

“That Worthy Name”

Have you ever wondered how we started using last names? Until the year 1100, most people in Europe had only one name. With an increase in the population, the main purpose was to distinguish people from one another. For instance, in the 13th century about a third of the male population was named William, Richard, or John. To uniquely identify them, people began referring to different Williams as William the son of Andrew (leading to Anderson), William the cook (leading to Cook), William from the river (leading to Rivers), William the brown-haired (leading to Brown), and so on. Eventually these surnames became inherited, being passed from parents to children.

God placed special significance on names. For example, He changed Abram’s name to “*Abraham*,” Sarai’s name to “*Sarah*,” and Jacob’s name to “*Israel*” (Genesis 17:5,15; 32:24-28). In James 2:1-13, James speaks of favoritism and he stated that when one shows favoritism, then it gives people the opportunity to blaspheme “*that worthy name*” by which we are called (vss. 6-7).

To God, one’s name reveals character. Isaiah 42:8 says, “*I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images*” (cf. Isaiah 48:11; 50:10). God has granted us the worthy name of “*Christian*” (Acts 11:26), and we should never be ashamed of the name. Will you obey the gospel and proudly wear that worthy name? Will you be careful to live in an obedient way so that worthy name will not be tarnished? Will you faithfully adhere to the authority of the New Testament so that false doctrine will not mar that worthy name?

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