

What's in a name?

The short answer is nothing. As believers we have made a huge deal of the names that we give our children as if little Sarah or little Joseph will be like the famous characters of the bible simply because they share a first name. We often scoff and people who give their children non-biblical or, in our sometimes narrow eyes, carnal names because it seems like the “world”. We are so busy trying to distance ourselves from the human race and trying not to be like everybody else that in the end we have become just as weird, twisted and carnal as the people we hope will be saved and converted. We have begun to think that another badge of Christianity is naming our boys Peter and Paul and making sure that our daughters are named after ever obscure women in the Bible no matter if we are familiar with them or not. Grandparents are overjoyed that their unsaved son names his child Zechariah or Amos and forget that he doesn't know who they are or what they did but thinks the name are cool and sound good. I don't know about you but I have been treated just as rude in stores, restaurants and churches by as many Matthews, Adams and Thomas's as I have by Billy's and Bobs. I don't notice the prison rolls being filled only by Judas' or Lucifer's. The names of saints are on as many prison cells as they are on Pastors office doors. These names have no effect on wealth, marriage, health or salvation. If a child is named Jezebel will that child take on her characteristics? If she is able to do that then it would be clear that every child named Esther or Deborah would have wisdom, beauty and boldness in leadership. They should be destined to greatness by virtue of having the right moniker right? No doubt many people will begin to search the text for the Abram to Abraham or Simon to Peter name changes that we see in the Bible.

This must prove that names have power right? On the contrary, a given birth name is a human endeavor enjoyed and cherished by family or friends that generally is never changed. When God changes a name it is due His decree and revelation of life purpose and not because of the feebleness or humanity of the first name. **Genesis 17:4-5 says as for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be ABRAHAM; for a father of many nations have I made thee.** The purpose is in the last line. At this point, Abram was a childless man whose name meant *exalted father*. His current name was a complete contradiction to his state. His name did not help his dream of fatherhood or fulfill his destiny. You will notice that God changed his name because his original name was based on his human condition and physical hope. The changing of his name was the changing of his focus from his desire to the much larger will of his creator. We become sons of God and receive the power of change through the same process. God was not trying to be stylish or witty but was trying to let Abram know that this was a change of focus and nature that was to be carried forever. This new name was to be as permanent as the covenant and revelations that were given to him. His name signified a promise that did not come from the limited hopes of a man but Divine providence and the sure Word of God. It was all about change and transformation from human moral hope for temporal goals to a predestined fulfillment of divine faith for the promises of an invisible God.

Romans 12:2 says, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye TRANSFORMED by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” A name is not meant to be good luck charm nor has the Word given supernatural power to any name but the name of Jesus Christ. God gave Abraham and Peter and Paul new names as symbols of the renewing of their minds and the eternal covenant that He was making with him. God was establishing them in the earth and it is customary, even today, for a Father who was adopting a child to rename the child in his own image and to place his own new aspirations upon the child. The new names were not because the old names were bad they simply were not His. **Isaiah 62:2 says, “and the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a NEW NAME, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.”** For those of us who believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, we are not only walking under the name and banner of Jesus Christ but have a precious promise of a new name that will perfectly reflect God's reason for bringing us into existence.