

“Identity”
Series, “*What’s in a Name?*”

6/13/10

9 & 10:45 am

INTRODUCTION

Last week we began a new series, “*What’s in a Name?*”

We saw that names reveal something about the person.

We saw how God’s names reveal Who He is and what He is like. We saw that God’s names and titles reveal He is about having a relationship with us, one where He displays His complete commitment to us, and calls us into a relationship where we love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Today we’re going to see that the Bible teaches that names also reveal identity; and identity answers the question, *Who am I?*

Now be sure to notice that we’re asking the question “*Who?*” not “*What?*”

So, if someone were to ask, “Who are you?” you wouldn’t answer, “I’m a carpenter.” That’s *what* you do. It is something you do to make a living.

By asking “*who?*” we focus on personhood and that leads to relationships—who we are identified with.

Today we’re going to see that **Names Reveal Identity**, answering the question, “Who am I?” *really*

I. Physical Identity

OPEN to Genesis 2:7

A. Human identity

We all began with Adam and Eve.

READ Genesis 2:7 “**The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.**”

Genesis 2:18, 21-24 “**The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’**”

21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, He took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh.

22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, and He brought her to the man.

23 The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called "woman," for she was taken out of man.'

24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

Genesis 4:1-2 "Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.'

2 Later she gave birth to his brother Abel."

That's where it all began, and there is continuity of that genealogy to all of us, today. This is clear from Luke 3:23-38 where we find the human side of the genealogy of Jesus, starting with his step-father Joseph, and working backwards to the point of absolute origin in v. 38: "... **the son of Adam, the son of God.**"

All people, regardless of the color of their skin, the language they speak, their culture, or the land they were born in, share a common origin.

We're all the children of Adam and Eve and in that sense, our identity as human beings goes back to the same set of parents.

Who am I, really? I'm a child of Adam and Eve.

Next, we find ...

B. Family identity

In the Bible we often find someone identified in relation to their father.

Five of Jesus' disciples are identified in this way:

Simon, son of John (John 1:42, 21:15, 16, 17)

James and John, sons of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21)

James son of Alphaeus (Matthew 10:23)

Judas son of James (Acts 1:13)

In the lists of family connections that fill the Bible (genealogies), fathers' names are listed first, the son follows:

Matthew 1:2 “Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.”

So, we see that names reveal something of a person’s identity—their family tree.

II. Spiritual Identity

A. Human identity

Genesis 1:27 “So God created man in His Own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

We find our beginning in being created by God, and in His image ... thinking, feeling, creating, relating

Being made by God in His image is the point of origin of who we *really* are ... *our identity*.

ILLUSTRATION

“Influenced by Darwinian evolution through our educational system, many people think of themselves as just a little higher than the animals.

They have in their minds a picture of something we’ve seen in natural history museums and text books: little jumping creatures, developing until they eventually become apes who are humped over with knuckles dragging, and finally standing erect. When we see the final ape looking similar to us, we are told, ‘This is your heritage. This is where you came from.’

And if we believe it, we think of ourselves as just a little higher than the animals. And our identity is rooted in ape-dom and “primordial soup.”

When a society believes that, and not that they originated from God’s Own hands, that society moves steadily to putting man in the center of everything instead of God.

But, the central statement of Scripture about humanity is that we are made in God’s image. We are not just *a little higher than the animals*, but “*a little lower than the heavenly beings*” (Psalm 8:4). That’s a big difference! *And it’s a radically different identity!*

B. Family identity

OPEN to Ephesians 3:14-15

The most frequent family term used to describe the identity of Christian people in the New Testament is “**children of God.**”

For the Christian, God is our common Heavenly Father.

And as with our common physical identity in Adam and Eve, our language, culture and color have nothing to do with our spiritual identity with God as our Heavenly Father.

Every Christian is equally and fully His child.

READ Ephesians 3:14-15 “**For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from Whom His whole family in Heaven and on Earth derives its name.”**

This is saying that the **whole family in Heaven** ... from all those who have a relationship with God beginning with Adam and Eve, who are now living in Heaven ...

