

A New Name – Rev. 2:17

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Let Your Face Light Up*

1. The famous Charles Spurgeon was speaking to a group of young pastors in training and gave this sage advice –
2. “When you speak of heaven, let your face light up. When you speak of hell - well, then your everyday face will do.”
3. Oh how I long that my countenance may shine like the noonday sun, because today, I’m talking about heaven.

B. *Not Just Clouds*

1. I recently saw a cartoon that showed a man in heaven.
 - a. he had on the typical white robe down to his shins; little ineffectual wings
 - b. sitting on a cloud with a bored look on his face
 - c. the caption had him thinking – “Wish I’d brought a magazine.”
2. How typical of many people’s idea of heaven –that it’ll be some colossal bore;
3. That eternity will be nothing more than floating around on clouds, strumming harps and singing *Amazing Grace* endlessly.
4. Nothing, and I mean *nothing*, could be further from the truth.
5. Heaven is going to be a *blast*, and boredom will never be a malady we’ll contend with.

II. TEXT

A. *V. 17*

1. To each of the seven churches John wrote to in chs 2 & 3, Jesus gave a promise.
2. But each promise, while directed to a specific church, also applies to all the churches
3. So Jesus says,

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

4. This was written to the church at Philadelphia, but the promise Jesus makes here to them applies to us *as well as* to them.
5. We have ears – so let’s hear what the Spirit is saying to CCO, and to each of us this morning.
6. And here’s what he says –

To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.

B. *To Him Who Overcomes*

1. This promise is for the one who *overcomes*.
2. In 1 John 5:4 & 5 we find out what it means to overcome –

⁴Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

3. Overcomers are those who are born again by faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord & Savior, and who *maintain* that faith through all obstacles and challenges to the end!
4. It isn’t enough to respond to some passionate altar call at a concert or night of outreach.
 - a. raising your hand or repeating a prayer do not make you an overcomer.
 - b. raising your hand, praying a prayer, going forward in response to a call to receive

- Christ are all good things, *if they help inaugurate and launch a life of faith* –
- c. a life that *continues* to hold on to Christ even when things get rough.
 - d. and a faith that lasts to the very end.
5. There might be those here this morning who some time ago, maybe *years* ago, went forward at a church service or outreach event and prayed a prayer with a counselor.
 6. But truth be told, that was about the extent of your venture into faith.
 7. The months or years since then have been something less than an overcoming and victorious faith.
 8. Today, at the conclusion of today's service, we want to give you an opportunity to get back on track with God – to re-enter the race – to pick up that fledgling faith and press on through to become an overcomer.

C. The Hidden Manna

1. To those who overcome, Jesus makes this incredible promise –
2. He will give them some of the hidden manna to eat.
3. It was a long-standing tradition among the Jews that the prophet Jeremiah had removed the pot of manna which had been inside the ark of the covenant, and hidden it.
 - a. they believed that when the Messiah came, one of the ways he would prove He was the Messiah was by finding that pot or manna and then feeding the people of Israel from it,
 - b. thus proving He was the same one who had fed them in the Wilderness during the Exodus.
 - c. so, to eat of the hidden manna, meant to enjoy the blessings of the *Messianic Age*.
 - d. Jesus is saying that those who overcome will enjoy the fruits of His reign and provision.
4. Do you ever get frustrated with the government?
 - a. do you ever find certain laws to be restrictive and silly?
 - b. do your taxes ever seem too high?
 - c. so you tire of corruption in high places?
 - d. do foolish decisions by officials make your blood boil?
 - e. do you ever hear of some candidate whose won an election and say, "Oh NO!"
 - f. or some proposition gets passed and want to pull your hair out?
5. The day will arrive when we who have overcome will get to enjoy the government of God!
 - a. not more Parliaments or Congress.
 - b. no more human courts and judges
 - c. no more Presidents and Prime Ministers
 - d. we'll have a King! A Perfect, Benevolent Sovereign, All Wise, All Powerful, Just King!
 - e. and as King, He will make sure that each and every one of His subjects is taken care of & every need met!
 - f. no one will worry about being able to afford groceries or paying the rent or mortgage.
 - g. no one will have to worry about insurance coverage or medical expenses.
6. Just as God took care of all the needs of Israel in the Wilderness by giving them daily manna, water from the rock, and shoes and clothes that never wore out – Jesus will take care of every need

D. The White Stone

1. Then Jesus promised the overcomer –

And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.

2. The promise of the white stone with a new name is one I find precious and exciting.
3. In the ancient world, when people voted, they would toss either a white or black stone into the ballot box.
 - a. a white stone meant *yes*,
 - b. a black stone meant *no*.

