

WHAT IS IN A NAME?

A good name is better than precious ointment . . . (Ecclesiastes 7:1)

When we meet a person, the first thing on our minds is, "What is your name?" Almost everyone has at times been interested in the meanings of names. You probably have looked up your own name, its meaning and origin. It did have an origin, came from something, somewhere, and bore some significance.

To the modern Western mind, a name is generally just something to designate Bill from Joe, simply a handle. But in Bible times and oriental thought, names meant far more than that. In fact, all the names in the Bible are divinely inspired. I do believe in the verbal inspiration of the scripture: every *word* is inspired. Many persons appear in scripture without names: for instance, "a certain rich man," or "a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho." But other times, people are specifically named, and their names are given for a specific reason. And when the Holy Spirit sees to it that men's and women's names are given in the scripture, they are given for a purpose.

We do not know all the meanings of the names in the scripture, but that does not mean that they do not have meaning. Our ignorance does not nullify the validity of God's Word. We have lost some of the meanings, others we can only guess at; but many of them we do know, and they have powerful significance. The Bible does not have any meaningless words in it; they all mean something. Often the discovery of meanings will greatly enrich our study of the Word and the truth, and our comprehension of what the Holy Spirit has to say to us.

The Hebrew word that is translated "name" is *shem*. Shem was the name of Noah's eldest son. Ham and Japheth were his brothers. From these men came the three major racial divisions of humanity. The Hamitic people eventually became the Negroid race; the Japhetic people descended to the Caucasian and Germanic peoples, and Shem's descendants became the Oriental or Mongoloid race: Mongoloid, Caucasoid and Negroid. Inter marriages and intermingling between these three principle roots, however, have now rendered it difficult to make positive distinctions.

The line of Shem was not only the progenitor of the Oriental race, but of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all the sons of Israel, and eventually the Lord Jesus. It is the line of the Hebrew race, and the line of our Saviour according to the flesh.

The word *Shem* means renown, fame, or reputation, that for which one is known. A person was named for what he was associated with. In other words, the Hebrew name meant "that which you are." There are also Biblical accounts of babies being named for the circumstances in which they were born. For instance, when the ark of the covenant was taken away by the Philistines, Eli the high priest's daughter-in-law gave birth to a son which she named *Ichabod*: "the glory of the Lord is departed." From that time until now Ichabod has been a synonym for that which is ruined, forsaken and reprobated.

God's Name

An interesting thing about names is that we do not know God's name. This was not an oversight of the Lord. There are many names of God given in the Bible, but all of them are partial names; that is, they just give insight to a small facet of what He is. If God only had one name, then God would be limited to whatever that name meant. Since a person's name is his renown, what he is, what he is noted for, it is impossible to limit God to one name, because He is infinite. One may limit God in his own imagination, in his unwillingness to believe Him, but when he does that he has only limited his access and apprehension of God. God himself is not decreased by our unbelief. He is ever all He is at any time and in any circumstances. We may deny Him, but He cannot deny Himself.

Therefore, in Exodus 3:13, when God called Moses and sent him to the Hebrew slaves in Egypt to tell them that the God of their fathers had sent him to be their deliverer, He said, "Who am I going to say sent me?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. Thus shall you say, I AM has sent me to you." This is, as far as we can understand, the origin or original meaning of the word we now call "Jehovah" or "Yahweh". This an accommodation that we have given to the consonants, YHWH, from the Hebrew alphabet, the vowels having been left out because the name was thought too sacred to utter. In fact, it was unlawful for a Hebrew to use that name. English vowels were added in order make it pronounceable. There simply is no way to pronounce that, so we say Jehovah or Yahweh. But the meaning of it is, "I am that I am." These words, spoken in the first person, present tense, do indeed render the name unspeakable except from the mouth of God. Only He can say "I AM THAT I AM". But we shall see that it is a wonderfully appropriate and accurate name for the Almighty Infinite God.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that "they that come to God must believe that He is." This is the second person present tense, and it says the same thing: We are speaking of His name. When He speaks of His name, He says, "I Am;" when we speak of His name we say, "He is." He is what? We cannot limit Him by description. He *is*. Where did He come from? How long has He been here? How long will He be here? He is. We can say nothing else. Before anything was, He was, and still is. He is the eternal I AM!

