

GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Genesis Lesson 10 (11:1-10; 27-32): Some Summary Thoughts:

Overview: Chapter 11 serves as a transitional benchmark in God’s plan to turn an aimless, wandering mass of humanity seeking self-gratification through attempts to secure fame in their own name to a new beginning – a human representative who God selects to become His agent of blessing. The unfinished tower and city stand as silent testimonies to their presumptive arrogance. Renewal will come, but not due to man’s efforts. God’s “NAME,” not man’s “name,” will become the foundation of His people’s future identity.

Authority in the “name”: In 2:19-20, Scripture provided our first introduction to the interrelationship between “name” and a sense of identity or character. . So, in Gen 2:19, Adam “names” animals.

- By virtue of authority he had in his own right, or bequeathed to him (in this case by God), Adam was given the privilege and responsibility to ascribe character traits upon the animal kingdom. In effect, he was allowed to dictate some parameters by which life is ordered, subdivided, and defined in recognizable elements. For in the conceptual world of Biblical ancient Semitic cultures, name and reality are interrelated.
- The “*Name of God*” also needs to be understood within this framework. Chapter four concluded its discussion of the arrogance of Cain’s descendants as it announced the birth of Seth with the hopeful note that “*At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD*” (4:26). “*Calling on the name of the LORD*” marked subservience, revealed submission to God, and was seen as being synonymous with establishing a personal relationship with Him. In Psalms 9:10, we read, “*Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.*”
- In Genesis 11:2, we encounter mankind who is described as having journeyed east (synonymous with moving away from God and no longer *calling on God’s name* or making themselves subservient to God). Instead, humanity is now intent upon attempting to make a “name” for itself (11:4).
- In 12:2, in complete contrast to the *nameless* builders of Babel (just how many of them can you name?), God will gift to Abram – the one He has chosen as His agent of blessing, not only just a name, but a *great name!* (one that the entire world remembers). In this and subsequent instances, one’s “name” describes specific attributes or character traits. A change in a person’s character, destiny, or status is marked by changes of name throughout Scripture. Thus, for example, we will read later that the Patriarch *Abram* (Hebrew meaning “*exalted father*”) will have his name changed by God to “*Abraham*,” Hebrew for “*Father of Multitudes.*” (Genesis 17:4f).
- Covenant descendants of Abraham will also become related to God by “name.” Jacob, in response to his request for blessing, will be renamed by God as “*Israel*” (one who strives with God) in 32:28.
 - Later, as the nation of Israel assumed its identity as a servant of the LORD, when the priest invoked God’s blessing of grace and peace on the people, by instruction of God through Moses, he was enjoined to “*put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them*” (Numbers 6:27).
 - The “*name of God*” was thought to have power inherent in itself; thus, the Jewish strict obedience of the third commandment not to take the name of the Lord in vain (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11).
- In His covenant relations to Abraham, the People of Israel, and to us, “God” reveals Himself as the fullness of our creator “*Elohim*,” (Gen 1:1) the redemptive and all-mighty power “*El-Shaddai*,” (Gen 17:1) the possessor of heaven and earth “*El-Elyon*,” (14:18) an assured presence in covenant “*YHWH/Jehovah*” (Gen 2:4; Ex. 6:2) – the great “*I AM.*”
- In the New Testament, the early Christian Church was first described as “*those that call on this [Jesus] name*” (Acts 9:21). Jesus links Himself to God’s Covenant “*I AM/ YHWH*” name in His own revelation of Himself: “*Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am!*” (John 8:58). In each revelation, God demands a response from man to Him that can be best summed up as submission, obedience, and faith. With Him, IN HIS NAME, (in His Power and Authority), we are everything. Apart from Him, we literally are nothing. Perhaps the most noteworthy for our consideration is found in Ephesians 1:19-21 where we read that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly places, “*far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.*”

Bottom Line: Scripture tells us that the name we wear (and the one given to us by God is “*Christian*”) both shapes and reflects our character. To attempt to make any other “name” for ourselves is both totally “unfruitful” and of no value as we, like Abram, “journey” forth in our lives.