

BIBLE STUDIES - WHO ARE YOU?

SERIES: **NAMES GOD USES FOR CHRISTIANS**

“A good name is to be more desired than great wealth.” (Prov. 22:1)

Lesson #1

INTRODUCTORY STUDY

“A good name is to be more desired than great wealth.”
Prov. 22:1

Christian

Soldier

Light

Salt

Saint

Epistle

Servant

Pilgrim

Ambassador

Sheep

Steward

Children

These are names that we will be studying in this series of lessons. Each name is unique and special because our heavenly Father gave them to us!

The Word “Name” Defined:

“A word, or a combination of words by which a person, place, or thing, is designated, called, or known. The study of names is called “*onomastics*. ” (The New Heritage Dictionary)

Names Are Important To God.

- In Exodus 33:17 God said about Moses, “I know you by name”;
- In Isaiah 45:4 God said of the wicked King, Cyrus, “I have called you by your name though you have not known me”;
- In Luke 10:20, Jesus said concerning the 70 that He sent out, “your names are written in heaven.”
- Furthermore, God has names for all the stars: Psalm 147:4 tells us that “he calls them all by name.”
- Names are so important that when it came time for Jesus to be born, God sent an angel to tell Joseph “.... You shall call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Matt.1:21)
- In Philippians 2:9 we read. “God also has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.”
- God has a new name for us when we get to heaven. (Rev.2:17)

We are not just a number to God; He Who knows when the sparrow falls; Who counts the hairs of our heads and numbers our days, knows us personally by name. Indeed, we are important to God and our names are likewise important to Him.

Names Are Important To Humans.

A name recognizes ones personhood. A person’s personality, reputation, deeds, status, etc. are inseparably associated with a name.

Names form a historical record. Once a baby is given a name it becomes a permanent part of a historical record. The name is on the birth certificate, hospital records, county and state records, driver's license, Social Security card etc. The name becomes a part of a genealogical record and forms an integral part of ones ancestral tree. In Matthew's genealogy in Matthew chapter one, 45 individuals are named; In Luke's genealogy recorded in Luke chapter three, there are 80 persons mentioned by name; In Romans chapter sixteen, Paul names 36 close associates.

Names communicate a person's image. We hear a name and instantly either a positive or negative mental picture pops into our minds. For example, there are good Bible names and bad Bible names.

- Good names: Joshua, Joseph, Esther, Ruth, David, Paul, John, Mary etc.
- Bad names: Lucifer; Ahab; Jezebel; Judas; etc.

In Jordan, certain names have been outlawed. On Oct. 9, 2002, following the 9/11 terror attacks in New York, many Jordanians rushed to name their children after Osama Ben Laden's name. Interestingly, however, the Jordanian Government banned the use of Osama Ben Laden. But they have also banned the use of certain Israelis like Shamon Perez, Isaac Rabin, Benjamin Netanyahu and other famous Israelis, because they considered them "bad" names.

The 6 most popular first names in the USA in 2007, according to the Social Security Administration were, girl's names: Emily, Isabella, Emma, Ava, Madison, Sophia. Boy's names: Jacob, Michael, Ethan, Joshua, Daniel, Christopher. The 6 most popular names in 1957 in USA – girls: Mary, Linda, Patricia, Susan, Barbara. Boys: James, Robert, John, David, William, Richard.

Dr. Christopher Anderson, in his book *The Name Game* says: "Names affect personality. They are acted out in our day-to-day contact with people. Names have an effect on self-concept. There is a relationship between names and behavior." That is an interesting observation, especially in view of the names God has bestowed upon us, His children.

Why Does God Use So Many Different Names?

God has many special names, terms or titles for those in His family. Why? For several reasons, foremost among them are:

1. To Define Our Relationship.

"But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!'" (Isa. 43:1)

2. To Document Our Identity.

God changed names of individuals in biblical history to indicate their new identity. For example, Jacob was changed to Israel (Gen.35:19); Abram to Abraham (Gen. 17:5); Sarai to Sarah (Gen.17:15); Simon to Peter (Mark 3:16); Saul to Paul (Acts 13:9), etc.

Names identify us. Are you a “child of the Devil”? (Acts 13:10) Or a “child of God”? (I John 3:19)

Illust. The following story comes from the Reader’s Digest:

“In the 1960s Hippy Movement in Southern California, many did not name their children traditional names. People in the mountains around Santa Cruz grew accustomed to hearing children called names like Frisbee, Spring Fever, Moonbeam, Earth, Love Child and so on.

This created some problems when the children started to school. Every Fall, according to tradition, parents applied name tags to their children, kissed them good-bye and sent them off to school on the bus. That’s when a kindergarten teacher first met a boy with a name tag that read: “Fruit Stand.” The teachers, that first day, thought the boy’s name was odd, but they tried to make the best of it assuming that he was the child of a hippy couple.

They would address him as follows: “Would you like to play with the blocks, Fruit Stand?”; “Fruit Stand, how about a snack?” etc. He accepted hesitantly, but never said a word. At the end of the day the teachers led the children out to the buses. “Do you know which one is your bus Fruit Stand?” He didn’t answer. That wasn’t strange. He hadn’t answered them all day. Lots of children are shy on the first day of school so they overlooked his silence.

The teachers had instructed the parents to write the names of their children’s bus stops on the reverse side of their name tags. Concerned that “Fruit Stand” would get on the wrong bus, one of the teachers took a closer look at his name tag. The teacher simply turned over the tag. There, neatly printed, was the word “Anthony.” (Luanne Oleas in Salinas, Calif., Reader’s Digest)

It is important that we, as well as others, know our true identity as Christians. Other reasons why God gives us a variety of names are:

3. To Declare Our Privileges.

“....if children; then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...” (Rom. 8:17). We shall see, in this study, that some of the names God calls us also convey certain privileges.

4. To Describe Our Responsibilities.

For example: “Soldiers,” God has His army to oppose Satan’s army; “Ambassadors,” God has His messengers of truth to offset Satan’s messengers of error; “You are the Salt of the earth” to deter decay; “you are the Light of the world” to enlighten the darkness, etc.

I am sure, from God’s perspective, there are other reasons for the many names that He has applied to Christians, but the above reasons are sufficient for us to see that all the names that God gives us are important.

CONCLUSION

Although all the names God has given us are to be cherished, there is no name so dear, so important, as powerful as that name which is above every other name, the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! As we study the various names God uses for His children, let us remember that each one is meant to bring glory to Him. So,

“Take the name of Jesus with you,

Child of sorrow and of woe;

It will joy and comfort give you,

Take it, then, where'er you go.”

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