

What is in a Name?

God confers great importance to the meaning and use of names. His Name alone is of the highest importance. He never mixes words on naming persons or things and He always calls them what they are.

Lucifer was a cherub, was the “bringer of light.” In the Hebrew, Lucifer was, “Helel,” which meant the “shining star of the dawn.” But when Lucifer rebelled and was filled with pride and vanity, he became an enemy to God. When he was cast down out of Heaven, God changed his name to, “Satan,” which means “adversary.”

Throughout the Bible, when we discuss name meanings, they are usually more than just a designation or title. The names are often related to a character or destiny and purpose in God’s grand design. The names can be related to a person, a region or area, or a group of people and not necessarily a single individual. When God would change someone’s name, it was often a change in their life’s direction or calling.

Abram became Abraham and the “father of many nations.”

Genesis 17:4-5- “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. Neither shall your name any more be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.”

One of the biggest changes came upon Jacob. The meaning of his name was “supplanter.” This was because he replaced Esau in the position of inheriting birthrights.

Genesis 27:36- “And *Esau* said, “Is he not rightly called Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times—he took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.” And he said, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?”

But later, Jacob had his name changed to Israel when he prevailed with God.

Exodus 32:27- “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.” His new name of Israel means “one who prevails with God.”

In the case of Moses, his name means to be “drawn out” as he was drawn out of the water by Pharaoh’s daughter.

Exodus 2:10- “And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses. And she said, “Because I took him out of the water.”

God then used Moses to *draw* Israel out of their bondage in Egypt. He received the Ten Commandments from God on Mt. Sinai (**Exodus 20:1-17**).

Continuing with an Old Testament prophet, Elijah, in Hebrew his name means, “YHWH/Jehovah is my God.” Elijah was used by God in mighty ways. He stood up against King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. He even brought a young boy back to life.

1 Kings 17:20-22- “And he cried to the LORD, and said, “O LORD my God, have You also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn by slaying her son?” And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried to the LORD, and said, “O LORD my God, please let this child’s life come to him again.” And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child came into him again, and he lived.”

The purpose of words is to communicate and convey meaning. We humans tend to overcomplicate things, especially the Word of God. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew. The references to the Name of God in the Old Testament Hebrew may confuse some people today as to Who we are speaking of. God is not a God of confusion.

1 Corinthians 14:33- “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”

YHWH, Yahvah, El Shaddai (Almighty God), Elohim, or even in the New Testament, “Yashua, Yehoshua” for Jesus Christ might blur and cause confusion for those seeking Biblical knowledge. We use the names of God in whatever language we are speaking so the people of that language will understand and receive the message we are trying to convey. If we are to share the word of God and proclaim the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we cannot cloud meanings and cause misperceptions. Keeping things simple yields easier understanding.

Take the example God used in sending Moses to Pharaoh. Moses was concerned about what to tell the Pharaoh of who sent him. God’s reply says it all.

Exodus 3:13-15- “And Moses said to God, “Behold, *when* I come to the children of Israel, and shall say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they shall say to me, ‘What *is* His name?’ What shall I say to them?” And God said to Moses, “**I AM THAT I AM.**” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘**I AM** has sent me to you.’ “And God said to Moses again, “You shall say this to the children of Israel, ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This *is* My name forever, and this *is* My title from generation to generation.’”

The name, “I AM,” is known as the Tetragrammaton, in case you are ever on Jeopardy. That in itself sounds like nuclear carnival ride.

“I AM” is the ultimate statement of sovereignty, of self-sufficiency and self-existence and omnipotence. God made it clear that His existence is not dependent or contingent upon anyone else or anything. He states that what He wills, will be. He is eternal, ever-present, and unchangeable. We know that God never changes **(Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8).**

By God identifying Himself as “I AM WHO I AM,” He is saying no matter where or when, He is there. This is stated again in Revelation in similar wording.

Revelation 1:8- “I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* Ending,” says the Lord, “Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come—the Almighty.”

When Moses and Aaron delivered the message to Pharaoh, he was not impressed.

Exodus 5:1-2- “And afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Let My people go that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.’” And Pharaoh said, “Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.”

Blinded by his own pride and arrogance, the Pharaoh refused and the plagues soon fell upon Egypt. It took the death of Pharaoh’s son to finally let the people go.

