

Jesus: The Name of Christmas – *Matthew 1:21*

Introduction – Mary was told that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and she would bear a Son. Promised many great things about this Son, the angel makes sure that Mary knows that His name was already given by His Father. She *"shall call His name JESUS"* (Luke 2:31). When his betrothed is found to be with child, righteous Joseph wants to mercifully put Mary away quietly. Then, in a dream, her story is confirmed by an angel who also tells Joseph very pointedly that the Son must be named JESUS. The importance of His name should not be lost for the name of the Son of God is what makes Christmas Christmas.

The Name of Jesus – "Jesus" was a very common name in first century Palestine, so the name did not make the baby stand out, but rather the meaning of the name. It means, "Yahweh Savior," or "God saves" and is the point of this angel-dream given to Joseph. There were many saviors of old. Moses was a savior, Gideon was a savior, and so was David. Israel needed a savior but they were looking for one who would save them from the tyrants of the earthly empire. Later, Jesus would warn them that such a deliverance would never amount to anything lasting (Matt 12:43-45). This Savior would come to deliver us from our worst enemies: ourselves, our fallen humanity, and our sinful bondage to the devil. Jesus came to save us from something we didn't even want to be saved from – until we have been saved.

The Name of Joshua – Jesus is our English version of the Greek word, "Iesous," which is simply the Greek version of the Hebrew "Y'shua," or "Joshua" in English. Just as Joshua led the people across the Jordan River to conquer Canaan, so our Greater Joshua is the New Israel Who leads us across the waters of baptism and into the Promised Land, the New Creation, as the New Humanity.

The Name for Family – Matthew comments on his first 21 verses by telling us that this was all done to fulfill another prophecy. Born of a virgin, this Child would be named "Immanuel," or "God with us." It is not that God wasn't with us before. But He hadn't been with us as a man, incarnate, taking on flesh. Jesus is fully God and fully man. The ramifications of this fill volumes of books. But for Mary, and then for Joseph, and then for all who call on Him, it means He is family. He is the *"everlasting Father"* (Isaiah 9:6) of this new humanity, and everyone who calls on His name is saved (Rom 10:9). Jesus turns to His followers and says, *"Here are my mother and my brothers"* (Matt 12:49). We are adopted as God's children (Rom 8:15, Eph 1:5). Because Jesus is confident in His work for us in our sanctification, He is not ashamed to call us *"brothers"* (Heb 2:11). And like brother-princes, we reign with our High King over the New Creation (Eph 1:20-21, 2:6). Because He is *"Immanuel,"* we come to the Father boldly in the name of Jesus and only in that Name.

The Name of Salvation – His name is Jesus, *"for He will save His people from their sins."* Who are *"His people?"* They are not those who are saved from becoming sinners – they are sinners who are saved from their sins. *His people* have a particular kind of character. They are those whom the Holy Spirit has revealed their need for a Savior and the washing of the Savior's blood. They are sick, not healthy; they are unrighteous, not self-righteous. *"if you feel yourselves to need saving then cast yourselves upon him, for such as you are he came to save"* – Spurgeon. This salvation was procured for us by Jesus bearing our sin as the Sinless Man on the cross, by binding the strong man, casting him out, and releasing us from our bondage. It is accomplished by His keeping of us as the Good Shepherd, by His protecting, leading, and feeding us all the way to the end. This all comes to us by His own instrument, even the faith granted to us – *"and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith"* (1 John 5:4).

The Name of Victory – We need to emphasize the success of the work of His name. His name is Jesus and He did save His people from their sins. God named His Son "Jesus" not hoping He would accomplish His work, but proclaiming that He would accomplish His work. *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). *"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself"* (John 12:32). Immanuel became a bondservant, even to the point of death – but that death was an efficacious death and God raised Him from the dead, seated Him at His throne and every knee shall bow (Phil 2:5-11). Christmas is not about a cute little baby in a manger. It is about a King, whose name is Jesus, who took over the world by saving the world (Matt 28:18-20).

The Name for Eternity – Jesus, Our Savior-God, was His name at His birth, even while a little babe lying in a manger. Jesus was His name while He hung on the cross, *"THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS"*, atoning for the sins of all His people, for He would save His people from their sins. Jesus was His name at His resurrection, declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness. Jesus was His name preached by Peter to the Gentiles by which they might receive remission of their sins. Jesus remains His name as He reigns in heaven and John's Revelation ends with His name – *"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star"* (Rev 22:16). This is the name of Christmas. There is no Christmas without Jesus. But Jesus is here, declared to you – and so, Merry Christmas to you.