

God is Always Working

Fall Quarter: God's World and God's People

Unit 2: God Destroys and Re-Creates

Sunday school lesson for the week of October 14, 2018

By Dr. Nita Crump

Lesson Scripture: Various verses from Genesis 9-12

Key Verse: Genesis 12:2-3

Purpose: To discover that even biblical genealogies reveal God at work.

A list of names. Just how exciting can reading a list of names be? A filibuster is a tactic to prevent an elected body from moving forward with the work at hand. Elected officials have been known to maintain control of the floor of the body by continuing to speak for extended periods of time. Some have filled their time at the microphone by reading the names in the phone book. As I said, just how exciting can reading a list of names be?

And, yet, we find lists of names throughout the Bible. What is God trying to tell us through these lists of names and is there anything we can learn that is useful today?

We can learn that names are important. Adam was given the task of naming all the animals. Those who are parents know the remarkable honor (and stress) of choosing a name for a child. The name that is chosen is the way that child will be addressed throughout life. I remember choosing names for my children and wanting to choose wisely so that no unkind nicknames could come from their names. Children's names are often chosen to represent the family in some way and to keep the memory of family members alive. We read in scripture that the Lord knows our names. Think about that for a moment. Let it sink deeply into your heart and mind. The Lord God Almighty, creator of all that exists, redeemer of all on earth and in heaven, the great I Am, knows my name. The God who has all the universe to attend to knows me by name. What an amazing thought!

Throughout scripture we read of praising the name of the Lord in word and deed. The Lord is known by many names, with those names describing his attributes. As praise is given using the various names of the Lord, we are not only praising God but also praising the multitude of reasons we have to acknowledge and appreciate the relationship he offers to us.

We read in Genesis 12 that if Abram follows God's command to leave everything and go where God sends him, one of the results of that obedience will be that his name will be respected. His name has been and continues to be respected countless generations later.

Philippians 2 tells us that because of the obedience of Jesus, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names. His name is to be so respected that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord.

Today, those who answer Jesus' call to follow him are called by his name. What an honor it is to be allowed to use the name of Jesus to describe our mission in life – to be an imitator of Christ in all that we say and do. Once again it is obedience, our obedience this time, that leads to the honor of using the name above all names as a description of who we are.

There is an act of obedience to which we are called that we seldom think about today. God instructed Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. The lists of names throughout the Bible are there because of, at least in part, humanity's response to that command.

So what does a list of names in scripture have to say to us and about us today? Hmmm ... A list of names. The most common list of names we find in churches today is the roll of the church – the list of names of all those who have promised to support the church with prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. That list of names represents those who have joined the body of Christ to be obedient to his call to go and make disciples (another way of saying “be fruitful and multiply”).

Now, let me see if I can tie all this together. Names are important for a multitude of reasons, some of which are mentioned above. Christ has the name above all names. We are allowed to use his name as a description of our lives and our faithful obedience. One of Christ's commands we are called to obey is the command to go and make disciples. In today's world, one of the ways we acknowledge disciples is to record their names in the list of names on the rolls of the church. A more important place to find someone's name is written in the Lamb's book of life. So what have you done lately to honor the name of Jesus the Christ by working to add to the list of names of people who know Jesus as Lord so that those names may be written either on the roll of a church or in the book of life or, hopefully, in both places?

(Information in this article was drawn from *The New Application Commentary, Genesis, From biblical text...to contemporary life*, John H. Walton, p 364-410 and the Teacher's Edition of the *Adult Bible Studies, Uniform Series, International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching*.)

Dr. Nita Crump serves as Director of Connectional Ministries. Contact her at nitac@sgaume.com.