

WHAT IS IN A NAME?– PART 1
PROVERBS 22:1; ECCLESIASTES 7:1

Introduction

As we lead up to **CHRISTMAS** this year and probably even a little beyond that point, we're going to focus on the **FIVE DESCRIPTIVE NAMES OF MESSIAH** that are given in **ISAIAH 9:6!** But we're just going to lay a foundation this morning for those messages as we ask the question, **WHAT IS IN A NAME?**

Proverbs 22:1– “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches”
Ecclesiastes 7:1– “A good name is better than precious ointment”

Great importance was attached to **NAMES** that we see given in **SCRIPTURE**. **NAMES** most often had **meaning** and were usually chosen for the **meanings** of the **NAME**.

This goes all the way back to the **BEGINNING** when the **LORD GOD NAMED ADAM!** **ADAM'S** name meant *“man”* or *“the man”* which makes sense because at that time **ADAM** was *“the man”* that the **LORD GOD** had made!

Before *Genesis 2:19*, the **HEBREW** word for the name **“ADAM”** was translated as *“man”* or *“the man”*. It is first translated as **“ADAM”** in our **ENGLISH BIBLE** in *GENESIS 2:19* where the **LORD GOD** brought the beasts of the field and fowls of the air to **ADAM** to see what he would call them. So **ADAM** became his **NAME** and **not just what he was** but yet **his NAME was descriptive of who or what he was!** He was **THE MAN!**

The **LORD GOD NAMED ADAM**, but **ADAM NAMED** not only the beasts of the field and fowls of the air, but **ADAM** also named **EVE** in *Genesis 3:20* **after the fall and the curse**. Up to that time she was just called **“WOMAN”** because she was taken out of **MAN**. (*Genesis 2:23*)

Genesis 3:20– “And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. [EVE = “life giver”]

In SCRIPTURE we also find where GOD chose the NAME for some others! In *Luke 1:13*, **GOD'S MESSENGER** (the angel **GABRIEL**), told **ZACHARIAS** that he and his barren wife were going to have a son and he was to name him **JOHN**, which he did! (**JOHN** means *“God is gracious”*)

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God was gracious to them by opening **ELISABETH'S** womb and giving them a child in their old age! That child, **JOHN THE BAPTIST**, was a fulfillment of an **OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY** in *Malachi 4:5-6*. **GOD** was gracious to **ISRAEL** in sending **JOHN THE BAPTIST** to prepare their hearts for **MESSIAH'S** first **ADVENT** and to point them to **CHRIST** as the **LORD JESUS** began **HIS** earthly ministry!

Shortly thereafter, in *Luke 1:31*, the same **ANGEL (GABRIEL)** appeared to **MARY** and told her she was going to have a special, **DIVINE SON** and she was to **NAME HIM JESUS!**

And in *Matthew 1:21*, the **ANGEL of the LORD** appeared to **JOSEPH** in a dream explaining to him the **DIVINE** nature of the **CHILD** in **MARY'S** womb and that **HE** was to be **NAMED JESUS!** (*i.e. GOD SAVES!*)

And **JESUS**, the **EMMANUEL**, was born into this world to **SEEK** and to **SAVE SINNERS!** **HE** alone can **SAVE** and **HE** gave **HIMSELF** to be **CRUCIFIED** on the **CROSS** of **CALVARY** that sinful men might be **SAVED**, if they turn to **HIM** in **REPENTANCE** and **FAITH, TRUSTING** in **HIS FINISHED WORK!**

“We have heard the joyful sound...JESUS SAVES...JESUS SAVES!”

In SCRIPTURE we also find where GOD changed the NAME of some folks:

Remember in *Genesis 17:5*, after **GOD** renewed **HIS COVENANT** with **ABRAM**, **HE** changed **ABRAM'S** name to **ABRAHAM**. What was the significance of that?

Abram – meant *“High father”*

Abraham – meant *“Father of a multitude”*

“...for a father of many nations have I made thee.”

The **NAME ABRAHAM** was a continual reminder of the promise the **LORD** made to him regarding his **SEED**, and making his **NAME** great, but especially of his being the father of many **NATIONS!**

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In *Genesis 17:15*, GOD changed SARAI’S name to SARAH.

Sarai – meant “contentious” “quarreling” or “domineering”
Sarah – meant “Princess”

In *Genesis 32:28*, GOD changed the NAME of ABRAHAM’S grandson, JACOB name to ISRAEL which is where the nation of ISRAEL got its NAME!

