

Chardon Christian Fellowship
Home Fellowship Lessons
Names of God

Lesson 1: Is a name important?

LEADER GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

(be sure to look at the accompanying STUDY GUIDE after you review this lesson plan)

Understanding the names of God will inform you of His character and how His name is expressed in the Old and New Testaments. This will help you in your reading/study of the Bible, interpreting scripture, and understanding the power in the Name of God.

Are names important? Well ... how many folks do you know with the following names:

Ichabod - the name means “no glory, inglorious, ‘where is the glory?’, ‘the glory has departed” (**1 Samuel 4:21**); the grandson of Eli and the son of Phinehas.

Adolf – rarely used since WWII (not a Biblical name)

Lucifer – from the Latin *lux ferre* meaning “to bring light”; Lucifer is a King James Version “English” translation of לִלְיָהּ in **Isaiah 14:12** (no longer used).

Merodachbaladan - a King of Babylon (**2 Kings 20:12**)

Perhaps the question is “*Do names have a meaning?*”

Proverbs 22:1 *“A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, favor is better than silver and gold”* (New American Standard Bible, NASB)

This verse speaks to the idea of what have you brought to your name:

- 1, a good name earns the trust of people;
- 2, the reputation you make of your name echoes throughout history (how about names like Genghis, Adolf, Mao, Abraham);
- 3, with a good name, people will be devoted to you.

LESSON

A. Key understanding of God’s name

We will look at a verse in the Bible that describe the name of God.

Exodus 20:7 *“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.”* (NASB)

This verse is powerful in the simplicity of its message. A lot has been written about this verse, some stating that it focuses and supports a moratorium on swearing, bearing false

witness, or not shaming God with your behavior, to name a few; however, the meaning of this single verse goes deeper than the above mentioned actions – it actually points to the heart behind the actions.

Let us first look at the names of God that are used in this verse:

Exodus 20:7 *“You shall not take the name of the LORD (YHWH) your God (Elohim) in vain, for the LORD (YHWH) will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.”* (NASB)

Stepping back, the word ‘name’ is mentioned twice, and in both cases it is **His** name that is referenced, first as YHWH and then as Elohim. The first observation is that the verse is focused on **His** name, and taking His name in vain.

Regarding ‘vain’ in this verse, it is the English translation of the Hebrew word *shâv*’ (שָׁו). Throughout the Old Testament (53 times), *shâv*’ is interpreted as meaning: emptiness, nothingness, vanity, falsehood. The root idea of *shâv*’ is what is groundless or unsubstantial (thus, in a material sense it means unreal or vain), and in a moral sense it denotes what is empty, frivolous, or insincere.

Examples of *shâv*’ are (the English translation for *shâv*’ is underlined, and some additional information is provided in the brackets; all verses are NASB):

Exodus 23:1 *“You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. [groundless report; falsehood]*

Psalm 12:3 *May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that speaks great things” [insincerity]*

Psalm 24:3-4 ³ *Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? ⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully. [unreality; insincerity]*

Psalm 41:5-6 ⁵ *My enemies speak evil against me, “When will he die, and his name perish?” ⁶ And when he comes to see me, he speaks falsehood; His heart gathers wickedness to itself; When he goes outside, he tells it. [emptiness; this is what an enemy does, tell falsehoods with no substance]*

Psalm 60:11 *O give us help against the adversary, for deliverance by man is in vain. [in a material sense, this is unreal or vain]*

****Leviticus 19:11-12** ¹¹ *“You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. ¹² You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD. [you are not to desecrate the Name of God by having a moral failure of lying; when we, who represent God, tell lies we dishonor or desecrate His name].*

Jeremiah 7:9 *“Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after other gods that you have not known,” [you are not to desecrate*

the Name of God by having a moral failure of lying; when we, who represent God, tell lies we dishonor or desecrate His name].

Jeremiah 27:15 *“for I have not sent them,” declares the LORD, “but they prophesy falsely in My name, in order that I may drive you out and that you may perish, you and the prophets who prophesy to you.”* [God specifically bans predicting the future, unless He specifically gives someone a prophetic calling and word (examples Genesis 20:6-7; Jeremiah 1:1-3; 1 Samuel 3:2-19)].

Zechariah 5:3-4 *Then he said to me, “This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land; surely everyone who steals will be purged away according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears will be purged away according to the writing on the other side. ⁴I will make it go forth,” declares the LORD of hosts, “and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name; and it will spend the night within that house and consume it with its timber and stones.”* [you are not to desecrate the Name of God by having a moral failure of lying; when we, who represent God, tell lies we dishonor or desecrate His name].

Malachi 3:5 *“Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,” says the LORD of hosts.* [you are not to desecrate the Name of God by having a moral failure of lying; when we, who represent God, tell lies we dishonor or desecrate His name].

An outstanding quote regarding **Exodus 20:7** is the following:

“God’s name is to be treated with reverence: it is not to be desecrated either by false swearing or by being used disrespectfully for any other frivolous or idle purpose, as in cursing or reviling; or to support false pretensions of being able to use magic or divination, or to predict the future.” - Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.

This quote succinctly sums up the attitude of many scholars: a heart that does not know God, respect God, fear God, or love God is in danger that when using His Holy Name, that is, using it in a frivolous and/or false manner, that person will not go unpunished. A believer should not ever have an attitude of irreverence or frivolity with thoughts or words regarding His Holy Name. He is jealous regarding His Holy Name and how it is used.

Regarding having an unholy or frivolous thought about God, and the consequence of the thought, look what Job did “just in case” ...

Job 1:5 ⁵ *When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, “Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did continually.* (NASB)

B. What does God say about your name?

The Bible has a lot to say about YOUR name.

(1) First of all, the verses above (section A) point out that you can bless or disrespect God based on the reputation of your name. Do you “*shâv*’ “, that is, do you make false testimony (are you a liar?)?

(2) We are to eagerly strive to have a “good name”, that is, a name that does not have any accusation against it.

Proverbs 22:1 *“A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, favor is better than silver and gold”* (NASB)

(3) There is something important that must happen to your name. We will look to the Bible to get the instructions.

In Luke chapter 10, Jesus sent out seventy, and when they returned He said to them after they reported regarding casting out spirits ...

Luke 10:20 *Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.* (NASB)

When we become a Christian, and our sins are forgiven based on the Blood of Jesus as our propitiation, He records our name in heaven. This is further explained in the epistle to those in Philippi:

Philippians 4:3 *Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.* (NASB)

And emphasized in Revelation ...

Revelation 3:4-5 *But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.* (NASB)

Revelation 20:11-15 ¹¹ *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* (NASB)

Revelation 21:27 *and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.* (NASB)

APPLICATION

There are two key challenges that this lesson raises:

(1) Do you or the members of your group use God's name vainly? This could be with a profane expression, or through action that discredits God's name in the eyes of the world. Perhaps challenge your group to take heed and change any wrong habits.

(2) Are all of the folks in your group saved, that is, are their names recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life? Perhaps pray through the **Revelation 20:11-15** verses as a closing prayer.

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References

All Bible quotes are from New American Standard Bible, Lochmann Foundation

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