The name of God tells us not only that He is, but that He is whatever our need is. The fame, the reputation of God is inherent in His name. Whatever your need is, *He IS*. They that come to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. The world is filled with believers in the God that was: the God that worked miracles in the past; the God that rolled back the waters of the Red Sea; the God that made the iron float; the God that raised the dead; the God that healed the lepers. They also believe in the God that will be: Jesus is coming again some of these days, and He's going to reign again on earth and we're going to

have peace and joy and victory, and everything Jesus did in the past He's going to do in the future. But Bible faith is believing in the God that is right now. That is, all that He was in the past, all that He ever shall be in the future, He is right *now*. More particularly, in respect to my particular need right now; whatever that need is, *HE IS*.

In the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, verse fourteen, we are told that Abraham, being tested by the Lord, was commanded to take Isaac and offer him up for a burnt offering on Mount Moriah. Upon their arrival at the place, Isaac looked at Abraham, and said, "Father, I see fire and I see wood, and here is an altar, but where's the sacrifice?" Abraham answered saying "*Jehovah-Jireh*"... "God will provide." God will provide a lamb for Himself. Under the Old Covenant a man making a sacrifice was required to bring the lamb, or turtle dove, or whatever was to be offered. But Abraham's *Jehovah-Jireh* anticipates the New Covenant and Christ, God's Lamb that takes away the sin of the world. Where is the sacrifice for sin? It is in calling upon the name of the Lord, *Jehovah-Jireh*: God will provide for Himself a Lamb! Seventeen centuries later, John stood on the bank of Jordan and said, "There He is. Behold God's Lamb; the Lamb that God provided to take away the sin of the world." What is the name of the Lord? Jesus! He is the Lamb that God Provided. That ram caught in the thicket, God's Lamb, was not offered in Ishmael's stead, but Isaac's. The Lamb of God offered particularly for God's elect people is according to Name of God, *Jehovah-Jireh*, the LORD will provide!

In Exodus the seventeenth chapter, God had already delivered the Hebrew children out of Egypt, brought them across the Red Sea, and they were on their way into the promised land. "Then", the Bible says, "came Amalek". Amalek is an Old Covenant type of the flesh, that carnal body in which the renewed man is bound to live, but no longer required to serve. It has no interest in spiritual realities and always attacks the spiritual man in his pilgrimage. Joshua was sent out to dispatch this enemy of God's people. "Joshua" is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek "Jesus". Another name for Jesus is Emmanuel, which means "God with us". The battle is not ours, but the Lord's. Moses had the rod of God in his hand, and when he held up the rod of God, Joshua prevailed over Amalek. When he lowered the rod of God, Amalek prevailed over Joshua. It is God Who goes with us to fight our battles and saves us from our enemies, including Amalek, the flesh. "If, by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live" (Rom.8:13). But Moses' arms would get tired, so they found him a rock (another type of Christ) upon which he could rest. With Aaron and Hur, the brethren, on either side to hold up his arms, the rod of God was lifted up like a banner until the sun went down, and the battle for the day was over. Amalek, grandson of Esau, the fleshy man, will never be completely annihilated. The people of God will have war with him as long as the earth stands. You are going to have war with your flesh from now on, but as long as the rod of God is elevated, we will be triumphant. Moses built an altar there and called it "*Jehovah-Nissi*", that is, "The Lord Is My Banner".

At certain times, you may feel like you have gotten the victory. And you will have, but it will only be for that day or that hour. And the victory is not you or yours, but Christ.

You will need the same victory again tomorrow. Amalek, the flesh, those carnal emotions, anger, envies, jealousies, impatience, intolerance, grudges, resentments, lusts, and everything that constitutes our frail human nature, will come tearing down upon you, and you will certainly lose unless the standard - *Jehovah-Nissi*, "The Lord My Banner", goes up. You do not even have the strength within yourself to hold the standard up. But He has provided for that too. He has called out a church, a body of believers, and enabled them with various gifts to uphold, edify, and build one another up. We will have help from our brothers and sisters in Christ to triumph until our day is finished. There will be warfare until the sun goes down; that is, until God calls you out of here: but God is our Banner. There is victory in Jesus. His Name is our Banner.

In The Land

After Israel arrived and settled in the land of Canaan, their perversities and sins brought on them the judgment of God, and He gave them over to Midianite oppression for seven years. The Midianites were an exceedingly fierce and cruel people who would destroy Israel's crops, and had near starved them. Then they cried to the Lord for help, and He sent a prophet who reaffirmed that He was their God, and that they had nothing to fear from their enemies' gods.

