

BIBLE STUDIES - WHO ARE YOU?

SERIES: **NAMES GOD USES FOR CHRISTIANS**
“A good name is to be more desired than great wealth.” (Prov. 22:1)

Lesson #9 **“CHILDREN”**
I John 3:1-3

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

After a church service, Dad and Mom were going home in the car with little Johnny in the back seat. Johnny cried all the way home. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally, Johnny said, well, "The Preacher said he wanted children to be brought up in a Christian home. But I don't want to stay with a Christian family, I want to stay with you guys!" Of course, Christian families are comprised of children of God. However, not all families that call themselves Christian, live like they are children of God.

In John's first epistle, he uses the word *“father”* 13 times; *“brother”* 12 times and *“little children”* 9 times. Clearly, he writes about the Christian family. In this study we will focus on the name *“Children”*. The Greek word translated *“children”* in I John 3 is: *“Teknon”* (tek'-non) and is translated as *“children”* and/or *“son”*.

The question arises, “Aren't all people the children of God?” The Answer is: “Yes” and “No.” First, the “Yes” answer:

(1) “Yes,” All People Are Children Of God In The Creative Sense.

Acts 17:26 states: “He (God) made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth...” And in v.28 Paul quotes from a heathen poet: "For we are also his offspring." (Acts 17:28),

In the creative sense, God is the Father of all in that He created all. However, God's children by creation became rebels against their Creator, necessitating God's redemptive work by His Son, Jesus Christ. Now, for the second part of the answer:

(2) “No,” All People Are Not Children Of God In The Redemptive Sense.

John 1:12 “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”

After God created Adam and Eve, our ancient forefathers and heads of the human race, willfully sinned and, as Romans 5:12 states: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

Then God, in His infinite mercy, love and grace, provided a means whereby fallen sinners could be redeemed, that is, bought back from the slavery of sin and into His Redeemed Family. But not all His children by His Creative Act have accepted His terms of redemption and consequently they remain “lost” and outside His family.

Galatians 3:36 makes it plain how we become children of God in the redemptive sense: “... you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” Jesus, the Son of God, in the most unique sense, paid the price to redeem us at Calvary, so that we could become the redeemed children of God. This study pertains to the relationship that God’s redeemed children enjoy with their Heavenly Father.

Now, to I John 3:1-3 – note the following five truths relating to those who are the children of God in these verses:

- Our Parent - *“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!”*
- Our Privilege - *“Beloved, now we are children of God”*
- Our Perception - *“Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”*
- Our Prospect - *“and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”*
- Our Practice - *“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”*

1. WHO IS OUR PARENT?

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us.” (I Jn.3:1a)

A. Who is our Father? Our Father is:

- The God who “so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”
- He is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.” (II Cor.1:3)

We are God’s loved children. We should not overlook the fact that it is the way, the degree that God has loved us which shows us how great that love is: He “so loved”; “behold what manner of love.” By His redemptive work of love, we became His children and He became our Father.

B. There is another Father mentioned in scripture.

Jesus said of certain ones in His day, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.” (John 8:44)

What does it mean that the devil is the father of Jesus’ opponents? Some scholars hold that the fate of Jesus’ opponents had already been pre-determined and they, therefore, were forced to reject Jesus. This view sees people as mere puppets who only act when prompted by God or the devil. That is not the case at all.

The opposition to Jesus is something they themselves willed to do, that is, they chose to reject Jesus; they wanted to carry out the devil’s desire, as John 8:44 indicates:

“You are of your father the devil, and *you want to* do the desires of your father.” Instead of the devil being the source of sin in some deterministic sense in the lives of these people, he enticed them to sin as he did the first sinners – Adam and Eve. However, they could not truthfully say, “The devil made me do it!”

Their wills were in tune, consciously or unconsciously, with the devil’s desires. Paul was a Jewish opponent similar to these people, and ignorantly so, when Jesus met him on the way to Damascus. Paul later testified, “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.” (I Tim. 1:13) When talking to the Jews gathered at the Temple, he said, concerning the crucifixion of Jesus, “Brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders.” (Acts 3:17)

We can conclude then, that when persons choose to reject Jesus Christ and act out what aids the devil’s agenda, even though they act in ignorance, they can rightly be called the “children of the devil.”

Who is your Father, in the spiritual sense? The redeemed children of God, upon whom the heavenly Father has lavishly bestowed His love, can say, “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.” (Matt. 6:9)

2. WHAT IS OUR PRIVILEGE.

“we should be called children of God!” (I John 3:1b)

The status of sonship in the gospel is an unspeakable privilege. It is:

- obtained by grace, (Eph. 2:8-9)
- through regeneration (John 1:12-13),
- and adoption (Rom 8:14,19).