Exodus 11:4-5- “And Moses said, “Thus says the LORD, ‘About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt. And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sits upon his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl that *is* behind the mill; also the firstborn of beasts.’”

Exodus 12:31- “And during the night he sent word to Moses and Aaron saying, “Rise up! Get away from my people, both you and the children of Israel! And go serve the LORD, as you have said.”

I am amazed at how blind and dumb people can actually be. Here we have a Pharaoh who witnesses all these events and the plagues first hand, and he still chooses to pursue Moses and the fleeing Nation of Israel to destroy them. Even after seeing a pillar of smoke and a pillar of fire, and the Red Sea parting, he still went after them. God having hardened Pharaoh’s heart and being blinded with pride and arrogance, Pharaoh failed to realize the magnitude of Who he was dealing with. It cost him his life and the lives of his army.

Exodus 14:27-28- “And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea. And the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared. And the Egyptians tried to flee from it. And the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the middle of the sea. And the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. There did not remain so much as one of them.”

Pharaoh, like us today, stand in opposition to God. We want to do things our way and not yield to God’s way of life or even to obey His Commandments. We want to

worship Him “our way.” God is “The Great I AM,” but we humans incessantly want to be our own “I am.” This is evidenced by the number of denominations and so called “Christian Churches” that have very little to do with the actual worship of God or remotely obeying His word. Even when we are faced with the evidence, we are doing it wrong, we are so full of ourselves we continue on a path to destruction.

God is The ONLY One who can describe Himself as “I AM.” There is not one of us, no matter how much we think we are, completely self-sufficient. Not one of us is omnipotent nor omnipresent. Our greatest hope lies in our surrender to The Great I AM and relinquish our claims of sovereignty, pray for God’s grace and mercy upon us, and acknowledge our total dependence upon Him.

Jesus never used the terms in Hebrew as the New Testament was written in Greek. His Name was made clear at the beginning of the New Testament.

Matthew 1:1- “*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham:*”

From the very first book of the New Testament and the very first chapter and verse, the Name of Jesus Christ was set forth. The Name above all names.

Philippians 2:9-11- “Therefore, God has also highly exalted Him and bestowed upon Him a name which *is* above every name; That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *beings* in heaven and on earth and under the earth, And every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord to *the* glory of God *the* Father.”

Hebrews 1:4- “Having been made so much greater than *any of* the angels, inasmuch as He has inherited a name exceedingly superior to them.”

Jesus used the words “I am” numerous times throughout the Gospels. He was describing His actions and intentions. He was not referencing Himself all the time as being One with the Father. However, He did so in one instance addressing the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus referred to Himself as I AM.

John 8:56-58- “Abraham your father was overjoyed to see My day; and he saw it, and rejoiced.” Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not even fifty years old, and You have seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.”

This, of course, enraged the Pharisees as they felt His comments were blasphemous.

John 8:59- “Then they picked up stones to throw at Him. But Jesus concealed Himself and went out of the temple, passing through the midst of them, and in this manner departed.”

Jesus also referred to Himself as “I AM” to His disciples when He was foretelling them of His betrayal by Judas Iscariot.

John 13:19- “I am telling you at this time, before it happens, so that when it does happen, you may believe that I AM.”

Apparently, the people of Jesus’ day were as bright as the Pharaoh and his army. Jesus referred to Himself as “I AM” in the Garden of Gethsemane when they came to arrest Him.

John 18:1-10- “After saying these things, Jesus went out with His disciples to a place beyond the winter stream of Kidron, where there was a garden into which He and His disciples entered. And Judas, who was betraying Him, also knew of the place because Jesus had often gathered there with His disciples. Then Judas, after receiving a ***band and officers*** from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with torches and lamps and weapons. Jesus, therefore, knowing all the things that were

coming upon Him, went forward and said to them, “Who are you seeking?” They answered Him, “Jesus the Nazarean.” Jesus said to them, “I AM.” And Judas, who was betraying Him, was also standing with them. But when He said to them, “I AM,” they went backward and fell to the ground. Then He asked them again, “Who are you seeking?” And they said, “Jesus the Nazarean.” Jesus answered, “I told you that I AM. Therefore, if you are seeking Me, allow these to go their way;” So that the saying might be fulfilled which He had said, “Of those whom You have given Me, not one of them have I lost.” Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And the servant’s name was Malchus.”