"And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained to Joash, the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." (Judges 6:11-12)

Think about that a moment. Here is a man creeping and crawling around the winepress trying to hide while he threshed out a bit of bread, terrified lest the enemy see him, take away his grain and leave him to starve. The Lord calls him "a mighty man of valor"! Gideon certainly did not look like such a man, nor did he feel like one. This made no sense to him at all: "And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?" ... "And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? (vs.13-14)

Gideon understandably had considerable trouble believing that this was an angel of the LORD, and that the LORD was really telling him that he, the least in one the poorest of families in all Israel was going to be a savior and deliverer of Israel from the powerful Midianites. By no means a man of faith, he asked for a sign that he might believe the angel. He prepares food and drink and sets it on a rock before the angel, who then touched it with his staff. To Gideon's amazement and terror, fire rises up out of the rock and burns up the flesh and bread. Now Gideon is more terrified than ever. He has seen an angel of the LORD and had doubted his reality. He thinks he is going to die. But the LORD graciously forgives him for his unbelief and assures him that he will not die. "Then Gideon built an altar unto the LORD, and called it *Jehovah Shalom*" The Lord My Peace. (Judges 6:24)

It is not possible for one to know the peace of God until he has sensed the fear of the LORD, His enmity. The love of

God will not be known by those who have not had their sensibilities terrified by His wrath and imminent judgment. We must first see Jehovah as the Almighty and Holy One who has been offended by our unbelief and sin, Who, lest He have mercy, will be our Judge and Executor. But then to sense His mercies, to know His forgiveness and kindness for Jesus sake and to know Him as our strong refuge and defender...that is salvation...Jehovah, My Peace! Another of God's names.

God's Name and His People

It is of enormous significance that God's Name is always identified with a people and a place. In Deuteronomy 12:11 and 18, concerning the building of the temple, God says He will put His name there. In Ezekiel 48:35, the "rebuilt" temple of the Lord in the Holy City is described. "...and the name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah Shammah...The LORD is there". No better name for a local church could be hoped for than that! No higher recommendation could be made for a gathering of the people of God than a report, a renown, a name, that "God is there" in the midst of His people! (I Cor. 14:23-25).

After the murder of Abel, a type of Christ, God gave Seth, who is a type of the resurrected Christ, from whom came Enos, who is a type of the poured out Holy Spirit. And then, we are told, "men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:25-26).

It is not without great significance that when a woman marries a man she takes his name. Now, it is not merely a matter of convenience, so that they both may have a family name, something to pass on to the children. She becomes identified with him, and she is either his glory or his disgrace. Not only that, but he is her strength and her refuge, and all that he is, she is. Not only does she avail herself of all the strength and resources of her husband, but her husband takes upon himself all her reproaches and weakness. Therefore he is understandably jealous for the appearance, behavior and attitude of his wife. He loves her, desires the best for her. All that she is reflects him. Her name is his name and his name is in her. This is what is in view in the third commandment.

The third commandment forbids us to take the name of the LORD in vain. This has nothing to do with profanity or cursing. It means that we are not to identify ourselves with Him, and then live as though He did not exist. If Miss Brown should marry a Mr. Jones, call herself Mrs. Jones, yet live somewhere else than where he lives, have nothing to do with him, living just as she always lived, she would have taken his name in vain. To take the name of the Lord is to absolutely abandon your former life and lose your identity in Him.

We are told in Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21, and Romans 10:13, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." What is it to "call upon the name of the Lord"? It is nothing less than to put our hope and expectation on nothing less than the renown of our Great God and Savior for whatever our need is. Do you need food? Jehovah is my groceries. Do you need a place to live? Jehovah is my house. Am I sick? Jehovah is my health and healing. Am I bound or in prison? Jehovah is my deliverer. Am I lost, a condemned sinner headed for Hell? The name to call upon is Jesus, which means Jehovah's salvation. That is the name which heaven ascribed to the virgin-born Son of God, Who would save His people from their sins.

Do you have doubts that God will save you? Six months before the Savior was born, His forerunner was born, also named by a messenger from heaven. What is the name given this man who is to prepare the way of God's salvation? His father was told, "His name shall be John". John means, "Jehovah is gracious". The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. That does not mean that there was no grace before Christ and no law after He came. God is unchanging. All He is, He always has been and ever will be. It means, rather, that God's Name, His reputation before Christ was for His holy law, His absolute righteousness, and His utter intolerance of sin. But with the coming of His Son, He would now be known for the overflowing fullness of His grace and truth in the Person of His Son. God is gracious. Whoever calls upon Him will be saved. None will be refused. Irrespective of how great a sinner I am, I am not beyond the grace of God. The Christian God is the Saviour of sinners, known for His boundless mercies in Christ.