... to those who are God’s children now **on Earth** ...

... this whole family **derives its name** from the Father.

*What is that **name**?*

We used to sing a song, “*He is my God, He is my Father, His name is my name, too.*” (Lin Sexton and Tom Payne wrote this)

This verse is using “**name**” in the sense of *identity*; i.e., the whole family **derives its identity** from the Father ...

... once we are in relationship with Him, we are family and so our identity comes from Him, He is our Father in Heaven, and that makes us His children; children of God.

1 John 3:1 “**How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”**

Now, please get this: Being a child of God is not “just” our “spiritual” identity ... it is our **actual, very real identity from the core of our beginning, being made in the image of God to being adopted by the Father through faith in Jesus!**
Children of God is who we are!

This identity is **now**, and will last **forever** into and throughout all of **eternity**.

It supersedes all other identities: being a part of humanity, a national identity, even a personal family identity, e.g. being an “Estes.”

APPLICATION POINTS

So, what does that mean that I’m a child of God?

How does that identity play out in our lives?

1. We can talk to our Father in Heaven on a very personal level, one that is close, treasured, safe:

Romans 8:15-16 **“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’”**

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

“*Ab*” is Hebrew for “*Father*.” “*Abba*” is “*Daddy, Papa*”

This is the same way Jesus prayed, “**Abba, Father ...**” (Mark 14:36)

2. He lives within us now

John 14:23 **“Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.’”**

3. He coaches us

Hebrews 12:5-7a **“And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you,**

6 because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son.’

7a Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons.”

The word “discipline” can also be translated “training.” God, as a good, loving Father, trains us for our good, our benefit. He trains us because He loves us too much to simply leave us to our own ways, and the pain that goes with it.

4. We will receive an inheritance in Heaven:

Galatians 4:7 **“So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.”**

Romans 8:17a **“Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.”**

When we accept God’s invitation to re-enter a relationship with Him through Jesus, that relationship is re-established, and we enter into and realize our original and true identity.

It’s not “just” a spiritual identity, it is who we are, and this identity will last forever;

It is this identity that should define how we see ourselves now...

ILLUSTRATION

There was a lady who was the result of an unwanted pregnancy.

“Her mother was a prostitute, and she was the unintentional byproduct of her mother’s lifestyle.

Although her life’s journey had brought her to faith in Christ, blessed her with a deeply Christian husband and beautiful children, and given her a life of love and stability, she was obsessed with the need to find out who her father was. This obsession was affecting her marriage, her family and her life.

“She told how one day she was standing at the kitchen sink, washing the dishes, with tears of anguish and frustration running down her face into the dishwater. In her agony she cried out, ‘Oh, God, who is my father?’ Then, she said, she heard a voice saying to her, ‘I am your Father.’

The voice was so real she turned to see who had come into the kitchen, but there was no one there. Again the voice came, ‘I am your Father, and I have always been your Father.’

“In that moment she knew the profound reality that deeper than the ‘accident’ of her conception was the eternal purpose of a loving God, Who had spoken her into being before the foundation of the world.”

(M. Robert Mulholland Jr., Invitation to a Journey (IVP, 1993), pp. 35-36)

- If you lose your employment, you have lost a job, you have not lost your identity. You are still a child of God.

- If you lose your home, you have lost the place where you lived, you have not lost who you are. God is still your Father and your Father promises to provide for His children.

- If you don't get the scholarship you were hoping for, you have not lost your identity. You are still God's child, and His purpose for your life cannot be thwarted.

- If the human relationship you treasured most comes to an end, your identity has not been lost. You are loved with an everlasting love by your Father in Heaven.

John 1:12-13 "Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God - 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

CONCLUSION

Have you been "born of God?" Have you received Jesus into your life? Have you surrendered your life to Him, entrusted your life to Him?

Embrace your identity as a child of God not just as "the spiritual part" of your life, but as the entirety of who you are!

"Father in Heaven, thank You for forgiving me, accepting me and making me Your child! Please help me to see and adopt this as my true identity. In Jesus' name, Amen."