows only the יהוה יה entries from J²⁰. The actual *Kyrios* references from J²⁰ are reproduced in Appendix C.) J²⁰ also gave me the information identifying the Hebrew Scripture quotations which used the divine name. Finally, the entire list of *Kyrios* verses (and the remaining *Theos* verses included in the 237 *Jehovah* references) was organized in the form of Appendix B. After the *Kyrios* study was completed, I examined other areas relating to the Tetragrammaton such as the writings of the church

¹ Simply stated, I believed with less certainty then—as I believe now with great assurance after my study of the biblical information associated with the Greek word *Kyrios*—that Scripture fully identifies Jesus with Jehovah God himself. Witnesses merely believe that Jesus is God's first and highest creation. The contrast is immense when one considers that, in salvation, we have God's righteousness *through Jesus*. (See Romans 4:24-5:2 and 2 Corinthians 5:20b-21.) The difference is whether, because of Christ's death and resurrection, the one who believes receives merely the righteousness of the highest of God's created beings, or infinitely greater, the full righteousness of Jehovah God himself. In the first instance, that righteousness would cover only the sin of Adam, because Jesus' righteousness would be the righteousness of one who was also created. In the latter, the gift of Jesus' righteousness is the righteousness of "the Lord God Almighty," which assures a secure eternity with him requiring no additional saving work on the believer's part.

fathers (the material in Chapter 10), the George Howard paper (Appendix D), and studies of actual ancient Greek manuscripts themselves (Chapter 8, Appendix E, Appendix F, Appendix H, Appendix I, and others). In addition, a considerable amount of time was spent reading in the area of textual criticism and related subjects dealing with the Greek text and its manuscripts.

My first area of concentration, however, was the *Kyrios* study which has been described in Chapters 3 and 4, with the resulting entries reproduced in Appendix B. For almost two years I spent as much as an hour a day, three or four days a week, locating and cross-referencing verses from the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* and the *New World Translation*. Week after week as I located each *Kyrios* reference, I began to see a pattern develop. This was particularly true in those verses with a cross reference to the Hebrew Scriptures in the column entitled *Hebrew Scripture quotation using the divine name* or the following column *Hebrew Scripture quotation referring to the divine name* (Appendix B). A trend was becoming unmistakably clear. ••195•• The Hebrew Scripture quotation was clearly talking about Jehovah. Yet, when a Christian Greek Scripture writer used the same passage, he often ascribed the verse to Jesus² using the title *Lord*. For example, Isaiah 45:22-24 says:

For I am God, and there is no one else. By my own self I have sworn... that to me every knee will bend down, every tongue will swear, saying 'Surely in Jehovah there are full righteousness and strength.'

But when the Apostle Paul quoted these verses at Romans 14:11 according to the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* Greek text, he attributed the quotation to the Lord. The passage appears as follows in both Greek and English in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*:

γέγραπται	γάρ	Ζω	ἐγώ,	λέγει	Κύριος,		
it has been written	for	Am living	I,	is saying	Lord		
ὅτι	ἐμοί	κάμψει	πάν	γόνα,	καὶ	πάσα	γλῶσσα
that	to me	will bend	every	knee,	and	every	tongue
ἔξομολογήσεται	τῷ	θεῷ.					
will confess	to the	God.					

A memorable conversation

Throughout the time I was involved in the initial parts of my study, the two Witnesses mentioned earlier graciously maintained contact with me.

A conversation took place in our living room in which an Overseer said that *his faith was not dependent on the presence of the Tetragrammaton in the Christian Greek Scriptures*. When I heard his statement, I was aware of the remark's inconsistency. I had already learned enough to know that his statement could not be true. Much of my study since then has been cognizant of the seriousness of his lack of understanding. Whether or not he knew it, *his faith was absolutely dependent on this single teaching of the Watch Tower Society*.

