

"Jesus, the Name Above All Names"

Matthew 1:18-25

The Bible starts out with humans dwelling with God together, at peace in a perfect environment where all their needs are met. The Bible ends with humans dwelling with God together, at peace in a perfect environment where all their needs are met. But shortly after the creation, Adam and Eve sinned and broke fellowship with God, experiencing anger and frustration with each other, and now have to work hard to have their needs met. The storyline of the Bible is, how do we get back to what we had? How can we have a relationship with God again, in peace and in a never-ending paradise?

God promised very early that restoration would come, surprisingly through the birth of a human being. In the midst of pronouncing the curses which were a result of the consequence of our disobedience with God, God promised us through Adam and Eve,

Gen. 3:15 *And I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman [humanity], and between your offspring and hers; he [Jesus – her offspring] will crush your [Satan's] head, and you will strike his heel.*

And so they began to look for this child, wondering if their child would be the one who would lift the curse and heal the brokenness between God and man. But Gen. 5 gives us one of those genealogies that repeats with, "and he died" (except for Enoch) showing us that the one had not yet come. We know they were looking for him because at the end of Gen. 5 we read about Methuselah, who had a son named Lamech who

²⁸ *When Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son.* ²⁹ *He named him Noah and said, "He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed."* ³⁰ *After Noah was born, Lamech lived 595 years and had other sons and daughters.* ³¹ *Altogether, Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died.*

And while Noah and his family would be spared from the flood and used to start again because mankind was so hopeless, he still wasn't the One who would remove the curse. So God chose Abraham through whom the promised child would come, and then chose Isaac and not Ishmael and then chose Judah over his 11 brothers and then chose David over his 7 brothers and God said from you I will build my house through you and bring peace to My people. So now we know the family line. Later we're even told that light will come from Galilee (Is. 9) and the place of His birth (Bethlehem, Micah 5). And then one day an angel appears to Mary and says, it's time and you will bear this child and here is His name, Jesus.

As we look again at the coming of Jesus this Advent season, let's marvel not so much at the plan to bring Jesus into the world, but Jesus Himself. Let's look at how He is introduced to the world and what Names and titles He was referred to at His birth. And the best place to start of course is with His Name.

Matthew begins his gospel with a genealogy of how the Messiah can be traced back all the way to Abraham because that's where God promised Abraham and all his descendants that He would bless the world through him. We know God had a very unique plan through Abraham by which He would

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing."³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples

on earth will be blessed through you.”

And now the Messiah has come and we know His name, Jesus. The promise has now become personal. The Name

Jesus Means Hope Has Come **(1:18-23)**

The name Jesus comes from the Hebrew ‘*yeshua*’ which means God is salvation. If Jesus is here that means hope has come. God is going to

Save His people as promised (1:1-17)

Matthew doesn’t just give us the full line of Jesus, he skips a few generations so he can give it in a memorable pattern of three sections of 14 names. Since most people in Matthew’s day would not have a written copy of Scripture, this could be more easily memorized. And Matthew also highlights some interesting individuals, some of whom may raise an eyebrow or two. After all, shouldn’t the Messiah have a perfect lineage? Shouldn’t His line be free of scoundrels and scandals? No. We have Tamar, a daughter-in-law of Judah who tricked him into an intimate relationship since he withheld one of his sons from marrying her. We have Boaz son of Rahab the harlot who marries the Moabite, Ruth. Then we have Solomon who is David’s son through Uriah’s wife (who is not even named). There are many kings named, some of whom followed God, some not so much like Ahaz. Why didn’t he skip him? Then after the exile there were no kings but a long line of nondescript names through whom the promise remained until it came to Joseph, son of David.

The promises of God don’t always travel a smooth road. But the promises of God are not threatened by scandals and scoundrels. God places them in the line of Jesus because these are the people who need saving. The word in v.18 for ‘birth’ comes from the same root word in v.1 for genealogy. Matthew purposely talks about these beginnings. Luke will even trace Jesus’ beginning back to Adam. Matthew also begins v.18 with a word rarely translated in most translations; the word ‘Behold’, which means, look, pay attention, watch this! **THIS** is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph but before they came together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.”

Mic drop. Bomb shell. ***This is how the birth of Jesus came about? This is how salvation came into the world? With an emotional, heart-rendering, scandalous entrance?*** Why? Because in a strange way, this is how God is going to ensure a virgin birth. The Messiah will be God in the flesh. Matthew is very careful to explain that Joseph is not the human father of Jesus. Legally yes. Biologically, no.

If we remember from Luke’s gospel, Mary, had a visit from Gabriel who told her she would have a child through the Holy Spirit who would be the Messiah. As a sign of this she is told her cousin Elizabeth was also expecting – another miracle – and Mary went to her immediately and stayed for 3 months. Mary is gone for 3 months and comes home pregnant. What else would Joseph think? Mary has been unfaithful.