Jacob – meant “Heel catcher” or “supplanter” (Esau)
Israel – meant “a prince of God”

In SCRIPTURE, we also find some folks who at least attempted to change their own NAMES:

In *Ruth 1* we find that after NAOMI returned to BETHLEHEM from MOAB where her husband and two sons died, she changed her name from NAOMI to MARA.

Ruth 1:20-21– “And she said unto them, *Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?*”

Naomi – meant “Pleasant.”
Mara – meant “Bitter.”

However, we note that in the balance of the **BOOK OF RUTH** that she is **NOT** called MARA, but rather is still referred to as and called NAOMI! And the **LORD** blessed her again and brought pleasantness into her life again when her daughter-in-law RUTH married BOAZ and brought forth OBED!

Listen to me, you may have gone through some *bitter* or *difficult time* in your past or you might be going through a *bitter* or *difficult time* right now, but if you belong to the **LORD, HE** can bring forth “pleasantness” in your life once again to make you forget that *bitterness!*

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In SCRIPTURE, we also find where other people changed the names of some of GOD’S people:

An example of this is in the **BOOK OF DANIEL** where DANIEL and the three **HEBREW CHILDREN** mentioned as being captives with him in **BABYLON** had their names changed by the **CHALDEANS**.

Their **HEBREW names given to them at birth** were associated with their **GODLY heritage** as was frequently the case.

However, the **CHALDEANS** wanted DANIEL and the **HEBREW CHILDREN** to forget about their **GODLY heritage**. And giving names to captives or foreign slaves was a sign of their being put under subjection.

DANIEL, whose NAME meant “*God is my judge*” or “*prince of God*” had his NAME changed to “*BELTESHAZZAR*”. which meant, “*preserve thou O Bel*” or “*prince of Bel,*” who was the chief false god of **BABYLON**).

It is explained **6 times** in **12 chapters** that DANIEL’S NAME was changed. This would indicate that DANIEL was not fond of his new name. In fact, DANIEL uses his own NAME **75 times** in his book.

What about the three **HEBREW CHILDREN** that were with DANIEL in the captivity? We don’t know them by their **HEBREW NAMES** – HANANIAH, MISHAEL, and AZARIAH, but rather by their **CHALDEAN NAMES**– SHADRACH, MESHACH, and ABED-NEGO.

“*HANANIAH,*” which meant “*gift of the LORD*” had his NAME changed to “*Shadrach,*” meaning “*decree of Aku*” (who was the false moon-god).

“*MISHAEL,*” which meant “*who is what God is*” had his NAME changed to “*Meshach,*” meaning, “*who is as Aku*” (again the false moon-god)

“*AZARIAH*” which meant “*Whom Jehovah hath helped*” was changed to “*Abednego,*” which meant, “*servant of Nebo*” (the Babylonian false god of science and literature).

Could I tell you the world would have us to forget our **spiritual heritage** also!

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When we got SAVED GOD made ALL THINGS NEW! It says in *2 Corinthians 5:17*– “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”

When we got SAVED we got a NEW NATURE complete with a different set of values and desires. Many of us made new friends because our old friends didn't care to have anything to do with us anymore.

On top of a NEW NATURE with a new set of values and desires, we also got a NEW NAME! Before we got saved we were *CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL*, but now we are the *CHILDREN OF GOD*.

We got a new FAMILY and so we took on the FAMILY NAME!

I may not have a NAME that is well-known here on earth, but it made news in HEAVEN when I got saved and PRAISE GOD my NAME has been recorded in THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE! Has yours?

NAMES can come to mean something by those who are associated with those NAMES! You know what I'm talking about! I can mention a NAME and often you may have a thought pop into your head about that NAME!

Tell me what do you think of when you hear these NAMES of folks who are found in the BIBLE?:

JEZEBEL (*wicked*) Though her original name meant “CHASTE”, her NAME has come to mean “A SHAMELESS OR IMMORAL WOMAN.” In all my days I have never heard of someone naming their daughter JEZEBEL! That's because there is a STIGMA attached to that name now! A STIGMA is a mark or sign of DISGRACE or DISCREDIT!

DELILAH (*harlot, deceiver, gold digger*) Though her name meant “DELICATE”, it too has a STIGMA now attached to it because of SAMSON'S girlfriend DELILAH found in the BOOK OF JUDGES who sold his secret out to the enemy!