••196•• *Without the Tetragrammaton in the original Greek Scriptures, this Overseer must acknowledge that the one bearing the title *Kyrios* (Κύριος) stands as fully identified with יהוה.*

My personal realization

The pattern was clear. The Hebrew Scripture writers spoke of Jehovah. Yet, when quoting the same passages, the Christian Greek Scripture writers used the Greek word Lord (Κύριος). Ultimately, this left me with only one of two possible options.

The first option would be to recognize that the Greek text of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*

² This needs to be carefully stated so that it is not misleading. In the strictest sense, the Greek Scripture writers did not usually quote a Hebrew Scripture passage and insert the name of Jesus. (There are exceptions such as Philippians 2:10-11. However, the Philippians passage does not identify Isaiah as the source of quotation.) What the Greek Scripture writers *did* do was quote a Hebrew Scripture verse which identified Jehovah. Then they used the Greek word *Kyrios* (which was clearly a Greek title of Jesus) in place of the divine name. This was done repeatedly with no attempt to clarify whether they were referring to *Jehovah* or the *Lord Jesus*. *It is this dual meaning introduced by the Greek Scripture writers themselves which led me to realize that they were not concerned with making a distinction of substance between **Jehovah** and **Lord Jesus***. This was the subject of Chapter 14.

was faulty, but that it could be explained by the removal of the Tetragrammaton in the second or third centuries. Though the thought of a faulty Scripture text was troubling, it was a question which could be answered through a careful search for evidence of the Tetragrammaton in the original Greek documents.

The second option was that, under inspiration of God, *the Kyrios (Lord) of the Greek Scriptures was identified with Jehovah of the Hebrew Scriptures by the original Greek Scripture writers themselves.*

I looked at every possibility which would show me that these verses used the Tetragrammaton, but there was none. However, if these verses did *not* use the Tetragrammaton, then I was left with only one conclusion. The Jesus of the Christian Greek Scriptures is none other than the One identified with יהוה (Jehovah) in human form. *Without any fear of blaspheming the name of Jehovah, the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures could say of Jesus as Lord exactly what the Hebrew Scripture writers said of Jehovah.* The Apostle John could include Jesus as "God, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8, 4:11, and others).

The Lord's Evening Meal

I attended a Memorial service during the time I was completing this book. The Elder giving the talk emphasized the symbolism in the bread and the wine. As I saw the emblems passed, however, I could not help but see another symbolism poignantly displayed.

It was as if each publisher received the bread or wine, then reviewed his life before passing the emblem to the person next to him. Although he knew the answer in advance, it was as if he asked himself the following question in that brief interval:

I have averaged ten hours a month in field service for many years of my life. I faithfully attend five meetings each week. I have given time for temporary pioneering. I have sacrificed many things to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses; it has cost me much in my education and employment, it has taken much of my life's energy and free time. It has even separated me from dear family members.

••197•• Now, having done all of that, as I look at this bread and wine, has Jehovah God established a covenant relationship with me so that I can joyfully partake of it? Do I know that I am "in union with Christ Jesus hav[ing] no condemnation?" (Romans 8:1)

No. I cannot say that of myself. I have been left out. I must pass this bread and wine to the person next to me and let him decide if *he* has a covenant relationship with God.

What a graphic display of defeat!³

Yet, at Romans 8:2, 10-11, and 14-17, God's Word says,

For the law of that spirit which gives life in union with Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death...But if Christ is in union with YOU, the body indeed is dead on account of sin, but the spirit is life on account of righteousness. If, now, the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in YOU, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead will also make YOUR mortal bodies alive through his spirit that resides in YOU...

For all who are led by God's spirit, these are God's sons. For YOU did not receive a spirit of slavery causing fear again, but YOU received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which spirit we cry out: "Abba, Father!" **The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children. If, then, we are children, we are also heirs: heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ,** provided we suffer together that we may also be glorified together.

