

Mary and Joseph—What is Your Baby’s Name?

Today is a very special day because it’s the first day of December and that’s the beginning of Advent—running from today through Christmas Eve. It is a time of great preparation awaiting two of the most important events in history: (1) The celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and (2) The expectation of His Second Coming—both days are coming very soon. We know the date of the former, and the date of the latter is almost upon us as well! And with today being December 1, even I can do the math: That means that there are only 24 days before Christmas! We can now officially start the Christmas Holiday Season (despite the commercialism of our merchants in stores and online who want to lump Christmas in with Halloween—and give one about as much holy significance as the other).

The story of Jesus’ birth has so very many dimensions to it—and one of those dimensions has to do with the *name* itself of the Christ Child. I am reminded of a song by the **Goo Goo Dolls** back in the mid-1990’s entitled: *“I Won’t Tell’em Your Name.”*¹ Well, we want to do the exact opposite of that song title. ***We do want to tell’em His Name!*** Not only that, we want to tell the world all the many aspects of the most wonderful of all names—for quite literally, as Isaiah tells us: *His name is wonderful—and not only that, but Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace!*²

So how did the Christ Child, the Messiah—get His name? Well, in first century Palestine, a baby boy’s name usually came from his father’s side of the family—and the child’s name often used some part of his father’s name.³ But, if this had been followed on that first Christmas morning, you might have expected the name of Mary’s baby to have been connected with her espoused husband—Joseph. That, in fact, is exactly what people did in Mary’s own family. For example, when her cousin, Elizabeth, had a child, all the family members wanted him named after her husband, Zechariah. But, the angel Gabriel had previously appeared to Zechariah and told him that his child’s name was to be “John.”⁴ And due to Zechariah’s lack of faith, he was stricken speechless until he carried out God’s will and insisted that Elizabeth’s new-born would have the name that was ordained from on High.

And so it was with Mary, because Joseph also received an angelic visit to seal the deal as far as her baby’s name was concerned. This is what happened: ¹⁸ “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. ²⁰ But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a

Son; and **YOU SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS**, for He will save His people from their sins.’²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:²³ ‘BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND **THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL**,” which translated means, ‘**GOD WITH US**.’²⁴ And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife,²⁵ but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and **HE CALLED HIS NAME JESUS**.” Matthew 1:18-25 (NASB)

Isn't that amazing? Joseph never hesitated, never questioned the angel or his message—he just trusted in God and in everything that was said. Yet, when you turn to Zechariah, you see something completely different. Now, Zechariah was a priest. You would have expected him, with all his religious training as a priest to have believed the angel's message about Elizabeth becoming pregnant and giving birth to a child. And with that background, we would have expected Zechariah to have been anything but doubtful. But, it was Zechariah who basically told the angel that he didn't believe God could deliver on this promised child because both he and his wife were too old. And there is a lesson in this: You don't have to be a seminary grad to display true faith. Faith is not the product of ***book learning***. Rather, faith is the product of ***heart yearning***—a yearning to seek and know God, and to trust in Him.⁵ Joseph, who is not reputed to have had any formal religious training like a priest would have had—he trusted God without question. Zechariah, who had no excuse for not trusting him, failed despite his high status as a religious leader. You don't need to feel like you have to have some string of degrees from a Bible college to have true faith. God gives to each one of us the capacity to believe according to our individual make up. To those who have been given much, much will be required.⁶ But at least something is given to everyone as far as the capacity to trust in God goes.

Actually, here in this country, where churches dot the landscape most everywhere and Bibles are among the top seller list each year—the truth is: ***We've all been given much*** and much is expected spiritually from all of us. God has shed the great treasure of His light upon all of us so generously that anyone who doesn't believe really has no excuse whatsoever.⁷ In fact, Paul tells us that God “out of His glorious, unlimited resources [will] give you the mighty inner strengthening of His Holy Spirit.” Ephesians 3:16 (TLB) All you have to do is chose to accept the spiritual gifts God has to offer. For as the Scriptures proclaim: “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:10 (NIV) And Joseph apparently used his spiritual gifts to the fullest and trusted in God's message from the angel completely and without hesitation. So, when Mary turned to Him there in that stable and asked, “***Well Joseph, what should we name Him?***” Joseph didn't

miss a beat—“**His name’s Jesus!**”—and that’s that, case closed, end of story as far as Joseph was concerned.

