

Hear O Israel!

When I hear this phrase, I envision Charlton Heston dressed as Moses, standing atop a rock by the Red Sea. He has his staff stretched skyward and his arms spread apart, shouting this to the crowd below. If you have never seen the movie, The Ten Commandments, you probably have no idea what I am talking about. In any case, it is was a huge production made in 1956 and nominated for 7 Academy Awards, winning only one for Best Visual Effects. Okay, enough movie trivia, so bear with me.

As we read in the essays, God will not withhold any good thing from us. However, He will permit us to go through the trials if it is to our benefit in our spiritual growth, *if* the lesson is something we would not otherwise learn unless we experience it.

Acts 14:22- “Where they established the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and declaring that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

We must understand it, to learn how to overcome it. When we learn how to overcome trials we can teach and help others. Think *future* roles here.

We have on occasion discussed trials and overcoming. I know we have beaten a hole in the drum of character building and the relationship with God and the trials topic has been getting some good coverage too. So, what does Charlton Heston have to do with any of this? Probably not a lot other than the movie line, “hear O Israel!” Israel. Let us take a closer look at the word, “Israel.”

When Paul spoke to the church at Galatia, he called the church “the Israel of God.”

Galatians 6:16- “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”

Why? And What does that mean? We know God puts a lot into names, as Paul’s name himself was changed from Saul to Paul.

We will look back in Genesis 32 to see where Israel was first mentioned in the Bible.

Genesis 32:25-28- “And when *the Man* saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh. And the hollow of Jacob’s thigh became out of joint as he wrestled with Him. And He said, “Let Me go, for the day breaks.” And *Jacob* said, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” And He said to him, “What *is* your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” And He said, “Your name shall no

longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

We know it was God (Who later became Jesus Christ), Who first spoke the word Israel when He changed Jacob’s name after struggling with him all night. Jacob prevailed against God and men and God changed his name. Now I will not be going into a lesson on Jacob’s history, conflict with Esau, or his sons (who became the twelve tribes), we can save that for another time. I want to focus on the *meaning* of Israel and how Paul used it to identify the church. Is it a good name for God’s Church?

Bible scholars and commentators have cited several possible meanings for the word Israel, which is made up of two Hebrew roots. “He prevails with God” emphasizes the idea of prevailing against strength through persistent struggle. The Jerusalem Bible translates Israel with this power: “he has been strong against God.” Sounds like Jacob had his share of conflict and trials.

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #3478 translates Israel as a future meaning, “he will rule as God.” If you look this up on line it has several Hebrew listings and uses as well. This version stresses the idea of rulership (kings and priests, **Revelation 1:6**) because of *persistent* struggle.

Do we prevail with God through trials and *if* we overcome, will we not rule in His Kingdom? It becomes apparent that Israel is quite fitting for the name of God's Church. Our Christian walk is one of trials and overcoming to an end of ruling in God's Kingdom.

I find it quite interesting that we too will receive a new name someday *if* we overcome our flesh and make it to the First Resurrection.

Isaiah 62:2- “And the Gentiles will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; and you will be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.”

Revelation 2:17- “The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes I will give *the right* to eat of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows except the one who receives *it*.”

We can look at Jacob and even Paul receiving a new name as a turning point in their lives. God bestowed upon them their new names when He had “reassigned” them for their earthly purpose.

Jacob was still a carnal man. God renamed him Israel as he was called into God's service. There would be much to follow.

Saul of Tarsus persecuted Christians and the early church. He too, much like Jacob was changed when called into God's service. Stricken with blindness for three days (**Acts 9:3-6**), he became Paul and we know how much of the New Testament he wrote. They both represent what we are becoming, overcomers. We are overcoming our flesh and sin just as they did. We have been called out from the world and into God's service.

John 15:19- "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have personally chosen you out of the world, the world hates you for this."

Our focus cannot be on the world or the things in it.

1 John 2:12-15- "I am writing to you, little children, because *your* sins have been forgiven you through His name. I am writing to you, fathers, because you have known Him Who is from *the* beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked *one*. I am writing to you, little children, because you have known the Father. I wrote to you, fathers, because you have known Him Who is from the beginning. I wrote to you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God is dwelling in you, and you have overcome the wicked *one*."

Do not love the world, nor the things *that are* in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him”

Overcoming is the common thread joining all of the seven churches Jesus Christ mentions in Revelation 2 and 3. Every one of us seeking to enter into God’s Kingdom must overcome our sinful nature.

1 John 2:16-18- “Because everything that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pretentious pride of physical life—is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world and its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God abides forever. Little children, it is *the* last time; and just as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have risen up, by which we know that it is *the* last time.”

Our faith will make us strong as we have the promises of God through scripture assuring us and the example of Jesus to follow.

Philippians 4:13- “I can do all things through Christ, Who empowers me.”

Our greatest assurance is from Jesus Christ Himself.

John 16:33- “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation. But be courageous! I have overcome the world.”

Without overcoming our flesh and sins, we cannot enter into God’s Kingdom.

Overcoming these obstacles are a part of our sanctification or separation process from our old worldly ways.

Galatians 5:19-21- “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, strifes, jealousies, indignations, contentions, divisions, sects, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such things as these; concerning which I am telling you beforehand, even as I have also said in the past, that those who do such things shall not inherit *the* kingdom of God.”

God’s true Church is His family, a body of faithful believers who will in the end prevail over Satan, the world, and their sinful nature. It should be noted that some of the synonyms for prevails are: triumphs, victorious, succeeds, overcomes, and conquers. Have you seen any of these words used in scripture?

Romans 8:37- “But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us.”

1 John 5:4- “Now then, everyone who is begotten by God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith”

Whether past tense or the future tense, we *are* the Israel of God. Like those in the Bible who have gone before us, we too will have our struggles to overcome. And by the very Word of God, we have His promise we will receive our reward and our new name.

Revelation 3:12- “The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall not go out any more; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God; and *I will write upon him* My new name.”

Amen.

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