

NAMES in the Book of Revelation

The Significance of Names

A name represents the person (or object) that is named. In many cultures, it will also tell us something about the person himself, or about significant circumstances or events that may have occurred during his life. Sometimes a name might be changed when a significant event occurred, so that the new name would be a reminder of that event. Also, depending on the circumstances, a person might have more than one name.

- Examples of how names often revealed something significant: "Samuel" means "heard of God," for God heard his mother's prayers for a son - 1 Samuel 1:20; and "Ichabod" means "no glory," for the child was born at a time when the ark of God had been captured by the enemy and three prominent family members had just died.
- Examples of names that were changed: "Jacob" became "Israel" (which means "he struggles with God"), after he wrestled with God (in human form) - Genesis 32:26-28; the city of "Luz" was renamed "Bethel" (which means, "House of God"), because of a dream Jacob had, in which he saw God; and Daniel and his friends were given new names by their conquerors - Daniel 1:6-7.
- An example in which a person had more than one name: "Simon," "Cephas" and "Peter" all refer to the same person, in John 1:42.

A Modern Superstition

Today, there are some people who treat names in the Bible (especially names related to God) in an almost superstitions occult-like manner, as though the utterance of the syllables themselves had some type of magical quality. Some even think that such names must be uttered in the same exact way that they were originally uttered, in the original Hebrew or Greek languages. This is quite silly, considering the fact that we *don't know* the exact way people uttered those words at the time the Bible was written - we have no recordings of their voices! Linguists themselves *often* disagree on how vowels were pronounced in ancient languages - if they're even willing to guess. And this doesn't take into consideration the changes in pronunciation that can (and do) occur, as the centuries go by, or the dialects that may exist in different localities. Even the New Testament - originally written in Greek - testifies against this viewpoint, when it mentions the names of people in the Old Testament - originally written in Hebrew.

- Examples of this include: The Old Testament name "Joshua," which in the New Testament is "Jesus" (Hebrews 4:8); and the Old Testament name "Elijah," which in the New Testament is "Elias." (This is best seen in the 1611 King James Version of the Bible, for modern translations tend to harmonize the names, to minimize the confusion.)

This misconception can be dispelled when we realize that the important thing is what the word *represented*, not the syllables themselves.

Names in the Book of Revelation

In the book of Revelation, the concept of "name" occurs quite frequently, and for many reasons. A look at these verses is not only instructive of many things, but also shows the basic pattern of how the concept of "name" is used throughout the rest of the Scriptures.

A. The name of God

- 1. The value of God's name, representing God's worth**
 - It is worth revering/fearing, and those who do so will be rewarded - 11:18.
- 2. Some may reject God (his name), but eventually *all* will bring honor to it.**
 - The "beast" will slander God's name - 13:6.
 - Those who refuse to repent of their sins will curse God's name, when he sends judgment their way - 16:9.
 - The day will come that all will fear God - either in reverence (if they love God) or in terror (if they are his enemies). All will honor (glorify) his name - 15:4.
- 3. See also:** Section C-1, about God's names being written on his people.

B. The name of Jesus Christ

- 1. Some of his names, representing who he is**
 - Word of God - 19:13.
 - King of Kings and Lord of Lords - 19:16.
 - An "unknown name" (possibly representing a greatness that goes beyond our comprehension) - 19:12.
 - A "new name" (perhaps representing the special significance he has, in the lives of those who belong to him) - 3:12.
- 2. The value of Jesus' name, representing Jesus' worth**
 - It is worth suffering for - 2:3.
 - It is worth remaining true to - 2:13.
 - When a person is *unwilling* to deny it (when a person refuses to reject the one who is represented by the name), that person is worthy of praise - 3:8. [In this verse, Jesus praises people who did just this.]
- 3. See also:** Section C-1, about Jesus' names being written on his people.

