

## AFTER HIS OWN NAME

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A person's name is important. Names have meaning, and a person is identified by his name for his entire life. Because of this, some nations have strict rules concerning what a parent may name his child. Three years ago, a judge in France would not allow parents to name their child *Nutella* because, he said, it would lead to "mockery and disobliging remarks." Mexico has banned the name *Robocop*, but only after one child was given that name. In Sweden, government officials objected when parents wished to name their child *Metallica*. The Puritans gave their children unusual, but meaningful names, names like No-merit, Sorry-for-sin, and Kill-sin. Praise-God Barebone named his two sons If-Christ-had-not-died-for-thee-thou-hadst-been-damned and Jesus-Christ-came-into-the-world-to-save. Some names are significant, not because of their meanings, but because of their associations. One would think that no one would name his child Hitler, yet thirteen years ago that is exactly what one New Jersey man did. Some have named their daughters Jezebel. It is acceptable for parents to name a child *Joseph* or *Peter*. It is not acceptable for them to name their child *Messiah*, as one couple from the state of Tennessee wished to do. A judge forbade it, stating, "It's a title that has only been earned by one person ... Jesus Christ." (Katy Steinmetz, "From Messiah to Hitler, What You Can and Cannot Name Your Child, *Time*, August 12, 2013) A person's name is important because it says something about him. A man's name is his reputation. Darrah Brustein, in an essay in *Forbes* magazine asks, "What form of currency never fluctuates with the market?" Her answer: Your reputation. (Darrah Brustein, "10 Simple Ways to Improve Your Reputation," *Forbes*, January 28, 2014) The Scriptures say, "A *good* name *is* rather to be chosen than great riches, *and* loving favour rather than silver and gold." (Proverbs 22:1) As Iago told Othello (Acts 3, Scene 3):

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,  
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.  
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;  
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;  
But he that filches from me my good name  
Robs me of that which not enriches him,  
And makes me poor indeed.

God is great. He is the greatest thing that exists, and His greatness is without measure. David exclaimed in the Psalms, "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." (Psalm 8:1) God wishes for the world to know His greatness. He wishes for them to know His name. God made His name in the world especially by the Exodus. Before the Exodus, He told Moses, "When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go." (Exodus 4:21) God would do this to make a name for Himself. Before He sent upon Egypt the seventh plague, He spoke to Pharaoh through Moses, saying, "And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to shew *in* thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." (Exodus 9:16) God did destroy Pharaoh, and people still tell the story. Although God had many times proven Himself to Israel, they were often unfaithful to Him, and their hypocrisy gave the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme. Through the prophet Isaiah, God said to them, "My name continually every day *is* blasphemed. Therefore my people shall know my name." (Isaiah 52:5, 6; Romans 2:24)

David was a good man. God said he was a man after His own heart. (1 Samuel 13:14) His heart was perfect before God, and he "did *that which* was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." (1 Kings 15:3-5) That lapse in David's character led to the collapse of his kingdom. David took Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and she became pregnant by him. To cover up his sin, the king made certain that Uriah, one of his greatest warriors, was killed in battle. He tried to keep the matter secret, but it was bound to become known. Those whom the king sent to bring Bathsheba to him must have suspected. Joab, who by David's order arranged

for Uriah to die, surely knew why. After the death of Uriah, the king married his widow, and a few months later she gave birth to his child, and the whole nation must have suspected. How far beyond Israel the rumor flew it is difficult to say. When Nathan finally confronted David, he told him that his sins had given occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. (2 Samuel 12:14) Because of the scandal, faithless men complained, saying that there is no justice with God. David sinned privately, but God would shame him publicly, so that men might learn not to blaspheme. Nathan told David that, as a consequence of his great sin, the child Bathsheba conceived by him would die in its infancy. Moreover, through the prophet, God said to David, “Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst *it* secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.” (2 Samuel 12:11, 12) God had promised to make David a house, but, because of David’s sin, God would bring upon him calamity from within his own house.

After this, David’s kingdom, which he had fought so righteously and valiantly to build, began to fall to the ground. His sin did not cause the decay, but rather occasioned the uncovering of the rot, rot which had remained hidden so long as his position as king was strong. When he was exposed as a hypocritical sinner, his esteem with the people was weakened, and his enemies took full advantage of his vulnerable position. David loved his sons, but some of his sons had no love for him. David’s son, Amnon, lusted after Tamar, his father’s daughter, although the law forbade him have her. With the aid of his cousin, Jonadab, he contrived to have his father, the king, send Tamar to him, that he might be with her, and David, unaware of his sons designs, did send her. Tamar resisted Amnon, so he forced her. Then, after satisfying his lusts, he cruelly rejected her. When Absalom, her brother, found out what Amnon had done to her, he began to plot, not only his revenge upon Amnon, but his dethroning of the king, who had done nothing to punish the villain.

After the passing of two years, when David and Amnon believed the matter of Tamar to be behind them, and so were not on guard, Absalom had Amnon assassinated. Absalom, now a murderer, fled for sanctuary to Geshur, where he lived in safety for three years. David sought to bring Absalom to justice, but his purpose was thwarted. After the passing of time, he was consoled concerning Amnon, and so gave up the pursuit. Absalom, for his part, never let go his desire to overthrow his father, the king, and take the throne for himself.