³ Interestingly, the Watch Tower Society even publishes the *extent* of this defeat in its *Yearbook*. Each year, the "Worldwide Memorial Attendance" is reported in conjunction with the "Memorial Partakers Worldwide." However, because of the large number of visitors to the Memorial service, a more accurate comparison must be made by using the number of "Peak of Publishers in Kingdom Service" with those partaking. If we choose any year as an example (1997 was used for this illustration), and reduce these two numbers to a percentage figure, we find that for this year's memorial service, 99.84 percent of the publishers were defeated followers of Jehovah in spite of their 1,179,735,841 hours spent in field service. (8,795 Memorial Partakers divided by 5,599,931 Peak of Publishers equals 0.16 percent who claim a covenant relationship with God. 100 percent minus 0.16 percent equals 99.84 percent of Witnesses worldwide who have been excluded from this covenant relationship.) (1998 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, p. 31.) Similar figures are published each year. The Lord's evening meal was given to believers to *eat* and to *drink* (not merely to *observe* and to *pass*) in celebration of their participation in Christ's victory on their behalf as "Heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17; see also 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Nothing Paul wrote in the book of Romans leads us to believe that these wonderful truths apply only to a special class of Christians.⁴ ••198•• Rather, these truths are a reality for *all* who place their faith in Christ Jesus. (Carefully read the entire book of Romans. Pay particular attention to chapters 3 through 8.)

The power of salvation is in the person of the Savior himself. If Jesus is fully identified with Jehovah God in all his attributes and power, then the salvation he offers gives to us the righteousness of Almighty God himself.

The one who did not know sin he made to be sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness by means of him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Wonderful changes in my life

In the years following the completion of my *Kyrios* study, two marvelous changes began to take place in my life from this Scriptural understanding of Jesus. First, I began to experience a life in which the power of Jesus in me was, in reality, the power of Jehovah God himself. It is the One who is fully identified with Jehovah God, and who lived in human form who says to me, "I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things" (Matthew 28:20).

A second change began, and continues to grow with new delights each day of my life. Jesus gave me a great love for himself. I love him deeply. It has been the most moving experience of my life. I spend much time with him because I love him. I trust him implicitly because ••199•• I love him. I can love and trust him because I know who he truly is.⁵ *What a joy it is to know him and to serve him because I love him.* I am not compelled to serve him merely to secure a future reward.

As I write the paragraph above, I want you to know that I have no sense that this great love for Jesus is anything which I deserve or have earned. Nor is it anything which I am capable of producing by my own effort. It is a love which *he has given to me by his undeserved kindness.* I do not deserve it, yet he has given it to me as a free gift.⁶

O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments [are] and past tracing out his ways [are]! (Romans 11:33)

Has your faith as a Witness led you into a deep love for Jesus? Do others in your Kingdom Hall serve him because they truly love him?

Do you long to have a relationship with Jehovah based on a deep mutual love; an unshakable assurance of his compassionate love for you, and a daily joy in your love for him?

May I suggest, that you simply ask him for that which he truly wants you to have?

⁴ Romans 9:1-33 is certainly addressing Jehovah's right to determine whom He will choose. But notice that the choice is between those who will receive his ultimate blessing and those who will be rejected by him. The first 16 verses contain Paul's lament for Israel's refusal to acknowledge Messiah. Thus, "not all who [spring] from Israel are really 'Israel.'" (vs 6) resulting in "the children in the flesh [who] are not really the children of God." (vs 8) In verse 17 Paul uses Pharaoh as an example of one Jehovah has chosen to demonstrate his power, "For this very cause I [Jehovah] have let your remain, that in connection with you I may show my power, and that my name may be declared in all the earth." (vs 17) From these two examples, Paul establishes two categories; those to whom mercy is shown and those who remain obstinate. "So, then, upon whom he wishes he has mercy, but whom he wishes he lets become obstinate." (vs 18) Paul then elaborates the theme showing that Jehovah may choose like a potter between "vessels of wrath made fit for destruction" and "vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory, namely us." (vss 22-23) Verses 24-29 again apply Jehovah's choice to Israel in contrast to Sodom and Gomorrah. The chapter concludes by applying Jehovah's choice to the "people of the nations, although not pursuing righteousness, caught up with righteousness, the righteousness that results from faith." (vs 30)

This entire passage is dealing with Jehovah's choice between those who will be either rejected or those who will receive righteousness through faith. There is no suggestion of any kind from this passage that Jehovah is choosing between two classes of Christians.