Our Name

So much for God's name. What is your name? Do you have a good name or a bad one? What are you known for? When people think of you, hear your name, what do they think about? Do they think about integrity, uprightness, godliness, graciousness, generosity, love, joy and peace? Or do they think of meanness, intolerance, hatefulness, hypocrisy, strife, profanity, evil, distrust, pride, greed, lies, sham, and fraud?

The man for whom the most significant people on this earth was named, Israel, has much to say to us as we consider our own names. In affirming the truth of unconditional election, Paul reminds us: "When Rebecca had conceived by one, by our father Isaac, for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, 'Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated.'" (Romans 9:10-13) If election were based on God's foreseen information (foreknowledge), He would have loved Esau and hated Jacob. Esau was an honest, hard working, outdoorsman, a skillful hunter, and a good manager of his assets. Jacob, on the other hand, was a stay-at-home mama's boy, crooked as a corkscrew, who always had his eye on taking what someone else had. Failing to prevent Esau from preceding him in birth, He schemed and took advantage of his brother when he came in tired and hungry from a long hunt, and cheated him out of his birthright for a bowl of red beans. He then, with his mother's help, deceived his father, and stole his brother's blessing also. After this he had to run for his life, for Esau was, understandably, bent on killing him. Out in the desert, asleep with a stone for a pillow, the Lord appeared to Him and confirmed to him and his descendants the Abrahamic covenant and the land of Caanan. There, he made a covenant with the LORD, and called the place Bethel, the House of God. Continuing on to his mother's brother, he hired himself out to Laban to feed his cattle. Over the years, he took both his daughters and cheated him out of most of his cows, sheep, goats, donkeys and camels.

Jacob had made a vow to God at Bethel. "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD by my God:

and this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Gen. 28:20-22). After twenty years, Jacob noticed his father-in-law's countenance toward him had changed from favor to disfavor. His brother-in-laws, Laban's sons, were grumbling about Jacob stealing their father's wealth. Then the LORD spoke to Jacob and told him to return to the land of his fathers, promising to be with him (Gen. 31:3).

So Jacob took his two wives, his children, and all the possessions and herds he had acquired while serving Laban and went on his way to return. He sent messengers to Esau his brother in the country of Edom saying, "I have sojourned with Laban until now, and I have oxen, and asses, flocks and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight" (Gen. 32:4-5). When the messengers returned, however, they reported that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. Jacob was terrified by this news, so he did the same thing he had always done when he got in a tight place, or he wanted something he did not have. He began to connive and scheme to try to save what he could. He first divided his possessions and people into two bands, reasoning that if Esau destroyed one, he would have at least one left. Then he prayed, crying out to God to deliver him from the hand of Esau. But he had no faith either in God's promise to be with him or that He had heard his prayer, for early the next morning he started sending presents, by which he hoped to bribe Esau into sparing him. After sending all his possessions, desperately hoping to cool Esau's anger, he lodged for the night by the brook, Jabbok. But he had no rest, so he rose up during the night and sent his wives and children over the brook, and then he was left alone.

Here is the man God has chosen to succeed Abraham and receive the Abrahamic promise. But he is still faithless, trusting in his own arm of flesh, the scheming and manipulation that has gotten him everything he wanted all his life. So the LORD himself wrestles with this faithless Jacob all night. Near the breaking of day, when it became apparent that Jacob was not going to yield, the LORD reached down and touched his thigh, put it out of joint rendering him lame, and then said, "Let me go". But there has now been a drastic change in the wrestling. Instead of the LORD wrestling with Jacob, he begins wrestling with the LORD.

This is what has happened: Jacob is still in unbelief. He is not trusting the LORD, but himself. He is now broke, bankrupt and alone, but if Esau is still intent upon killing him, he can still do what he did before: he can run. But *now* the LORD disables him and he cannot run. His last fleshy hope is gone. Now he *must* have divine help or perish! He has been crowded to faith. "I will not let thee go except you bless me". The LORD responds with the telling question, "What is your name?" What are you known for? What sort of person are you? What is the real you? If you want Me to bless you, confess what your are." The response is "Jacob". The meaning of Jacob? Supplanter! Cheat! Thief! Liar! Schemer! Conniver! "I confess this is my renown, what I am known for and what I am".

