

FTB 54 Names have Meaning.

A while back I wrote a newsletter (FTB #41) telling you that in Genesis 5 the names that are listed tell the Gospel story. This newsletter is very similar, however, now we will look at the names of the Tribes of Israel as they are ordered in Genesis and in Revelation.

Today, we often name our children because we like the sound of the name, this wasn't the case in the times of Scripture. Names had meaning and they were often prophetic of the person's life and purpose. For example, Methuselah was the oldest man that ever lived, claiming 969 years on earth. His name seems to be a marker of sorts. It means something like, "when he dies, it comes." Interestingly, the very year of Noah's Flood was the year Methuselah died. This tells us one of two things: Either Methuselah was a bad person and died in the Flood, or his death served as a marker to indicate the time that the Flood would come. Because of his name, I am prone to accept the latter and his name was prophetic to his life. Perhaps we today shouldn't just name our children because it sounds nice but rather name them with prayer and careful consideration. I'm not saying that every case your child will fulfill a specific prophecy, but rather that we should consider the importance that a name carries. Proverbs states, "The proud and arrogant man—'Mocker' is his name' he behaves with overweening pride" (Prov 21:24). Clearly we throw out names to describe people, so why wouldn't we try to describe the character of who our child should be? We also see that, "A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold" (Prov 22:1, see also Ecc 7:1). Obviously, this isn't talking about the name itself, but that your reputation you develop that brings honor to your name is more precious than treasures. Likewise, we are to bring glory and honor to THE Name! We see many examples of this in Scripture. Consider the following:

- 3 John 7 "It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans."
- 1 Peter 4:14 "If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."
- Acts 5:41 "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name."
- Phil 2:9-10 "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow"

Jesus was given the name "Yeshua," which means, the Lord saves. Certainly He fulfilled His Name. It is no coincidence that we don't have a lot of Jezebels running around today. Deep down we must know that names mean something, yet our culture and desire to be in vogue keep us from truly taking hold of the importance of a name. Be assured that all the Bobs, Mikes, and even Joes or Matthews will one day receive a new name. God promises us that to "him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it" (Rev 2:17). Also, to "him who overcomes I will

make a pillar in the temple of My God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the Name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from My God; and I will also write on him My new Name” (Rev 3:12-13). Here we see that not only will we receive a new name, but Yeshua does as well. God told us that his name was “beyond understanding” (Judges 13:18). This means that the name has meaning, we just can’t understand the full glory of its meaning.

With all of this said, I would like to examine the names of the 12 tribes, understanding that we won’t grasp all of what God had intended for them, however, I do believe a general picture can be seen that tells the history of Israel. As we look at the names listed in Genesis in order of birth this is what we see:

Gen 29:32: Reuben “Because the Lord has seen my misery.”

Gen 29:33: Simeon “The Lord has heard.”

Gen 29:34: Levi “attached or joined to.”

Gen 29:35: Judah “this time I will praise.”

Gen 30:6: Dan “God has vindicated me.”

Gen 30:8: Naphtali “Had a struggle and won.”

Gen 30:11: Gad “Good Fortune.”

Gen 30:13: Asher “How happy am I.”

Gen 30:18: Issachar “God has rewarded me.”

Gen 30:20: Zebulun “to be exalted or honored.”

Gen 30:24: Joseph “May the Lord add another.”

Gen 35:18: Benjamin “Son of my right hand.”

Keep in mind that these names were given before Christ came. If you just put the names together we see a general story line emerge: Israel was born into persecution, slavery and isolation, therefore, “Because the Lord has **seen my misery** He **has heard** and joined **or attached Himself** to us. This caused Israel to **Praise** God who **vindicated** them. They had been in a great **struggle** but won and now had **good fortune** causing them to **be happy**. God **rewarded** His chosen people with the promised land, **exalted** them above all nations so that He **may add another** blessing, the **Son of His right hand**, Yeshua, the Messiah.

Again, there may be some different ways of looking at this, however, in general we can see the history of Israel told in these names. Interestingly, the names are listed in the book of Revelation (7:5-8) as well. This time, however, they are in a different order and there are some differences as well. Dan and Ephraim are left out while Joseph and Manasseh are added. I won’t get into all of the reasons for this right now, however and one must wonder why the order is different. Consider this order and see how the message might change by reading the meanings on the right as if it were one paragraph:

Judah Praise the Lord

Reuben He has looked on my affliction and
Gad has granted good fortune.
Asher Happy am I.
Naphtali, My wrestling
Manasseh has made me forget my sorrow.
Simeon God hears me,
Levi He has joined me,
Issachar purchased or rewarded me,
Zebulun exalted me by
Joseph adding to me
Benjamin the Son of His right hand.

These names give the history of the Gospel. We can *praise* the Lord because He has seen the **affliction** of His people. God looked down and granted them **good fortune** as He always took care of them so that they could be a **happy** and chosen nation. However, they **wrestled** with God and turned their backs on Him. However, this wrestling will bring them to repentance and cause them to return to the Lord as Romans tells us will happen (Rom 11:25). They will **forget their sorrows** as God hears their prayers once more when He has **joined** the Gentiles to the covenant tree through purchasing **and rewarding** those who by faith believe on His Name. God has **exalted** us by seating us with Him in the heavenly realms (Eph 1:20). This was all done by **adding to us**, the one who is seated at the **right hand of God**.

Once more we see the story of God's salvation through His Son Jesus Christ. For that may we all live up to the name of Judah.