⁵ Of course, I will never know everything about Jesus. I am simply attempting to communicate that, until I understood his identity with Jehovah, I could not fully appropriate his greatness and blessing in my life.

⁶ You also need to understand that this love for Jesus in no way replaces my love for the Father. In fact, as Jesus has given me a love for himself, he has also given me a deeper love for the Father. Notice what John 14:21 really says: the Father loves me *precisely because* I love Jesus.

"Jesus, show me who you really are. I don't deserve it, but I want you to give me a deep love for yourself. I want to enjoy loving you."

Ask him daily for his gift. He wants to give this great love for himself to you. In fact, he wants this for you so much that he died and came back to life so that you might have it.⁷

"In turn he that loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will plainly show myself to him."

John 14:21

⁷ Do you realize that when Jesus was asked to state the greatest commandment in the law he did not tell the Pharisee asking the question that the greatest commandment involved doing Kingdom ministry? Instead, Jesus said, "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind" (Matthew 22:34-40). Is a deep love for Jehovah your *greatest* area of service?

Epilogue

••200•• There are numerous questions which remain unanswered because they are outside the historical and textual evidence we used for our study of the Tetragrammaton in the Christian Greek Scriptures. Yet one question must be considered, if only briefly.

If the Tetragrammaton is not in the Christian Greek Scriptures, has God's name been forgotten?

God's name is not esoteric

God's name is not obscure in its meaning, nor limited to a select few. When God gave his name to Moses in Exodus 3:14-15, we read:

At this God said to Moses: "I SHALL PROVE TO BE WHAT I SHALL PROVE TO BE (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה)." And he added: "This is what you are to say to the sons of Israel, 'I SHALL PROVE TO BE (אֶהְיֶה) has sent me to YOU.'" Then God said once more to Moses: "This is what you are to say to the sons of Israel, 'Jehovah (יְהוָה) the God of YOUR forefathers... has sent me to YOU...'"

In all probability, God used a common verb for his name.¹ The word אֶהְיֶה is the first person singular form of the verb *to be*. God used the verb in the imperfect tense, implying that the action of the verb is continuous; I AM [BEING], or I SHALL PROVE TO BE.

A striking omission

Why did God choose to convey his name through a language without vowel markings? The absence of vowel identification in written Hebrew almost certainly assured that the pronunciation (though not the accuracy of the written information) would be lost. God could have provided a written language vehicle in order to preserve pronunciation had it been his purpose!

Does God's choice of a (presumably) common verb for his name, and his choice of a language vehicle with no written vowel markings tell us something? Is it possible that, to God himself, the importance of his ••201•• name is not to be found in its exact spelling or pronunciation, but in the meaning and reverence which it commands?

God's name in the Christian Greek Scriptures

After a careful evaluation of the best manuscript evidence, we must now conclude that, in fact, God did *not* introduce יהוה into the Christian Greek Scriptures. Rather, just as he had done in Moses' day, he again used a common word to convey his name and his identity. He chose the everyday Greek word *Kyrios*. For the Greek speakers of the day, this word could be used to describe a despised slave master. It could also serve as a polite form of address. To the devout Jews who knew the *Septuagint*, it was used to identify Jehovah himself!

Is God's personal name found in the Christian Greek Scriptures? It most certainly is! The Messianic (Christian) Jews of the first century understood *Kyrios* in the early pages of the Gospel of Matthew and Luke to be referring to Jehovah God. These same Jews read Romans, Hebrews, or the other epistles wherein the writer quoted Hebrew Scriptures and also understood *Kyrios* to be a reference to Jehovah. But by God's own design, these Jews who acknowledged Jesus to be the promised Messiah, also understood the complete identification of Jesus in the word *Kyrios*. God's name in the Christian Greek Scriptures was no longer restricted to its previous form.