And what a name God had chosen for His Son—it is the perfect name, coming from the Old Testament version of the same Hebrew name, “**Joshua**”—meaning, “**God saves**” or “**salvation is from God**.”⁸ And the name “Jesus” was very popular among Jewish families in Palestine during the first century A.D., and even today, it remains a very easy name to say—only two simple syllables that just seem to roll off our tongues without any effort. David Jeremiah puts it so well when he states: “**If you translate this name into all the languages and dialects of the world, whether Hebrew, Greek, or Anglo-Saxon, you cannot rob it of its [musical qualities]. It’s sweet tones [just reverberate] upon your ear.**”⁹

And, it’s not just another pretty name. Even the prettiest of names are merely proper nouns. But Jesus’ name is also akin to an action word, as if it were a verb—particularly when you think about all the many things that **we do** in Jesus’ name.¹⁰

- First, we **pray** in His Name. In fact, doesn’t Jesus say: “**I will do whatever you ask *IN MY NAME*, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.**” John 14:13 (NIV)
- Secondly, we **gather** in His Name. Jesus says: “**For where two or three come together *IN MY NAME*, there am I with them.**” Matthew 18:20 (NIV) You see, it doesn’t matter whether a couple people come together in worship in a home, or a handful in a small church, or a hundred thousand in a church the size of a football stadium—when we do this, **we honor the name of Jesus**, and our worship is pleasing to Him.
- And moving on to another action word connected with the name of Jesus—We should **be baptized** in His Name. The Apostle Peter said: “**Repent and be baptized, every one of you, *IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST* for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**” Acts 2:38 (NIV) Of course, baptism alone does not save you, but your decision to receive the Holy Spirit into your heart does, in fact, bring salvation the **Scriptures make very clear**.¹¹
- And so, what else do we do in Jesus’ name? Well, it isn’t so much something we do, as it is something that happens to us: We are **saved** by calling upon His Name. Luke tells us: “**There is salvation in no one else! Under all heaven *THERE IS NO OTHER NAME FOR MEN TO CALL UPON TO SAVE THEM.***” Acts 4:12 (TLB) And so, it all comes down to what the Apostle John proclaims toward the end of his Gospel: **That by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God you may have *LIFE IN HIS NAME.***¹²

What other name could there possibly be in which we can see so many wonderful things swirling around in great activity **all powered by the Name of Jesus Christ!**

Now let me tell you about an important passage in Matthew's Gospel having to do with Jesus' name. In this passage, we see that there are two important "code" phrases that serve as substitutes for Jesus' name. Listen to the following passage and see if you can pick these two "code" phrases out. Matthew's Gospel tells us: ¹³ "When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, 'Who do people say the **SON OF MAN** is?'" ¹⁴ They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'¹⁵ 'But what about you?' He asked. 'Who do you say I am?' ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the **SON OF THE LIVING GOD.**'" Matthew 16:13-16 (NIV) Here, the first code phrase is given by Jesus Himself—Jesus calls himself the **"Son of Man,"** and then Peter announces the second one by calling Him the **"Son of God."** Interesting—here we find that Jesus is not identified as the **son of Mary**, or even the **son of His step-father, Joseph**—but rather, as both the **Son of Man** and **Son of God**. So, how does that work?—in a word: **AMAZINGLY!**

"Son of Man" is a reference to Jesus being 100% human. Jesus was, indeed, conceived by the Holy Spirit (He had no human father), and yet as the son of the Virgin Mary, He was very much human—flesh and blood just like you and me. And even more than that, **"Son of Man"** is a reference to the Book of Daniel.¹³ John Piper explains that the reference to the **Son of Man** **"is probably taken from Daniel 7."** He goes on to explain: **"If you read that chapter you'll see that the Son of Man is a very exalted figure: not just a human figure but an exalted figure. It was Jesus' favorite self-designation. . ."** And then Piper adds: **"I think the reason He did so is because, on the face of it, Son of Man is an ordinary phrase for 'human being.' . . And there's no offense there: Who isn't a son of man? But those with ears to hear [can hear that in] Daniel 7, He was claiming a very exalted role in the history of redemption. And [Jesus] meant to do it."**¹⁴ To do what?—to use a name directly connected to His humanity—i.e. **"Son of God"**— to show that He would be subject to death, like any other man. But, why is that important?—because His death wasn't like that of any other man. His death was the most **exalted** death ever—because Jesus' death on the Cross was a sacrifice for all of mankind! So, how could a **mere** human being do something like that? Well, in reality, a **mere** human being could not. But Jesus wasn't a **mere** human being, for as Peter so correctly stated—Jesus was, and is, 100% the **Son of God** as well.

But, you might be thinking: **"Now hold on here! A minute ago, you said that Jesus is a 100% human, but now you are saying that He is 100% God. You might be able to add up the days from now**

to Christmas, but it seems to me that none of this adds up!" Well, if you are thinking that, then maybe it's time for you to get acquainted with a better kind of math. You need to graduate from mere addition and move on to a higher form of *holy multiplication*. You see, Jesus is part of the Holy Trinity—where Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all **ONE**—and not three persons. It's not $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$. Rather, it's $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. And when you begin to understand God's math, you'll also begin to understand the miracle of the birth of this very same baby we've been talking about. Despite Zechariah's doubts—or maybe even your own, the angel assured Mary that: "**[N]othing is impossible with God.**" Luke 1:37 (NLT2) Jesus was **both** 100% **Son of Man**—with the ability to die as that **Exalted One** on the Cross—and also 100% the **Son of God**, with the ability to save all of us by taking on the crushing burden of all the sins of the world—including yours and mine.

