

Title: What's in Our Name?
Date: August 5, 2018
Subject: Our names since we are followers of Jesus Christ
Scripture: Isaiah 7 & 8, Hosea 1 & 2

The VBS staff dealt with a lot of names this past week. I would occasionally intentionally mispronounce names like Ben-jam-in or call a kid by the wrong name. Or when switching locations I'd put a rhyming name after what I'd say like "time to move your feet, Pete." Some would laugh and retaliate in kind. Others scrunched up their face in a scowl. "I'm not Pete." Some kids don't like you to mess with their names.

There are parents who later in life wish they had given their children different names. I read where LeBron James, the NBA player who's nicknamed King James, wishes he hadn't named his oldest son after himself.

I think there were some kids in the Bible who may have wished that their parents would have chosen different names. The problem was the parents didn't pick the names but the Lord did. Kind of hard to tell him that he didn't do such a great job, especially since the parents are told that the kids will be signs and symbols to the people around them (Isaiah 8:18). People of the ancient world were much more in tune with the meaning of names. Today we don't really think about it so much. It's not like when someone says my name they automatically think "out of the dark water."

Such was the case with the children of Isaiah. READ 7:1-4.

Another account elaborates. The kings of Israel and Aram weren't able to overthrow the king of Judah but they were able to inflict heavy losses on the southern tribes. The Lord handed Ahaz over to the king of Aram who defeated him and captured many prisoners (2 Chronicles 28:5). At some point, on one day the king of Israel killed 120,000 soldiers of Judah (2 Chronicles 28:6).

Ahaz was scared. There was good reason for him to be scared. He was a wicked king who defied the Lord. He had defiled the temple and established the worship of false gods. The problem was that he wasn't scared of God, but just of human kings.

There was good news. Despite the heavy losses, he would not be totally defeated and removed from being king. This was the message of Isaiah and his son Shear-Jashub (sheh-awr'yaw-shoob'). His name means "a remnant shall return." Sounds like good news in that there will be a remnant. The problem is that in order for a remnant to return they have to have gone some place. That's not so good news.

But it really wasn't the concern of Ahaz as it wouldn't happen in his life time. That was often the way the kings treated bad news. If it wasn't going to happen while they were alive, who cares? They were only interested in their own hide.

The same is true today. People don't pay attention to warnings unless they are for the next moment. If it's for too far in the future, get on with life and hope that maybe it won't happen or someone else will have to deal with it.

Ahaz is provided with more information from the Lord. READ Isaiah 7:10-14. Do you find it surprising that the familiar words used at Christmas foretelling Christ's birth are in this kind of context? The king is told to ask for a sign but he refuses on what sounds like super spiritual grounds. The nation of Israel was punished for constantly putting the Lord to the test when they left Egypt. Ahaz proclaims he won't do it. He won't violate the Lord's command. It's possibly said with a sneer or with a huff as in "the Lord, why should I consult the Lord?"

The Lord was reaching out to the king but the king refused any sort of help. Isaiah provides the sign, rather, he says the Lord will give the sign. The virgin will give birth to a son who will be named Immanuel.

We revel in the Christmas message that "God is with us." God has come to earth in human form and hope is alive. It buoys our spirits. It cheers the heart. The immediate fulfillment was supposed to help Ahaz to know that the Lord could rescue him from his enemies, but he turned a deaf ear.

There's more as we turn the chapter. READ 8:1-10. This is the first fulfillment a child who would be called Immanuel. He would be born to Isaiah's new wife. The cry "O Immanuel" in v. 8 is a plea for the Lord to be with them during the difficulty. The overpowering invading Assyrian army would be like a mountain river at flood stage that sweeps up everything in its path.

It was part of God's judgment on Israel for their unfaithfulness with the Assyrian army being used as the Lord's tool. This doesn't exempt them from being judged by the Lord. They too would be shattered. All of these nations and people groups were judged according to their response to the Lord. The v. 10 expression of God's presence with them is a statement of vindication that the Jewish people were on the proper side, even though they themselves had been judged.

The name of the child is given differently earlier in the chapter. It's Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. How's that for a mouthful! I can imagine the other kids making fun of his name. Or simply mispronouncing it, but maybe that's the non-middle-easterner in my thinking. To them, it may have been as easy to roll off the tongue like Bob or Bill or Jean.

When Jean was in high school, people called her big Jeanie because there was younger Jean in the neighborhood whom they called little Jeanie. Jeanie babysat a 5 or 6 year old boy who had trouble pronouncing her name. He couldn't say big Jeanie. It would come out Bahseelio. Big Jeanie – Bahseelio. You say *potato*. I say *pubtabto*.