4. When Jesus promises a white stone, He's saying that He *accepts* the overcomer!
 - a. it's His way of saying – "For *you*, I vote "yes."
 - b. the white stone is our *entrance pass* to the glory of heaven!
5. But what's even *more exciting* is that on that white stone is a *new name!*
6. If you've read the Bible, you know that often, when God brings about a significant change in a person's life, He gives them a *new name*.
7. For us today, a name is little more than a *label* by which a person is known
 - a. but in the ancient world, a name was *more than* a label, it was a *description*.
 - b. it was given as an expression of a parent's dreams and desires for that child,
 - 1) Leah, Jacob's wife named her firstborn *Rueben*, meaning "See, a son!"
 - 2) She hoped that this son would endear her husband's heart to her.
 - 3) When it didn't, she named her second son – *Simeon*, which means "Heard" because she had asked the Lord for another child, hoping to impress Jacob and thus acquire his affection.
 - 4) Her third son she named *Levi*, which means "attached" because she thought now, surely Jacob would become attached to her for being such a faithful and fruitful wife!
 - 5) The fourth son was *Judah*, which means "praise" because now she was overjoyed and thankful to God; certainly Jacob would shower her with affection!
 - 6) there are dozens more examples we could give of how a name expressed the dreams and desires of the parent for that child
 - 7) but the most notable – is the name Gabriel told Mary her Son had been given by God –
 - 8) "His name shall be *Jesus* – For He will save His people from their sins." [Mat 1:21]
 - 9) the name *Jesus* means – "Jehovah is salvation."
 - c. some names were chosen because of some important event that took place at or near their birth.
 - 1) when Rachel, Jacob's other wife, was dying in the process of giving birth to her last child, she named him *Ben-oni*, which means "son of my sorrow."
 - 2) but that would have been a terrible label to be stuck with for the rest of his life so Jacob changed it to *Benjamin*, "son of my right hand."
 - 3) when word reached the ears of Eli's daughter-in-law that the ark of the covenant had been captured by the Philistines, and that both her husband and father-in-law were dead, the shock was so great she went into labor –
 - 4) when told she had a son, she named him *Ichabod*, which means "Without Glory" – because the glory had departed from Israel.
 - 5) this would be the same as some poor child that was born last September being given the name *9/11*.
8. God, in His grace, gives new names to those who respond in faith to Him.
 - a. *Abram*, which means "father" becomes *Abraham*, "father of a multitude."
 - b. and his wife *Sarai*, which means "contentious," becomes *Sarah*, "princess."
 - c. *Jacob*, "sneaky-conniving thief," becomes *Israel*, "prince with God."
 - d. *Simon*, which comes from a root meaning "unsteady," becomes *Peter*, "rock."
9. Each new name signifies something *new* in that person; it marks a new beginning and expresses God's plan for them.
10. When we get to heaven, Jesus will hand us a white stone and on it a new name - a special name that will be totally and uniquely new to us.
 - a. as we look at it, we'll realize that name is an absolutely perfect *description* of who and what we are.
 - b. it's how God sees us – as unique individuals!
11. It's the great goal of all *eastern* religion to escape the mindset of being an *individual* and being taken up into the *universal consciousness*.
12. But this isn't the Bible's picture of heaven.
 - a. we're not all going to morph into some kind of impersonal cosmic marshmallow.
 - b. we'll be unique individuals in heaven – each with our own name

- c. in fact, in heaven, our individuality will be *fully realized* and complete.
 - d. we'll finally be content to be US!
 - 1) there'll be no fashion magazines telling us to have this hair style or wear those clothes.
 - 2) no advertisers hawking their products promising a "new you" if you'll just spend a fortune on their new line.
 - e. we'll be all that God created us uniquely to be.
 - f. and with that, to seal it and cap it all off, He will give us a new name – something that perfectly sums up all that we are!
13. But there's something even *more* precious here – this name, this special God-given name – is known only by God and the one to whom it's given!
- a. it's a secret mark of *intimacy* that promises the deepest fellowship with God.
 - b. I am called "pastor" by those who know me least.
 - c. I am called "Lance" by my friends
 - d. my children call me "Dad"
 - e. a mother has called me "son"
 - f. but my wife has special names of endearment for me which propriety do not allow me to repeat in public.
 - g. they are to be shared only between us – in the hearing of no one else.
 - h. these names don't even get put down in letters or emails – because they're names that demand the *actual presence* of the beloved.
 - i. this is the intimacy promised to those who overcome.
 - j. the Bridegroom will speak to the Bride.
 - k. He will have a tender name for her that not even the angels will know! ^[1]
14. All of this awaits us, on the glorious day when we step from this life into eternity.

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Disneyland*

1. When I was a youngster, my family lived in the Mid-west and every Summer we'd load into the car and take a vacation.
2. Occasionally we'd make the long trip out to the West Coast and visit my Dad's family in Southern CA.
3. Whenever we did, there was always one attraction we had to visit – guess which one!
4. Disneyland!
5. I was so excited about going to "Dizzy-land" that for a couple weeks before we even left our home in the suburbs of Chicago, I could hardly sleep!
6. The prospect of walking through the ticket booths and into the park thrilled me to no end.
7. Every day I would remind my friends – "I'm going to Dizzyland."
8. A child's innocent excitement at something like going to an amusement park is fun to witness.
9. And it ought to give us a picture of the kind of excitement and anticipation we have as we think about heaven and all that God has promised to bestow upon us when we step through heaven's gate into glory!
10. My brothers and sisters – as the children of God – We're going to Heaven!

[1] Barnhouse, Donald pg. 56-7