Although David had named Solomon as his successor, Joab, commander of the armies of Israel, was concerned that Absalom, then the eldest son of the king, had a claim to succession. Joab was concerned that the kingdom might descend into civil war. He was, therefore, for the succession of Absalom, and not of Solomon, and he took pains to have David be reconciled to his son. To that end, he sent a woman to tell the king this story:

I *am* indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead. And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and *there was* none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him. And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband *neither* name nor remainder upon the earth. (2 Samuel 14:5-7)

No doubt, Joab wished for David to be reminded of Cain and Abel, and how God protected Cain from retribution. After the woman secured from the king his promise of protection for her son, she drew a parallel between her tale, and the matter of Amnon and Absalom. If the king would have protected the surviving son of her story, then he must surely agree to protect his own surviving son, Absalom, and so ensure that Absalom’s name would continue in Israel. The king was persuaded, and so he recalled Absalom to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the king refused to see his son, and so for two years Absalom existed in a sort of limbo, not condemned, but not pardoned. As Absalom could not, in this state, gain favor with the people, he had Joab arrange a reconciliation. After they were reconciled, Absalom began to conspire against his father, the king. When anyone from one of the tribes of Israel came to see the king for his judgment on a matter, Absalom would say that the king would not see him, and that he himself would judge, and he would treat the people, not as inferiors, but as equals. In this way, he won the hearts and minds of the people. Then he left Jerusalem for

Hebron until the time was right for him to strike. When word reached King David that the people followed Absalom, David and his court fled Jerusalem, and then Absalom came into the city and declared himself king.

Ahithophel, the father of Bathsheba's father, who had long been David's trusted counselor, aligned himself with Absalom. He advised Absalom to take to himself ten concubines that David left in Jerusalem to guard the royal palace. This act would make the breach between Absalom and David irreparable, and so strengthen the resolve of Absalom's followers. Absalom did as Ahithophel advised. A tent was spread across the roof of the palace, the very same roof from which David gazed upon Bathsheba. There Absalom took his father's concubines for all of Israel to see. When David learned that Ahithophel had joined the conspiracy, he prayed, "O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."

Ahithophel further advised Absalom immediately to attack David while his position was weak. However, Hushai the Archite, David's spy, advised Absalom to wait until he had a larger force. He gave this counsel so that David might have time to strengthen his position. After some consideration, Absalom and his men agreed with the counsel of Hushai the Archite. The Lord answered had David's prayer. The Scriptures say, "The LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom." (2 Samuel 17:14)

When the two factions finally met in battle, David's men slaughtered twenty-thousand of Absalom's men, and even more died after fleeing into the woods. Thus David's men secured the victory. Absalom, the usurper, fled into the woods on a mule, the traditional ride for a king. As he fled, his hair caught on the branches of a great oak tree, and the mule on which he rode went on, leaving him hanging in the air. This was as high as Absalom would ever ascend. Absalom had a magnificent head of hair, which he cut once a year. No doubt it was a matter of great pride for him. In this case it was his undoing. David had commanded that no one harm his son, but Joab, when he found him, ran him through with three spears, and his armor-bearers delivered the fatal strokes.

Absalom had wished to make a name for himself as king over Israel. The Scriptures say, "Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which *is* in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place." (2 Samuel 18:18) Absalom had had three sons, but it appears they did not survive their infancy, and so he was the last of his line. (2 Samuel 14:27) After Absalom was killed, the people threw him into a pit, and raised over him a great pile of stones. Absalom did make a name for himself, not as king over Israel, but as one who rebelled against the king, and who died, not gloriously, but ignominiously.

Sometimes God makes a righteous man's name great, as he did with Abraham. God called Abraham and promised him, "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:2, 3) He later told him, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16) God had in view, not a people, but a person, and this person is Jesus.

God made David's name great. He will always be known as the man after God's own heart; the one who defeated the giant Goliath, the one who ruled over all of Israel; the one who wrote the Psalms; and the one from whom the Messiah has come. Sadly, however, his name will always also be associated with the matter of Uriah the Hittite. When King David planned to build a house for God, God said He would build a house for David. (2 Samuel 7:1-17) David would build a temple for God, but God would build a dynasty for David. God said that the king will build a house for His name, that is to say, for His glory. David did not build the temple; his son Solomon did. Yet, God had in view, not a mere material temple, built by David's son, Solomon, but a spiritual temple built by one who is both the son of David and the Son of God; a king who will rule forever, and this king is Jesus.

The Son of God came into the world not to make a name for Himself, but to glorify the name of His Father in heaven. He laid aside His privilege as Son of God, and came into the world not to be served by man, but to serve him. Jesus was obedient to God unto death, even the death of the cross. So, God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of

*things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:10, 11)

Let us not seek to make names for ourselves. Let us seek to make God’s name great. Let us serve the Lord Jesus, and proclaim His name. Let us not seek to rule over one another, but to serve one another.

Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name is to be praised. *Amen.*