I have only heard of ONE person named DELILAH in my lifetime (*She's a radio personality of some sort!*)

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I don't know if that is her given name or just her radio name. I personally would never name a daughter DELILAH because of the STIGMA attached to the name!

JUDAS (*betrayed*) It was a popular name in JESUS' day, but not today in our circles! There even was another JUDAS who was a DISCIPLE and an APOSTLE! (The APOSTLE JOHN identifies him as “not ISCARIOT!” in *John 14:22*) The NAME means “praise.” But, again there is a STIGMA!

What about NAMES in recent history.

Benedict Arnold (traitor)

Adolph Hitler (mass murdering dictator)

Ted Bundy (serial killer)

Those NAMES are normally avoided because of the REPUTATION or STIGMA attached to those who bore those NAMES!

I remember a TV special one time where they were interviewing members of HITLER'S family. Many of them lived in the U.S. but they had changed their NAME and very few people ever knew who they were.

Now they didn't commit the crimes that ADOLPH HITLER committed, but the NAME HITLER had an extremely negative STIGMA attached to it.

How about these BIBLICAL NAMES?:

Enoch (walked with God; translated)

Noah (walked with God; the Ark)

Moses (deliverer of God's people from Egyptian bondage)

David (shepherd, giant killer, king, man after God's own heart; but sadly, also murderer; adulterer)

Barnabas (missionary, son of consolation; a giver)

We know that the APOSTLE PAUL was known as SAUL before his conversion, but changed his NAME not long after entering into the ministry. We are not told why, but I believe that quite possibly it could have been because he wanted to be removed from what his NAME represented to many. (i.e. SAUL THE PERSECUTOR)

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Now we know that sometimes it's not really the **NAME** itself that matters. **It is what one makes of the NAME!** The name **PAUL** is no better than the **NAME SAUL**, but it had a **REPUTATION** that went with that **NAME**.

SAUL had ruined his **NAME** by persecuting **CHRISTIANS** and then—boom! He became a **CHRISTIAN!**

So how does one get a GOOD NAME? The same way as one gets a **BAD NAME!** It normally comes from one's **CHARACTER** or **REPUTATION!**

Large Corporations spend billions of dollars building and trying to **maintain a GOOD NAME**. They want us to **trust** them enough to buy their products.

If they are proven to be **untrustworthy** they lose business and billions of dollars because they have developed a **BAD NAME** or **BAD REPUTATION**. Some have been hurt because someone else hurt their **NAME**.
(e.g. TYLENOL)

Now, we know that for a person to get a **GOOD NAME**, they must prove themselves to be **PERSONS OF CHARACTER**, they must develop a **GOOD REPUTATION**, and they must be **TRUSTWORTHY**.

Our **NAME** becomes associated with who we are. (i.e. the people we become.) We, as **CHRISTIANS**, have taken the name of **CHRIST**, that's why it's so important that we be very careful of how we live. We need to do everything we can to have a **good testimony** because we are **ambassadors for CHRIST!**

We represent the **KING of kings** and **LORD of lords**, so it is of utmost necessity that we be men and women of good **CHARACTER!**
1 Peter 3:16—“Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.”

1 Peter 4:14—“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.”

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For the most part, a person's **REPUTATION** is based on **CHARACTER**. A person's **CHARACTER** is based on their **CONDUCT** and their **SPEECH!**

CHRIST said, that people are known by their **FRUITS**.
Matthew 7:17-18—“. . . every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”

Conclusion

Now, the **PURPOSE** for our looking at **WHAT IS IN A NAME** has to do not only with what we will see tonight in the second part of this message as we look at the **NAMES** given in **SCRIPTURE** to those who are **IN CHRIST**, but also over the next couple of weeks as we approach **CHRISTMAS!**

LORD willing, we plan to look closely at the **DESCRIPTIVE NAMES OF MESSIAH**, that are given in **ISAIAH'S PROPHECY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**, as found in **ISAIAH 9:6** and the significance of those **NAMES!**

But, let me ask, is your **NAME** written in the **LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE?**
Do you belong to **CHRIST?**

If you say that you belong to **CHRIST**, what do your **FRUITS** say about that? Do your **FRUITS** show that you belong to **CHRIST?** Does your **NAME** bring **HONOR** or **DISHONOR** to the **NAME** of **GOD** and **HIS SON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?**