

## ***Name Changer is Game Changer***

Lesson 16: **February 26, 2015**—*influence*

A 2010 article in *Our Daily Bread* said, “The name—Louis **Braille**, Rudolf **Diesel**, Hans **Geiger** and Samuel **Morse** all have something that carries their name—a thing they discovered or invented. Their names are known for something! We bear the name of Christ—Christians!” Christ is in the name **Christian**, so the definition of a Christian should be one who is in Christ!

Be sure, God is the name changer and the game changer. In the Old Testament, Abram was renamed **Abraham**, and his wife Sarai’s name was changed to **Sarah**; Jacob became **Israel**—the nation God raised up to bring forth the Messiah (Christ in Greek), Hoshea was renamed **Joshua** by Moses (Numbers 13:16b “*Moses gave Hoshea, son of Nun, the name Joshua.*”) and Nathan renamed Solomon **Jedidiah** (2 Samuel 12:25 says because the LORD loved him).

The New Testament gives account of Levi becoming **Matthew**; Simon becomes **Peter** (Cephas in Aramaic—1 Corinthians 15:5-8); Saul changed to **Paul**, and the apostles changing Joseph to **Barnabas**. And we know that the name of every believer and follower of Christ—*disciple*—is renamed **Christian**! John 3:16 offers every person on earth the opportunity to believe in Jesus Christ—*Who* He said He is—and then not perish but have eternal life beginning in eternity past!

It’s very interesting that throughout the Bible we are told that someone’s name was changed. Often there is explanation as to ‘why’, but when there is not, we can be sure that there is good reason. Abraham was renamed so because he would be the father of many nations, and the same for Sarah—she would be our mother; Jacob was renamed Israel to indicate the birth of the nation belonging to Almighty God forever. But why Moses renamed Hoshea we can’t be certain.

There is the renaming that God did to Simon—calling him Peter (meaning rock)—and then Peter’s statement of *Who* Christ was and is that preceded the Lord saying that upon the ‘rock’ of that statement Christ would build His church. Levi the tax collector is called to follow Jesus and becomes Matthew, meaning ‘gift from God’. John 20:24 tells us that (doubting) Thomas (Aramaic for ‘twin’) was called Didymus (Greek equivalent). We’re not told why God changed Saul to Paul, but we are told that the Levite, Joseph, because he was so gifted with encouragement is renamed Barnabas—‘Son of Encouragement’!

We may ask: what is the point? God has a powerful, purposeful plan for each and every believer and **He will change us to prepare us for His plans!**

Famed Russian novelist and philosopher, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, while known to be religious but with no belief in salvation through faith, said, “The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for.” God created man and woman to live for Him—to live out His purpose for our lives and to follow His plan. Interestingly, God’s first purpose assigned to the first man He had created was for him to *name* all of the animals. “Naming things is one of the oldest and simplest of human pastimes. Children play at it with their dolls and toy animals,” said Henry van Dyke. “In fact, it was the first *game* ever played on earth, for the Creator who planted the garden eastward in Eden knew well what would please the childish heart of man, when he brought all the new-made creatures to Adam, ‘to see what he would call them.’”

**Here are some name-changing reversals**, and there will always be reversals in the work of God because Satan copies for evil effect: In Daniel we read that Nebuchadnezzar changed the names of the captured Hebrew children: from Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to Beltshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, to strip them of their faith. But the strong commitment of these God-honoring captives to the LORD of heaven did not change! The world will have ‘names’ for those who follow Christ steadfastly—like fanatic, Bible thumper, Jesus freak, etc. Christ taught us to **be in** the world but **not to be of** it in John 17:14-16 and Paul exhorted the same message in Romans 12:2.

In Acts 14:11-12 Paul and Barnabas were preaching and the crowd renamed Barnabas (Zeus) and Paul (Hermes—chief speaker) because they thought they were Greek gods. They even made plans to ‘worship’ them. But as soon as the apostles heard about it, they immediately humbled themselves and refused to be called those names or be idolized. Verses 14-15 record: “*But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: 15‘Men, why are you doing this? **We too are only men, human like you.** We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.’” To accept personal ‘adulation’ for our faith is idolatry: We must humble ourselves and not allow anyone to ‘overstate’ who we are as Christians, but rather point them to Christ!*

► God’s **Name** is to be revered: No name is given for the blasphemer stoned in Leviticus 24:10-14 “*Now the son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father went out among the Israelites, and a fight broke out in the camp between him and an Israelite. 11The son of the Israelite woman **blasphemed the Name with a curse**; so they brought him to Moses. (His mother’s name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri the Danite.) 12They put him in custody until the will of the LORD should be made clear to them.*

13“*Then the LORD said to Moses: 14‘Take the blasphemer outside the camp. All those who heard him are to lay their hands on his head, and the entire assembly is to stone him.’”*

We hear this in the world today—the cursing of, the blaspheming of, the making fun of God’s glorious Name, especially the blessed name of Jesus. Woe to those who practice this defaming of the *Name*—the only thing worse is if the one who practices this sin is a ‘Christian’! Be sure, just as Peter did, when a believer repents and turns from this sin, our Lord will forgive. But, be sure as well, that Peter probably never forgot his three-time cursing denial of Jesus.

