The Name Game

(by Luke Moyer)

Names are a peculiar facet of God’s creation. From the beginning, names were not necessary. “Adam/Man,” “Woman/Eve,” and “God” are merely descriptions of who they are: “Dust,” “From Man/Mother,” and “God.” The primary objective of a name is to refer an audience to the identity of the owner. Without a name, a person still is. God’s name YHWH wasn’t revealed to mankind for thousands of years. Two people of the same name are not the same identity, however. Names are markers which direct attention to identities.

The book of beginnings places a great deal of emphasis on names. The persons mentioned within are real identities. Sometimes their names are left out, but the identities remain. In **Genesis 11**, the people of the earth gathered together for a single purpose of building for themselves a great name. What name did they want to take on? Ironically, we do not have their collective “name.” But I suggest it wasn’t about the placeholder at all, but their identity. They wanted to be defined apart from God. God had previously defined who they were as a being. They decided to make for themselves a single name which disambiguates them from God. This is the first time man actively tried to separate from God. Adam and Eve still wanted to be in God’s presence, but without rules. Cain still wanted to be the center of God’s attention, but without responsibility. The people of Noah’s day were just indifferent, thinking only about themselves. In each of these cases God had removed His identity from them. But in **Genesis 11** mankind tries to remove their identity from God.

What was their purpose? They were seeking the glory of their own identity. In this they had severely fallen from God’s character. God does not act for His own sake, but for the good of others. The first motivation God has in creating mankind is to duplicate His image or identity in a limited form. How did this differ from those in **Genesis 11**? Jesus as Creator sought to glorify the Father. As a part of that the creation is blessed abundantly. The Father in turn glorifies the Son and has grace on all His creation. For us to be in God’s image is a blessing. To take His name on ourselves is grace and privilege. This is far from the motivations of mankind who act to serve themselves.

The result of the human attempt to glorify self identity led to the scattering of nations. Much like the Gospel crushes all nations, God scattered all people in judgment. What is the very next thing we read about? A genealogy of names which leads to one man, Abram, whom God will give a great name and use to bless all nations. God wants us to be unified by one identity. But we ought not glorify and promote our own name. The promise to Abram wasn’t even about his identity. It was about unifying all nations back through the seed, into the name and identity of our Creator: Jesus Christ.

A lot of people today go to great lengths to “find themselves,” or establish a legacy. There is no greater legacy found than in the infinite identity of God Himself. You are individually important to God with the opportunity to have your name inscribed upon the book of life. He acts to help and bless us. We, in turn, need to act to bless and glorify Him. No name we make for ourselves can compare with being known by the Father. So, call yourself by His name, but more importantly, live with His identity upon you. Then people will see you as a placeholder and direct their attention to glorify God.

**Another Word from Isaiah**

(by Kevin Heaton)

Isaiah wrote, ***"Let me sing for my Beloved my love song concerning His vineyard: My Beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; He built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and He looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between Me and My vineyard. What more was there to do for My vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?"*** (**Isaiah 5:1-4**). He then said ***"For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant planting; and He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!"*** (**Isaiah 5:7**).

Isaiah said that the Lord planted the people of Israel, made them the nation they were. He came to them seeking good fruits of righteousness that they were supposed to be producing. But instead He found wild fruit, rotten fruit, sinful fruit. They did not produce the fruits of God but rather fruits of the world. Therefore, God was going to punish them and destroy them. From this we can learn that God has planted His people today. He expects us to bear fruits of righteousness and not fruits of this world. Consider these two passages:

**Luke 3:8**, ***"Bear fruits in keeping with repentance."***

**John 15:1-8**, ***"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples."*** What kind of fruit are you bearing? Good or evil?