There are four persons in every one of us: the first is the person you think you are, the second is the person other people

think you are, the third is the person you think other people think you are. But the fourth, the real person, is the person God knows you are. That is the real you, and you will get nowhere with God until you agree with God about yourself. Here is confession of sins and sinfulness, the fruit of repentance, the unfailing twin of true trusting faith. The LORD immediately gives his repentant trusting child a new name! "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel (Prince of God): for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed". (Gen. 32:28).

What does Paul say of the new man in Christ? "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I (Jacob), but Christ liveth in me...(Gal. 2:20). This is true conversion. It is nothing less than a dying and ending of the life of the old man, and the resurrection of a new one. "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). "And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). Henceforth Israel would walk with a limp and a staff, but he walked with God! Jacob, the supplanter was gone, and a prince with God lived in his stead.

But this does not mean the going henceforth will be smooth. There are lumps and hard knocks ahead. Not only are there lingering consequences of the old life, but there is a matter of growing in grace. This is often called sanctification, but sanctification (separation...holiness) has already been accomplished at the brook. Israel, created like God in righteousness and true holiness, is as holy as he will ever be. But he must now learn to walk in that infused grace. His sons have too well learned the deceitful ways of their father. They lied and broke covenant which they had deceitfully made with some people of the land, came upon them when they were unable to defend themselves, and killed them. Jacob, realizing himself to be a small minority among a people who now have good cause to hate and destroy him, must now flee afresh to his only Hope, the God who met him and made covenant with him when he was in distress fleeing from Esau. So he arises to go back to Bethel. "So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place Elbethel (The God of the House of God) because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother." (Gen. 35:6-7)

It is one thing to experience the mercy and grace of God, to know the love of God, to find the place of God, the house of God; but, dear friend, it is quite another thing to find the *God* of the house of God. It is one thing to be thrilled and excited over the word of God, but it is incomparable to knowing and experiencing the God of the word. This is experimental sanctification, and wonderfully made real in the appropriation of Jesus Christ, our Emmanuel...God with us! And God told him there, "Thy name shall no more be called Jacob." He had already told him that he would no longer be *called* Jacob, but Israel. Now He confirms that he will no longer *be known* as Jacob, but Israel, a prince with God. His name has been changed. Has yours?

- C. M.

GRACE BIBLE CAMP

681 Rock Hill Rd. Bentley, LA 71407
 Thursday Evening, November 3 – Sunday morning November 6, 2005

Meals, dormitory lodging, R.V. Hookups...(no charges) Bring linens if you wish dormitory lodging. **Note:** Dormitory beds are limited. First come first served. Some must leave early, making more beds available on Saturday evening.

MOTELS

Pineville: 14 Miles from Camp. Sleep Inn, 3411 Hwy 165. (318) 640-8505. **Alexandria:** (about 18miles from Camp) Comfort Inn (318) 484-9155, Travelodge (318)-433-2561); Holiday Inn (800) 787-8336; Hampton Inn (318)-4887-8530; Super 8 Motel, (318) 445-6541. **Alexandria, I-49:** (about 21 miles from Camp) LaQuinta Inn (800) 687-6667; Howard Johnson Express (800) 446-4656; Super 8 motel (800) 800-8000.

AGENDA

Thursday

7:00 P Mack Tomlinson, Denton, TX
 8:00 P Robert Jennings, Sedalia MO

Friday

9:00A Barney Bryant, Carthage TX
 10:00A Ken Murrell, Prospect LA
 3:30P Questions and Discussion
 4:15P Peter Hutchinson, Beaumont TX
 7:00 P Larry Dean, Nesbit MS

Saturday

9:00A Derrell Young, Warren TX
 10:00A Gilbert Barr, Simmesport LA
 3:30P Questions & Discussion
 4:15P Jeffry Johnson, Conway AR
 7:30 P Robert Jennings

Sunday

9:00A Mark LaCour, Baton Rouge, LA
 10:00A Larry Dean
 Adjourn

Continental Breakfast in dining Hall each morning 7:00 – 8:30 AM. Group devotionals at 8:30 AM. Brunch served at 11:00AM. Dinner served at 5:00 P.M. Group prayer meetings one half hour before each evening meeting.

Grace Bible Camps are sponsored by Grace and Truth Enterprises in conjunction with Grace Church of Bentley, and other sister churches in the region. A cordial welcome to preachers, men, women, youth, children, whole families...any and all wishing to come aside for a few days of soul refreshing encouragement in the word of God and Christian fellowship.

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