Readers and hearers of the original inspired Christian writings understood the word *Kyrios* to be an ordinary term used in everyday language. It was a common form of address—and sometimes, of derision. As they heard the word read in the Greek Scriptures, they allowed the context to define its meaning.

¹ Not all scholars agree. The *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*, (p. 210) says, "Therefore we may well hold that YHWH does not come from the verb *hawa* [הָוָה] which is cited in the first person 'ehyeh "I will be," but is an old word of unknown origin which sounded something like what the verb *hawa* sounded in Moses' day. In this case we do not know what the pronunciation was; we can only speculate." However, our example is in agreement with the *New World Translation Reference Edition* (1984, p. 1561) which states, "The divine name is a verb, the causative form, the imperfect state, of the Hebrew verb הָוָה (*ha-wah*, "to become")."

From their early familiarity with the *Septuagint*, Gentile and Messianic Jews alike understood that *Kyrios* could also identify Jehovah God. Thus, with the full reverence due their Sovereign God, Messianic Jews could understand *Kyrios* to mean יהוה of their Hebrew Scriptures. At the same time, the Gentile believers could understand *Kyrios* to be *Theos* (θεός), the Almighty God of the *Septuagint*.

The early Christian Jews and Gentiles alike, however, understood that *Kyrios* was also a title of Jesus who was unmistakably identified with יהוה, the God of heaven.

The Apostle Paul—the most prominent Messianic Jew in all of history—could identify both Jesus and יהוה with the inclusive title *Kyrios* when he wrote to the Hebrew Christians. Quoting Psalm 118:6, which used the divine name (יהוה), he said,

So that we may be of good courage and say: *Kyrios* (κύριος) [Jehovah—*NWT*] is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:6).

••202•• Yet, in the same chapter, Paul said of Jesus at Hebrews 13:20:

Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an everlasting covenant, our *Kyrios* (κύριος) [Lord—*NWT*] Jesus, equip YOU with every good thing to do his will.

The Gospel writer Luke used the same word to identify both Jesus as *Lord* and the God of the *Septuagint*. Addressing the Gentile official Theophilus, he wrote at Luke 1:76-77 while quoting the *Septuagint* form of Malachi 3:1:

But as for you, young child, you will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go in advance before *Kyrios* (κύριος) [Jehovah—*NWT*] to make his ways ready, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by forgiveness of their sins.

Yet, throughout his Gospel, Luke used the same Greek word to identify Jesus as *Lord* to this Greek-speaking nobleman. Immediately following the verses quoted from Malachi, Luke wrote at Luke 2:10-11:

But the angel said to them: "Have no fear, for, look! I am declaring to YOU good news of a great joy that all the people will have, because there was born to YOU today a Savior, who is Christ the *Kyrios* (κύριος) [Lord—*NWT*] in David's city.

So, also, each of the Christian Greek Scripture writers used *Kyrios* most frequently as a title for Jesus. Yet, they also identified Jesus with God the Almighty by using the same word.

Does God have a name in the Christian Scriptures?

The purpose of this brief epilogue is to suggest a tentative answer to the necessary question, "Does God have a name in the Christian Greek Scriptures if יהוה was not used in the original Greek manuscripts?"

How *did* the early Gentile Christians address the Sovereign God? If the Tetragrammaton was not used by the inspired Christian writers—as we have seen that it surely was not—how was God known?

The earliest Greek manuscripts indicate to us that the original writers, under inspiration, identified him as *Kyrios* to the Gentile world!²

² This in no way mitigates against use of the divine name. It does, however, recognize the difference between the Hebrew language Tetragrammaton (יהוה) and a different Greek word used in the Christian Scriptures (*Kyrios*). Both God's personal name from the Hebrew Scriptures, and the Title *Lord* from the Christian Greek Scriptures should be freely used today.