

What's in a Name?

A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold. —**Proverbs 22:1**

Shakespeare's question "What's in a name?" would have been taken very seriously in the ancient Hebraic world, for the name was an indispensable part of the personality. It has been said, "Man is constituted of body, soul, and name." "As a man is named, so is he," so it was often claimed.

Often in the Bible we see the appropriate use of names. When Abigail sought mercy from David she said, "May my lord pay no attention to that wicked man Nabal. He is like his name—his name is Fool, and folly goes with him" (1 Sam. 25:25). The word Nabal means "fool." Abram was given a new name, Abraham, "the Father of Many Nations." Isaac literally means "laughter," because when Sarah overheard that she was going to have a child of her own, she laughed. Jacob means "supplanter," or "one who takes by the heel," but God changed his name to Israel, which means "one who perseveres with God."

Paul said that God has highly exalted Jesus and given to Him the name which is above every name. (See Philippians 2:9.)

There are certain questions that the use of this name raises, and the first of these is, "What precisely is that name that is above every name?" Now a very strong hint toward the answer to this is found by examining the actual phrase, "exalted to the highest place."

The meaning is "one who is" or "one who causes to be." "I am" means the "one who is;" "I am who I am" is the "one who causes to be." It was the ultimate revelation of God's name; a name than which no greater could be conceived. It was the name above all names.

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