

What's in a Name?

By: Lenny Chapman

I can remember while growing up my parents explaining to me the importance of the family name. Because I was quite young the idea did not make a lot of sense. As I grew, I began to realize the importance of this lesson. Having children of my own, I always tried consistently to instill this same lesson in them. My children continue learning this lesson as they make their own way through adulthood. While growing up, the older siblings unknowingly helped the younger as they paved the way by being good students and well-liked by the faculties. As the younger children moved up grades, often they were placed with some of the same teachers as the older children had. They were “joyfully” welcomed by the repeat teachers.

Solomon wrote, *“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold,”* (Pro 22:1). What a powerful statement. We all make choices by the minute, and with each decision made we are either strengthening or weakening our name. Through the years I have found that those who are of good reputation and good moral character are those who find themselves on the stable and sometimes even “fast track” when it comes to their career. Employers are thrilled to have a good, honest, dependable person on the payroll. They often say that these character qualities are the most important, because the knowledge and experience can be taught with time. The Ecclesiastes writer put it very plainly when he wrote, *“A good name is better than precious ointment,”* (Eccl 7:1).

Spiritually, one needs to put on the good name of a Christian. The word Christian means to be “Christ-like.” This responsibility should not be taken lightly. Basic steps are necessary before one can become a Christian. One must first hear the Word. Jesus set this in place when he told the apostles to *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:15-16). In the same passage we see that one must also believe the truth that has been preached. Once this occurs a public confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is to be made along with repentance, (which is a turning away from the current sinful way of living), and then one **must** be baptized before they are added to the Lord’s church. We see this in Acts 8, as Philip taught the Ethiopian eunuch, *“So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him... Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.”*

As a Christian we are a representative of the Lord’s church. It is the pure, good name of the church we now taint with every wrong we commit in a public or private nature. The church is to stay pure and unblemished. As a Christian, it is our duty to protect the church’s good name. Society looks at “church going” people one of two ways: either as one who is honest and true in their worship and commitment to God, or as a hypocrite. It saddens me to say, there are way too many hypocrites in today’s religious realm. Jesus taught, *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”* (Mat 5:14-16). We need to continuously let our light shine as a good example to others, thereby protecting the good name of the Lord’s church. It is also our duty and reasonable service as Christians to bring glory and honor to both God, and His church.



So, what’s in a name? Today when expecting parents choose names for their newborns, why are names like Judas and Jezebel not being chosen?