C. Names received by God's people

1. Names written on them (signifying that they belong to God, etc.)

- The names of God and the city of God (the New Jerusalem) written on them - 3:12. [This indicates that they belong to God and that they are citizens of God's city.]
- Jesus' *new* name written on them - 3:12.
- The Lamb's name and the Father's name written on their foreheads - 14:1. [This passage focuses on a group of 144,000 people, who are described as standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion.]
- The name of "God and the Lamb" written on their foreheads - 22:4 (see v. 3). [This verse describes it as one name; in 3:12 and 14:1, two names (or more) are mentioned.]

2. A new name given to them

- A new name, written on a special white stone (perhaps signifying God's approval and their part in his kingdom) will be given to the "overcomers" - 2:17. [It is uncertain as to the identity of this new name. Is it a special name for the *individual*? Or could it have something to do with *God's* name, indicating their special relationship to him?]

D. Names identified with the New Jerusalem - the future home of God's people

1. Names written on the city

- The names of the tribes of Israel on its gates - 21:12.
- The names of the apostles on its foundations - 21:14.

2. **See also:** Section C-1, about the New Jerusalem's name being written on the inhabitants of the city.

E. Names, either being present in, or absent from the Book of Life

1. About the "overcomers," whose names *are* written in the Book of Life

- Their names will never be blotted out; rather, Jesus will acknowledge these people as belonging to him - 3:5.

2. About those whose names are *not* written in the Book of Life, specifically focusing on those who are alive at the time the "beast" is present

- They will worship the beast (all that he represents) - 13:8.
- They will be astonished by the beast - 17:8.
- Note: Even today, people whose names are *not* written in the book of life devote themselves to the types of things that the "beast" will one day promote (and represent).

F. "Names" signifying one's "reputation" (whether that reputation is accurate or false)

1. **An "unworthy" name:** The reputation ("name") of most of the people at Sardis (who were thought to be "Alive") did not match their actual character (which was actually "Dead") - 3:1. [They were to repent... or they would not be ready when Jesus returned - v. 2-3.]
2. **A "worthy" name:** This was true of only a few people ("names") at Sardis, who, unlike the others, would one day walk with Jesus - 3:4. [This would also be true of all other "overcomers" - see 3:5.]
3. **Note:** In these two verses, many translations will use the word "reputation" (verse 1) and "people" (verse 4), in order to better communicate the concepts that were a part of the original New Testament Greek word.

G. Names related to specific events in the book of Revelation

1. **Names given to (or associated with) various judgments**
 - The rider on the pale horse: "Death" (followed by "Hades") - 6:8.
 - The falling star: "Wormwood" - 8:11. [This name signifies bitterness.]
 - The king over the locusts, the angel of the Abyss: "Abaddon" or "Apollyon" - 9:11. [Both names mean "Destroyer." "Abaddon" is the Hebrew name, and "Apollyon" is the Greek name.]
2. **Names related to specific evil characters** (including characters which may be symbolic)
 - Blasphemous, insulting names on the heads of the "Beast" - 13:1. [The specific names are not given.]
 - Blasphemous, insulting names on the heads of the scarlet beast (which the woman sat on) - 17:3. [The specific names are not given.]
 - The name on the forehead of the woman who was seated on this scarlet beast: "Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth" - 17:5.
 - The name, number and mark of the beast - see Section G-3.
3. **The name, number and mark of the beast**
 - The mark of the beast, that is, his name or his number: it will be required for participation in the economy - 13:17. [Nobody will be able to buy or sell, without accepting everything that the beast stands for.]
 - Those who *choose* to receive the mark (which is the same as accepting everything that the beast stands for) will receive the eternal torment of God's justice - 14:11.
 - Those who *refuse* to receive it are described as being in God's presence and singing praises to him, just prior to the final judgments against the beast and his followers - 15:2. [This may suggest that they died because of their refusal to receive it. (See also 13:9-10.) In God's eyes, they were *victorious* over the beast (and all that he represents).]
4. **"Names" representing the people who died in one of the judgments** - 11:13.