Maher's name meant "quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil." There'd be another reason to tease the poor kid. However discerning adults would get it. They'd understand as Isaiah's children were to be signs. He'd inform people that before the boy could utter momma or dada the northern tribes would begin to be taken into captivity.

That was the good news. The bad news was the implication that Ahaz and the southern kingdom would all too soon follow suit and be overrun by the Babylonians.

Isaiah wasn't the only prophet with children who were named by the Lord. One of the more notable families was that of Hosea and Gomer. Isaiah and Hosea lived at the same time. Though Isaiah was a prophet to the south and Hosea ministered in the north, I think they would have heard of each other as they seem to be the major spokesmen for God during their lives.

When it comes to Hosea, most of the attention is given to his marriage to the prostitute Gomer. It was a living illustration of the Lord's love for unfaithful people who prostituted themselves after false gods. Hosea was to time and again bring Gomer back even as the Lord time after time after time showed his love to Israel.

We want to focus on the three children of that marriage who were uniquely named by the Lord to again convey specific messages. The book of Hosea is at the beginning of the Minor Prophets just after Ezekiel, Daniel. READ Hosea 1:1-5.

Jehu rose to the throne by killing off all of Ahab's descendants. He was a little too overzealous in carrying out the Lord's directive to avenge the blood of his servants the prophets and of all his servants (2 Kings 9:6-10). Jehu also wiped out anyone loosely connected to wicked Ahab and executed the southern king and his family for good measure. Much of the blood shed took place in Jezreel. Five generations of Jehu's family reigned as king over Israel. His dynasty ended when his great, great grandson Zechariah was murdered. Hosea named the boy Jezreel during the reign of the next to last king as a warning that time was almost up.

The name of the next child is revealed in the next verses. READ Hosea 1:6, 7. Lo-Ruhamah. Not loved. Her name has a broader application intended for both nations. The Lord was running out of patience with the northern kingdom. They would soon be hauled away by foreign armies. The southern kingdom would be safe, for a while. He would continue to show his love and protect them, for a while. They would too quickly follow the pattern of their northern sister – unfaithfulness followed by judgment.

Lo-Ruhamah would have a little brother. READ Hosea 1:8, 9. Lo-Ammi. Not my people. “You aren’t my people and I’m not your God.” Just hearing those harsh words sends the chills down the spine. God was saying that it was over. There was no more hope.

But wait. There would be hope. The threats would be turned into blessing and a renewal of the Lord’s covenant. READ Hosea 1:10 – 2:1, 23. These words are for their distant future as the Jews would all be taken into captivity and wouldn’t be restored for a long, long time. Some did return from Babylon but it was only a small portion of what the Lord has in mind.

The promise is echoed in the New Testament where the restoration is extended to Jews and non-Jews. READ Romans 9:22 - 26. It’s the promise that comes through Christ that people of every race, nation and language can be part of God’s people, be loved by him and be his children.

Bounce ahead to 1 Peter. READ 1 Peter 2:9, 10. That’s good news with capital G-O-O-D N-E-W-S!

It’s a group thing. We can put our names into those promises, as can anyone who has placed their trust in Jesus Christ to deliver them from their sin problem and place them into a right relationship with God. It’s something to rejoice over.

One day 72 of Jesus’ disciples had returned from proclaiming the good news of Jesus. They were thrilled that the demons had submitted to them in the name of Jesus. The Lord stated he saw Satan fall like lightning from the sky and acknowledged he gave his disciples power over the enemy and protection from the same. However, he emphasized, “do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20).

Having our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life indicates we are citizens of the kingdom of God. We have all the rights and privileges of being the king’s kid. One of the letters to the seven churches of Revelation includes the promise that Jesus will give a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it (Revelation 2:17). The stone with the new name is regarded as a birth certificate or admission ticket. Another promise is given that the overcome will never have his name blotted from the book of life but Jesus will acknowledge his name from the Father and his angels (Revelation 3:5).

The promise of a new name on a white stone seems to have inspired the song “A New Name in Glory.” Catchy words and tune. “I was once a sinner, but I came Pardon to receive from my Lord: This was freely given, and I found That He always kept His word. There’s a new name written down in glory, And it’s mine, O yes, it’s mine! And the white robed angels sing the story, A sinner has come home. For there’s a new name written down in glory, And it’s mine, O yes, it’s mine! With my sins forgiven I am bound for Heaven, Never more to roam” (C. Austin Miles).