

Disciples: Believers Who Have Awakened Ears and Awakened Tongues

Discover Your Spiritual Identity: The Revelation of the Names and Titles God Has Given His People

The title “disciples” is the most used name for God’s people in the New Testament. In contrast, the term “believers” only appears twice, while the term “Christians” is only found three times. But the word “disciples” surfaces 256 times in reference to the sons and daughters of God: one time in the Old Testament and 255 times in the New Testament (KJV). What should our conclusion be? God’s emphasis should be our emphasis.

To be a disciple means to be schooled in the Word, by the Spirit, in the deep things of God. It means always striving to reach “the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). Evidently, the word “disciple” is the root of the word “disciplined,” so those who accept the call to be “disciples” must be ready and willing to “discipline” themselves in order to be in alignment with God’s Word, God’s will and God’s purposes for their lives—regardless of the cost.

There are three main definitions of a “disciple”:

- One who is trained or taught: a student.
- One who aspires to be like his teacher: a follower.
- One who accepts, and assists in spreading, the teachings of another: an adherent.

Just one authentic disciple can impact the world more powerfully than a thousand believers who are minimally

religious. No wonder Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19).

An Old Testament Mystery Unveiled

There is an intriguing, hidden mystery surrounding the one time "disciples" appears in the Old Testament. Ironically, it wasn't even referring to God's people in that era. Instead, the prophet Isaiah was foretelling certain characteristics that would be associated with "disciples" in the New Testament age. Here's the original verse:

"Bind up the testimony; seal the law among My disciples" (Isa. 8:16).

To **"seal the law"** meant to bring the law (the Torah) to a place of fulfillment—in other words, roll up the scroll and put a seal on it because a new era is about to unfold (which is exactly what happened when Jesus finished his earthly journey and ascended into heaven).

To **"bind up the testimony"** could mean to safeguard the words of the Messiah by recording them for future generations, in order to perpetuate His cause (because the "testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10; see Rev. 1:2, 9; 12:17)).

But there's more.

Two verses later, in a continuation of the prophetic declaration, the Lord spoke through Isaiah:

"See, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts who dwells in Mount Zion" (Isa. 8:18).

We know this verse is a reference to New Covenant disciples because the first part of it is quoted as proof of that very thing in Hebrews 2:13. So apparently, one reason God raises up "disciples" is for the purpose of manifesting "signs and

wonders” (the manifestation of the supernatural that advances God’s kingdom and validates Jesus’ claim of being the Savior of the world). In these dark times spiritually, we need this—because dry, ceremonial forms of Christianity can never bring the kind of spiritual awakening that births radical change in people and society as a whole.

Going Deeper

The profoundness of the revelation goes even deeper when we examine the original Hebrew. The word translated “disciples” is *limmud*, which is from the root word *lawmad* that means to stick with a goad (a pointed stick that a shepherd uses to prod sheep the right direction). A good example of this symbolic connection is Ecclesiastes 12:11:

“The words of the wise are like goads ... given by one Shepherd.”

When Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, thousands were gripped by his message—as he proclaimed that the Messiah who was crucified had risen from the dead. Like a shepherd, Peter “goaded” that “flock of sheep” in the direction of the cross. In describing their reaction, Acts 2:37 says:

“They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’”

In other words, they were stuck with the “goad” of God’s wisdom prodding them in the right direction to find true salvation (see Paul’s conversion story also—Acts 9:4-5). But there’s an even deeper truth to be discovered.

The Spiritual Awakening of a Disciple

Though *limmud* is translated “disciples” only once in the Old Testament, it is also translated twice as “learned” in Isaiah 50:4 (NKJV):

“The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned [Heb. limmud], that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to hear as the learned [Heb. limmud].”

You could easily render this verse, “The Lord GOD has given me the tongue and the ear of a disciple.” What would that mean?

A true disciple, because of a consistent commitment to truth, is sensitive to the voice of the Lord and guidance of the Holy Spirit—an awakened ear.

A true disciple, because of consistent communion with God, is prophetic and powerful, someone who knows what to say and when to say it (“a word in season”) to bring forth change—an awakened tongue.

Such inspired individuals become conduits of kingdom influence wherever they go—something the world desperately needs in these chaotic times.

Further Teaching on the Subject of Our Calling to Be Disciples

Many claim to be “Christians,” but true, dedicated “disciples” are rare. Yet this is the most used title for believers in the New Testament. Jesus did not say, “Go and make believers of all nations.” He said, “Make disciples.” There is a big difference. Prepare to be challenged!

Ten primary signs of a true disciple are found in Jesus’ teachings. These are some of the most challenging declarations the Savior ever made to His followers. Those who truly act on these divine directives become world-changers and history-makers. {eoa}

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