I never realized just how many men came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. **John 18:3** records that there was “a band of men” in the Garden that night that came to arrest Him. The Greek word for “a band of men” is *spira*. This word describes a military unit, typically numbering between 300 and 600 soldiers. These were well equipped soldiers armed with the weapons of the day. The scripture also states that they were accompanied by officers of the chief priests and Pharisees. The Greek word for “officers” is “huperetas” which had several meanings for the times, but in this instance, it referred to the Temple guards or “police” who worked on the temple grounds. They were responsible for executing

judgments (warrants) issued by the religious court of law. They reported to the Sanhedrin, Pharisees, and the chief priests. These “officers” accompanied the Roman soldiers to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In looking again at **John 18:4-6**- “Jesus, therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forward and said to them, “Who are you seeking?” They answered Him, “Jesus the Nazarean.” Jesus said to them, “I AM.” And Judas, who was betraying Him, was also standing with them. But when He said to them, “I AM,” they went backward and fell to the ground.”

By saying to those seeking to arrest Him, “I AM,” He knocked 600 men to the ground. How is that for power in a Name!?! How dumb would you have to be not to take notice to what had just happened? In addition, Peter drew a sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, a chief priest’s servant, only to have Jesus heal it and put it back on! I would have turned in my sword and found another line of work.

Luke 22:50-51- “Then a certain one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus answered and said, “That is enough!” Then He touched his ear and healed him.”

I guess they did not have any sort of I.Q. test to become a Roman soldier or temple guard in the day...but are we any smarter today? We too, forget the magnitude of Who it is we are worshipping.

There is great power and authority in the Name of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:10- “Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarean, Whom you crucified, but Whom God has raised from the dead, by Him this man stands before you whole.”

Proverbs 18:10- “The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.”

There is no other Name by which men can be saved.

Acts 4:11-12- “This is the Stone that was set at naught by you, the builders, which has become the Head of the corner. And there is no salvation in any other, for neither is there another name under heaven which has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”

We know in the end times many will come in the Name of Jesus but they will be false prophets and false teachers. We have been told numerous times throughout scripture. Sunday churches and T.V. preachers abound with false prophets, false teachers, and doctrines.

Matthew 24:4-5- “Then Jesus answered *and* said to them, “Be on guard, so that no one deceives you. For many shall come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ;’ and they shall deceive many.”

They will come in His name and claim to have His authority but in reality, they will be liars and frauds. But the closer we draw to God and grow in His word, greater awareness will be given to us through His Holy Spirit and the less likely we will be deceived.

We have been given power and authority in the Name of Jesus Christ to do His will as His ambassadors to proclaim the Gospel.

Colossians 3:17- “And *in* everything—whatever you do in word or in deed—*do* all in *the* name of *the* Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and *the* Father by Him.”

1 Corinthians 9:14- “In the same way also, the Lord did command that those who preach the gospel are to live of the gospel.”

Zechariah 13:9- “And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call upon My name, and I will answer them; I will say, ‘It is My people;’ and they shall say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

When we pray, we make our supplications and ask God the Father in the Name of Jesus Christ. Our prayers are measured in our faith. God the Father is glorified in the Son.

John 14:12-14- “Truly, truly I say to you, the one who believes in Me shall also do the works that I do; and greater works than these shall he do because I am going to the Father. And whatever you shall ask in My name, this will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”

John 16:23- “And in that day you shall ask Me nothing. Truly, truly I tell you, whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give you.”

We can know God and Jesus Christ by many names. Everlasting Father, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Creator, Savior, Prince of Peace, Righteous Judge, The Light of the world, The Truth, The Way and The Life, and others. We need not be as concerned knowing the Names of God as much as we should be having the love, reverence, and respect for Who He is and what He does. We need as well to be concerned with Him *knowing us* by our spiritual condition in the likeness of His Son.

Matthew 7:22-23- “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name? And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name? And *did we not* perform many works of power through Your name?’ And then I will confess to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness.’”

Luke 13:26-27- “And you shall begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You have taught in our streets.’ And He shall say, ‘I tell you, I do not know you or where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of unrighteousness.’”

Unquestionably, God knows everything and everyone. But we want Him to know us personally and intimately. We want Him to see His Son Jesus Christ in us. We

do not want Him not to recognize us when that time comes. Keeping His Name is simple, God is Love, Salvation, Hope and Peace, and a way of life for those who truly love and know Him by Name. Amen.

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