Believers are "children of God" in a sense true of no others. It is a relation, not of nature, but of grace. Our privilege is that we are called “children of God.” What a privilege! This has great and grand ramifications:

A. Our privilege is a present reality.

I Jn.3:2 reads, “*now* we are children of God.” Think about the present reality of our privilege as children of God. We have:

- *Now* justification - Rom.5:9 “having *now* been justified by His blood....”
- *Now* reconciliation – Rom.5:11 “we have *now* received the reconciliation”.
- *Now* no condemnation - Rom.8:1 “There is therefore *now* no condemnation....”
- *Now* of nearness - Eph.2:13 “But *now* in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”
- *Now* of light – Eph.5:8 “*now* you are light in the Lord”.
- *Now* people of God – I Peter 2:10 “are *now* the people of God.”
- *Now* believe it! “*Now* may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.” (Rom.15:13)
- We are God's children *now*;

- We will not be any more children of God when we get to heaven than we are right *now*!
- This is present day, right *now* salvation.

B. Our privilege brings a present relationship.

I Jn.3:2 - *"We are the children of God."*

I Jn.3:1 - *"And that is what we are!"*

Rom.8:16- *"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God."*

A word to those who are trusting the Lord Jesus for salvation but are not sure that you are saved: doubt if you are determined to doubt. However, God is going to hold up His end of the transaction! Whether you are bold enough to say it for yourselves or not, if you have come to faith in Christ as your Savior, you are a child of God – believe it and behave like it!!

3. WHY THE WORLD'S PERCEPTION OF US?

I John 3:1c *"The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him."*

Our identity is in Jesus Christ. Since they do not have a saving relationship with Him, they are perplexed as to who we are and why we live the way we do. It was just so with the Lord Jesus when He was on earth physically. The world's perception of Jesus was skewed.

They said of Him:

- That He had a demon – (John 7:20)
- That He was a mad man - (John 10:20)
- That He was born of fornication – (John 8:41) If they misunderstood Jesus, they will misunderstand us. Read I Peter 4:1-5 for further enlightenment on the subject.

We are "light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8) and are to reflect God's light. This is not always wanted or welcomed by a world filled with people who love darkness rather than light. (John 3:19)

Every time I read the last part of Hebrews chapter eleven, I am brought to the verge of tears. That is a section of scripture that we hear very little about. But here are children of God who were persecuted because they were hated by the wicked. What horrible atrocities were committed against them. It is hard to read, but let us do so with deepest admiration for these unknown brothers and sisters in Christ:

"Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground." (Heb. 11:36-38)

Why were they treated so badly? John said, *"The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him."* (John3:1) Truly, this world is no friend to grace! We should not be surprised if our enlightened lifestyle is rejected, for they rejected Him Who is the

Light of the world.

4. WHAT IS OUR PROSPECT?

I John 3:2 - *“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”*

A. The Prospect of the Coming of Christ. I John 3:2 *“we know that when he appears, we shall be like him....”*

We’ve all heard the saying. “Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be.” And for the child of God that is undeniably true! We may not know all that is in store for us in the world to which we are going, but we know our Father will bring to fullness the identity that we now cherish as His children. The prospects in the future for the children of God are literally out of this world!

B. The Prospect of Change at Christ’s Coming. I Cor. 15:52 *“we will be changed.”* If we are God’s children *now*, even though the world does not recognize us, we are promised that when we see Jesus, we shall be like Him – instantly changed!

It is reported that Yogi Berra said, “It’s tough to make predictions, especially about the future.” But when God makes a promise about the future it is a certainty. The future is only as bright as the promises of God. And God says we shall be like Jesus when we see Him!

5. WHAT SHOULD BE OUR PRACTICE?

I John 3:3 - *“Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.”*

All privileges bring responsibilities. We have the responsibility of living up to our names as “children of God.” The birth of a child into the human family is a glad day, however, the parents want to see that child grow to maturity. The birth of a child into God’s family is not the ultimate goal of its existence; its maturity and holiness are.

The prospect of the coming of Christ and the promise of our change when we see Him should prompt every child of God to keep themselves pure. Self-purification is the responsibility of God’s children. We are instructed to:

- I Tim.5:22 *“keep yourself pure.”*
- James 1:27 *“keep oneself unspotted from the world.”*
- I John 5:21 *“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”*

God has “purified” us - forgave and cleansed us when we came to faith in Christ. Now we are to purify ourselves. That is to be our daily practice. John concludes this section in his epistle by saying, *“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God....”* (I John 3:10)

As children of God we have the responsibility to *“go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Providing people with a glimpse of good living”* (Phil.2:15 *The Message*)

SUMMATION:

1. Let us be ever mindful of Who our parent is;
2. Let us never forget the privilege that has been bestowed upon us as God’s children;
3. Let us overcome the world’s perception and opposition of us by being “salt” and “light”;
4. Let us remember our prospect - Jesus is coming to take us to the Father’s House;
5. Let us practice our position in Christ as His children and not besmirch the family name “Christian,” and bring reproach upon our heavenly Father.

*“I’m a child of the King, A child of the King;
With Jesus my Savior, I’m a child of the King.”*

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