

What Name Should We Wear?

Many people have been heard to say “there is nothing in a name.” Of course, when they make such a statement, they only have religious issues in mind. Other matters are excluded. For example, who would dare name his newly born son, “Fido,” or name his daughter “Jezebel?” Who would appreciate his wife wearing the name of another man? Who wants to work long hours and then receive an unsigned check as wages?

God brought the beasts of the field before Adam that he might **name** them, Gen. 2:19. God named Adam, Gen., 5:2. God changed the name of Abram to Abraham, Gen. 17:5, of Sarai to Sarah, Gen. 17:15, and the name of Jacob to Israel, Gen. 32:28. God, through the prophet Isaiah, prophesied that after the Gentiles had seen His “*righteousness*,” His people would “*be called by a new name*,” Isa. 62:2. Obviously, then, with God, there is something in a name!

But what religious name should we wear? I believe in methods, so should I call myself a Methodist? I believe in baptism, so should I call myself a Baptist. I believe in having presbyters (elders) in each local church, so should I call myself a Presbyterian? I believe in Jesus of Nazareth, so should I call myself a Nazarene? I believe the church was established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), so should I call myself a Pentecostal? I believe in being holy, so should I call myself a Holiness? I believe in “witnessing” for Jehovah by sharing His message, so should I call myself a Jehovah Witness? I believe the church should be catholic (or universal), so should I call myself a Catholic? Since I believe in all of the things just mentioned, should I call myself a Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Nazarene, Pentecostal, Holiness, Jehovah Witness, Catholic? In brief, what name (or names) should I wear religiously?

Referring back to Isaiah 62:2, we learn that God said **He** would give His people a “*new name*” after the Gentiles had seen His “*righteousness*.” In Acts 10, we read of the conversion of Cornelius and his household, all of whom were Gentiles. In the very next chapter we discover that “*the disciples were called **Christians** first in Antioch*,” Acts 11:26. The words “*were called*” are from *chrematizo* (Greek) which is defined as “to give a divine command or admonition, to teach from heaven” (**Thayer’s Lexicon**, p. 671). Hence, the disciples at Antioch (a largely Gentile church) were divinely “*called Christians*,” which means this was a name given by the mouth of the Lord. Thus we have the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah which spoke of the time when “*the Gentiles*” would see the “*righteousness*” of God, a time when God’s people would be called by “*a new name*,” a name which Isaiah said “*the mouth of the Lord shall name*,” Isa. 62:2.

Yes, in Acts 11:26 “*the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch*.” Later, King Agrippa said to Paul, “*Almost thou persuadest me to be a **Christian***,” Acts 26:28. What was Paul trying to persuade Agrippa to become — a Baptist?, a Methodist?, A Jehovah Witness? A Presbyterian?, etc, etc.? No, my friend, Paul, an inspired apostle of the Lord, sought to persuade Agrippa simply to “*be a Christian*.” Elsewhere Paul taught

that we should wear the name of Him who was crucified for us, and in Whose name we were baptized, I Cor. 1:12-13. And the apostle Peter wrote, saying, “*if any man suffers as a **Christian**, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter,*” I Peter 4:16.

“*Christian,*” in the Bible, is always used as noun, never as an adjective. The “*disciples*” at Antioch were not different kinds of Christians; they were simply “*Christians.*” Countless religious names have been coined by uninspired men after the days of inspiration were completed, All these names are divisive; they are unauthorized, and they reflect a dissatisfaction with God’s arrangement. We must not weave a Bible command (such as “*baptize*”) into a distinctive party or denominational name. We should simply be **Christians**, and strive to live so as to glorify God in that name.

*** —Bobby Witherington

Four Mistakes of the Rich Fool

By Wayne S. Walker

In Luke 12:13-21, Jesus relates the story of the rich fool. This man had gained his wealth in a legitimate manner. He was not a thief or a swindler, but an honest farmer. Still, he was called by God a fool, because he made four serious mistakes.

Number one, he failed to recognize the true gauge of life’s worth. He was concerned only with his fruits and goods, thinking his physical prosperity was a measure of his value. But Jesus teaches that “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,” and “The life is more than meat and the body more than raiment” (verses 15 and 23). Rather, He exhorted His disciples to “seek ye the kingdom of God” (v. 31). As this rich man pondered over his wealth, he forgot that God created human life and it is He Who determines the measure of its worth, not man. We need to remember that God has not made material success the measure of a man’s real worth, but has given him a higher yardstick — the perfect law of liberty, the divinely inspired word.

Second, he failed to see the true and good use of his surplus. His only worry was where to lay up his goods for himself. There are very few of us who do not keep a savings account of some kind. Why? Most would say to provide for the needs of our families, to have some of the finer things of life, or to prepare for an emergency or old age; and these reasons are all fine. But the Bible gives another one. “Let him that stole steal no more, but let him labor, working with his hands that he might have to give to those in need.” (Eph. 4:28),. The Bible teaches that there are a number of ways a Christian can use his prosperity in the service of God to further the cause of the Lord. While the rich farmer was trying to decide what to do with his surplus, he forgot that God is the giver of every good gift, and that man is only a steward of these blessings. We ought not to be selfish like this fool; but as Christians use that which we have to help others and do good.

Again, he failed to understand the nature of true joy. He said to his soul, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” It was his belief that joy stemmed merely from enjoying physical goods, but the Bible

teaches differently. Truly, Christians are to rejoice. There is no picture in the scriptures of the Christian as a long-faced, downward-looking individual who views life as a deprivation, but rather as a vibrant, enthusiastic person who looks at life as a means of praising God. But notice where Paul places joy: "Rejoice always in the Lord: and again, I say, rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). Christians rejoice in spiritual things rather than in material things. When one who makes his material goods his sole source of joy must leave them, or they leave him, his joy disappears because he no longer has his source of joy. This fool forgot that God is the source of all true joy. Let us rejoice in the Lord and not only in the things of this life for they are fleeting and cannot give the everlasting joy God offers through Jesus Christ.

Last he failed to recognize the limited tenure of human life. It is possible that he had dismissed the thought of death from his mind entirely and tried to pretend his days were unnumbered. However, the Bible teaches that "it is appointed to a man once to die." Each one shall come to the end of his earthly life someday. Even if this fellow had given consideration to death, he evidently put it in the far future and felt assured of a long life to enjoy the fruits of his labor. But he was wrong, for God told him, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." No one has the right to count on future life, since James says our lives are like a vapor which appears for a little while then vanishes away. The subject of this story forgot that God gave life, and He alone has power over it, even to take it away at any time. We ought not to make this same mistake by counting on length of days, or even tomorrow, for such may never come. Rather, let us realize the brevity of life and the necessity of working the works of Him that sent us while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.

The parables of Jesus are rich in wonderful teaching, on how to live life and serve our Maker to please Him. The parable of the rich fool is a lesson aimed at keeping us from trusting in this life, its affairs and possessions. It is a lesson we need to learn so badly in this present, materialistic age.

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