A heart-broken Joseph “considered this” probably for days or weeks [and considered means ‘think deeply; and can even mean angrily] and rather than expose Mary to disgrace, he plans to have a private divorce arranged (only needed two witnesses, no officials) and they go their separate ways. Until God steps in through an angel and tells him not to be afraid to marry Mary because ‘*what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.*’ Joseph, son of David. Son of David refers to God keeping

His promise. And then the angel tells Joseph to “give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins”. This is how God saves;

He saves from our sins (John 1:29; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:13)

Jesus alone is qualified as the Son of God to pay for our sins because a sacrifice always requires an unblemished animal. But the sacrificial system only covered the sinner temporarily until the true sacrifice came, a perfect human sacrifice. That’s what John the Baptist meant when he said,

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

John knew the purpose of Jesus’ coming into the world. Visibly, he saw a man Jesus, yet spiritually, he knew Jesus was God’s Son who as the perfect man, was the only one who could pay the price required for sin’s penalty – a perfect sacrifice. The apostle Peter testified in Acts 4:12,

¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

And the apostle John would also affirm in 1 John 5:13,

¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Jesus, which means God is salvation, showed that through His sinless life and sacrificial death. Without forgiveness of sins through Jesus there is no knowledge of eternal life. This is the salvation that everyone needs. But in saying that, Jesus also provides

Salvation from sin’s consequences (Jer. 23:5-6; Is. 7-9)

Because man is so sinful he hurts people. Jesus, the Son of David, not only died for the sins of the world but He came to save the nation of Israel. God’s promises through Abraham meant Israel would be at peace in their own land one day. But evil leaders of evil nations continued to suppress them. Jesus came during Roman oppression but also when Israel was being oppressed by their own religious legalists, the Pharisees. One day, but not yet, Jesus will return and save all His people from the consequences of sin against us. This is what the people were hoping Jesus would do for them when He came:

Jer. 23:5 “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.

⁶ In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.

At this point, Matthew writes the implications of Jesus’ coming as the angel mentions His Name;

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” —which means, “God with us.”

Matthew is referring to Isaiah 7-9. The same Ahaz who is part of Jesus’ lineage was afraid of the Northern kingdom of Israel and the Arameans were attacking him in the south. God sent Isaiah to

comfort Ahaz that he would fall if he stood firm in his faith. He even said, ask God for a sign and He'll do it for you. Ahaz lacked faith in God and didn't want one. But God gave him one anyway, saying

The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right. ¹⁶ But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. ¹⁷ The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah—he will bring the king of Assyria."

This prophecy had a near fulfilment for Ahaz, referring to one of Isaiah's sons, within whose time Ahaz would see God's hand. In 8:18 Isaiah referred to his children as God's signs

¹⁸ Here am I, and the children the LORD has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the LORD Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion.

But Matthew and many others also knew this prophecy still looked forward to the coming of the Messiah through a virgin birth; which means God was with His people and this was the sign.

God told Joseph and Mary to name the baby Jesus because His Name means God is salvation. Salvation had come. Hope had arrived. The head of the serpent would finally be crushed and those who chose to place their faith in Jesus would have the curse of sin removed. But not let's not think this was a simple task to name Mary's baby, Jesus.

The Naming of Jesus Required Faith **(1:24-25)**

If Joseph was truly a righteous man he believed God's Word. Even if God told him his pregnant fiancé was not unfaithful to him. Even if marrying Mary makes Joseph look like he got his girlfriend pregnant before the wedding. About 5 months later when Mary finally gave birth Joseph named the baby not after his own father or whoever else they planned their baby's name to be, but Jesus because the

Fully believed God's Word without seeing (v.24)

He did what the angel of the Lord commanded. He married Mary. He had nothing to go on other than God's words to him and to Mary. He had faith as Heb. 11:1 defined it as;

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

He had months to think about this and pray and when the time came for Jesus' birth, this was a test of faith. Is this baby really the Son of God? What will our families say when we say we called Him Jesus? Jesus was a common name. Another Jesus. Couldn't you name Him after Mary's father, grandfather or Joseph's father or grandfather? What about Moses or Elijah or ... To name Him Jesus meant, Joseph and Mary did not waver in what they knew God said. Like Paul said of Abraham

¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory

to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²² This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.”

And faith didn't stop there because v.25 says,

²⁵ *But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

We are called to live by faith; that our actions reflect we

Live in such a way that Jesus is glorified (v.25; Col. 3:17)

Joseph said no to his own desires so that there would be no question as to whose child this was. This was a virgin birth and Joseph wanted God to get the glory. Living by faith requires making sacrifices; to say no to what we want and yes to what God wants. They can be decisions like giving God our time when we were going to do something for ourselves. Like giving resources that we had plans for ourselves and then saying, someone else needs this more than we do right now. Let's use it for God's purposes. Paul challenges us in Col. 3:17

¹⁷ *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

'Whatever we do'. Are their things we did this week that only resulted in our own glory? Were their situations where we chose God's glory over our own? Give thought to whatever you do and ask God, Lord how can I make this about you rather than me?

The name of Jesus is the name above all names. Every knee will bow before that Name one day. Yet, so many use that name in vain or have no clue who Jesus is. Let's end listening to Luke describe Paul shortly after he got saved:

Acts 9:27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸ So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.

Paul was overwhelmed by the grace of Jesus who had turned him from hating that name to loving that name. How's our passion for Jesus' Name?

Will we boldly share the Name of Jesus so others will find true hope in Jesus?

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at olivet@rideau.net