**God’s Name is on Israel:** In the book of Numbers 6:22-27 “*The LORD said to Moses,* <sup>23</sup>‘Tell Aaron and his sons,’ “*This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:* <sup>24</sup>“*The LORD bless you and keep you; <sup>25</sup>the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup>the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.’* <sup>27</sup>“*So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”*”

God’s promise to David in 1 Chronicles 17:8—“*I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now **I will make your name like the names of the greatest men of the earth.***” And 1 Chronicles 17:20-21 records part of David’s response: “*There is **no one like you, O LORD,** and there is **no God but you,** as we have heard with our own ears. <sup>21</sup>And who is like your people Israel—the one nation on earth whose God went out to redeem a people for himself, and to make a name for yourself....*”

**July 2014,** the whole world is watching as Israel defends herself against Hamas in Gaza, one of many Islamic terrorist, Jihadist, bent-to-obliterate Israel—and Christians as well—groups. A news reporter said that while Hamas knows it cannot win this war with Israel, they plan to ‘win’ over the world’s sympathy for the Palestinian people being killed, and make Israel look like the aggressor. What has stunned me, personally, is that Israel has done everything it could, short of just not defending herself, to warn the Palestinian people when and where they are going to strike. They have been open to a ‘true’ cease-fire, but Hamas has not. Less than two hours into a 72-hour cease-fire agreement, Hamas entered Israel through a tunnel and one of their men blew himself up and killed two of Israel’s soldiers and the group kidnapped a third.

God is alert and aware—much more than we can imagine—because Israel is His nation, and we are His people, He will avenge! As the nations of the world turn their sympathies to those who want to annihilate Israel and Christians world-wide, **our God is standing.** And at the appointed moment, Christ will descend to the Mt. of Olives; He will defend Israel; He will annihilate and obliterate her enemies. **God will have the last word,** and it won’t be pretty; it will be planned and purposed! Remember, God spoke to Pharaoh (Israel’s enemy) in Exodus 9:16 said, “*But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”*”

Just before Samuel anointed Saul as the first king of Israel, he told Saul everything that would take place, saying in 1 Samuel 10:6 “*The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them, and you will be **changed into a different person.***” And verse 9 records: “*As Saul turned to leave Samuel, **God changed Saul’s heart** and all these signs were fulfilled that day.*” What exactly God did to Saul we do not know, but from Scripture we clearly understand that God changed him. Would that Saul had chosen to remain in that ‘changed’ position!

A later king of Israel, Solomon by name, proclaimed in Proverbs 21:1 “*The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.*” Remember that the LORD spoke to Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7:14a saying, “*If **my people, who are called by my name...***” God was calling His people to humility, prayer and repentance, but He was letting us all know that He has His people, which include Jacob renamed Israel and believers renamed Christians, and He spoke to us way back in the Old Testament, even back in Genesis 35.

**We know when Israel got her name** in Genesis 35:9-11 “*After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him. <sup>10</sup>God said to him, ‘Your name is Jacob, **but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.**’ **So he named him Israel.***

<sup>11</sup>“*And God said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A **nation** (Israel) and a **community of nations** (true Christians everywhere) **will come from you**, and kings will come from your body.*” Jacob poured out a drink offering on a stone pillar and put oil on it and Scripture says he “*called the place where God had talked with him Bethel*”. Amazingly, we know also where we got our name—**Christian**—Christ meaning Messiah in Greek—though He didn’t mention Christ, He foretold a “*community of nations*” that would be His people too.

The end of Acts 11:26 tells us: “*The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*” 1 Peter 4:16 reinforces: “*However, if you suffer as a **Christian**, do not be ashamed, but praise God that **you bear that name.***” It is made clear: we who follow Christ have been given His Name to bear. We are ambassadors and representatives of the Living Lord! 2 Corinthians 5:16-17 “*So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, **he is a new creation**; the old has gone, the new has come.*”

► **The three ‘name and game’ changes we want to understand include:**

- 1) Jacob to **Israel**—the **nation** of people chosen by God in the Old Testament to bring forth the Messiah in the New;
- 2) Simon to **Peter**—upon his statement of *Who Jesus is* became the foundation for the **church** founded and built by the Lord Himself, and
- 3) Saul to **Paul**—set apart for the great gospel of **grace**—declaring repenting, believing, receiving sinners to be saints by grace!

We can clearly see God changing the unbridgeable condition of human beings with Himself into a way to Him through His Son—the Way! Before we had ever sinned in the Garden of Eden, God had a plan to ‘bridge’ the gap through Jesus. We can maybe visualize a suspension bridge with the nation of Israel on one end; the founding of the church, and salvation by grace to Jew and Gentile alike through the atoning work of Christ on the cross on the other.

FYI: A suspension bridge is one of the oldest of engineering forms supported by anchors at either end and towers at intervals, and is a type of bridge in which the deck is hung below suspension cables on vertical suspenders. Two examples are: the age-old Brooklyn Bridge of New York City erected in 1883, and the newer Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco built in 1937. These bridges can be made to span 2,000 to 7,000 feet and in their simplest form are made from rope and wood.

O how much more impressive is the span God covered to *bridge* us back to relationship with Him after we sinned. Galatians 6:14-16 *“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. 16Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.”*

Believers have already had their names changed to Christian and the Holy Spirit is at work today to change us into the image of Christ, but more change is coming! In 1 Corinthians 15:50-52 Paul told the church—**we will be changed**—*“I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51Listen, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but **we will all be changed.** 52In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, **and we will be changed.**”* We will be changed and given a **new name** (end of Revelation 3:12)!

Spurgeon again, “In this world it doth not yet appear what we shall be. God’s people are a hidden people, but when Christ receives His people into heaven, He will touch them with the wand of His own love, and change them into the image of His manifested glory.” And in Hebrews 1:12 the author tells us about what will happen to the heavens and the earth that God created: *“You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment **they will be changed.** But you remain the same, and your years will never end.”*

“Are you on the eve of change?” asks pastor and author, Max Lucado. “Embrace it. Accept it. Don’t resist it. Change is not only a part of life, change is a necessary part of God’s strategy. To use us to change the world, he alters our assignments.” God is name changer resulting in a ‘game’ of life change!