

Prophecy and Names:

Session 4: Divinely Mandated Name Changes

- 3) Name changed by Yahweh/Jesus to cause atmosphere shift (Peter, Abraham, Sarah, etc.)

Scripture also gives us many examples of divinely mandated name changes. A name change signifies a transition into a new realm of authority and power. Abram's name was changed to Abraham prior to the birth of his son Isaac.

“Your name will no more be called Abram (Exalted father), but your name will be Abraham (Father of nations); for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.” (Genesis 17:5).

Jacob wrestled with the God-angel-man prior to his name change.

“Your name will no longer be called Jacob (Heel grabber), but Israel (Struggles with God); for you have struggled with our God and men and have overcome” (Genesis 32:28).

The meaning of heel grabber pointed to Jacob's nature of trickery which he often used to achieve his life goals. However, after this encounter, his name was changed to reveal his new nature. As Jacob, he struggled in the ways of man to get what he wanted, but as Israel, he struggled with his God to become an overcomer.

In the New Testament, Jesus changed the name of Simon to Peter as he declared the revelation of Jesus as the Christ. Jesus replied to Simon's Messianic confession:

“Blessed are you, Simon (One who hears and obeys) Bar-Jonah (Son of a dove), for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. I also tell you that you are Peter (Stone), and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:17-18).

Simon experienced a name change that prophesied his solid rock commitment to the declaration that Jesus is the Messiah. History confirms that Peter lived up to his name. Clement of Rome (35-99 C.E.) wrote, *“Peter... endured not one or two but many labors, and at last, having delivered his testimony, departed unto the place of glory due to him”* (1 Clement 5:4). Peter died delivering testimony of the Christ, like a cornerstone on which a building is built.

We also see where some meanings of names convey a negative connotation. The Hebrew name “Miriam” or often translated “Mary” comes from the root word “mara” which means bitter. For instance, two women named Mary remained with Jesus during his entire crucifixion (Matthew 27:56). So, we see that those named Mary have the ability to stand with others through times of suffering.

The story of Jabez was made popular by author Bruce Wilkerson in his best-selling book, *The Prayer of Jabez* several years ago. The book describes someone who caused his mother much pain in birth. Unfortunately, his mother chose to mark him

forever with the remembrance of that hard day by naming him Jabez. As a result, anytime his name was spoken, he was reminded of the pain he caused his mother. But one day, he cried out to our God to break the curse put upon him by his name. As he prayed, the blessing of our God was released and he was freed from one “bringing sorrow.”

“His mother named him Jabez (Bringer of sorrow), saying, ‘Because I gave birth to him with sorrow.’ Jabez (Bringer of sorrow) called on the God of Israel (Struggler with God), saying, ‘Oh that you would doubly bless me and enlarge my border! May your hand be with me and may you keep me from evil that I may not cause pain!’ And our God granted him his request” (1 Chronicles 4:9-10).

There are almost 4,000 different proper names throughout the Bible and in each name, we discover a story. As we incorporate interpreting the meanings of names of people, you will discover the mystery and wonder as you encourage those to whom you are speaking. Biblically it is understood that names are powerful and point us in the direction of our destiny. If we can discover the meaning of our name, we can better understand the purpose of our life. Remember, Zechariah’s mouth was opened when he declared a name and Lazarus rose up at the sound of his name.