Now, let's see—this morning, we've mentioned at least nine variations on the names of Jesus, including **Jesus or Joshua** in the Old Testament; plus **Immanuel**, as the angel called Him; Isaiah adds to that **Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father** and **Prince of Peace**; and we just added two more as the **Son of Man** and the **Son of God**. Now that's a lot of names. But in truth, there are actually many more names of Jesus in the Bible. In fact, a biblical concordance published way back in 1737 listed 198 different names and titles of Jesus found in the Scriptures.¹⁵ So if my math is right, it's taken about 5 minutes per name on average thus far—and if we have another 189 names to go, then it will take only 945 minutes or a little under 16 hours to finish up this sermon. But since I would like to survive to see Christmas without you shooting me, I'll finish up with just one more name that was used in referring to Jesus.

And that name is actually the name of an occupation—one that Jesus temporarily took up from his earthly father—Joseph. You see, some people simply referred to Jesus as the "**carpenter.**"¹⁶ Now, it's interesting that Jesus was born the son of a carpenter. He could have been the son of a merchant, an accountant, or a door-to-door Torah salesman. But, why did God plan things out so that Jesus was born as the son of a carpenter? I think the 16th century Christian philosopher, known as Erasmus, may have been on to something when he wrote this: "**By a Carpenter mankind was made, and only by that Carpenter can mankind be remade.**"¹⁷ Now what did he mean by that? Well, think about it—carpenters make things, they create things and nail things together. That's actually the perfect description of Jesus as well. Jesus made things. He created things and nailed them together. When did He do that?—Was it when He started working in Joseph's carpentry shop? Well, I am sure He did work with Joseph, but Jesus exercised His wonderful creative abilities in a far greater way eons before He ever worked with Joseph, nailing nails and sawing wood. You see, Jesus actually started His career as a

carpenter when He first brought the universe and everything in it into being—that’s when His building plans really took off. Referring to Jesus, the Gospel of John teaches us: ¹ “Before anything else existed, there was Christ, with God.” ² He has always been alive and is Himself God. ³ He created everything there is—nothing exists that He didn’t make.” John 1:1-3 (TLB) And Paul confirms this by saying: ¹⁵ “Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God. He existed before God made anything at all, and, in fact, ¹⁶ Christ himself is the Creator who made everything in heaven and earth, the things we can see and the things we can’t; the spirit world with its kings and kingdoms, its rulers and authorities; all were made by Christ for his own use and glory.” Colossians 1:15-16 (TLB) And not only were all things created by Jesus—He didn’t just create the universe to have it go whirling out of control and flying apart. Oh no, like a good carpenter with nails that fasten true, it is by the power of Jesus that the universe remains intact for as Paul further tells us: “He was before all else began and it is His power that holds everything together.” Colossians 1:17 (TLB) Yes, Jesus was, and is, the most productive, creative and amazing carpenter of all!

But there is something else that you need to know about this carpenter—***He’s coming again!*** Why is He coming? Well to do what all good carpenters do, of course! Carpenters restore things; they mend things that are broken; they make things all new again.¹⁸ We live in a world that is surely broken and in need of a Good Carpenter. The Bible teaches that one day the Master Carpenter will come back, and when He does, He’s going to fix things, put them back together and make things right. He’s going to do that with the world as a whole very soon—but you don’t have to wait for that. Let Jesus into your heart and He will make a New Creation of you today!¹⁹

Now, we have been talking about Jesus’ name this morning. But in concluding, let me mention something else that’s important about Jesus when it comes down to names. If you didn’t know my *Goo Goo Dolls* song—well, that’s one thing. But, I will be totally disappointed if we don’t have any Bob Seger fans here this morning. One of my favorite Seger songs is entitled, ***“Feel like a Number”***—and a few of the lyrics go like this: ***“I work my back till it’s racked with pain / The boss can’t even recall my name/ I show up late and I’m docked, it never fails / I feel like just another, spoke in a great big wheel / Like a tiny blade of grass in a great big field . . . And I feel like a number, feel like a number / Feel like a stranger, a stranger in this land . . .”***²⁰ You see, here’s the thing—with Jesus, you’re not just a number. You’re not just a blade of grass in a big ole field. Jesus once referred to Himself as the Shepherd and those who follow Him are His sheep, and this is what He said: “The gatekeeper opens the gate for Him, and the sheep recognize His voice and come to Him. He calls His own sheep **BY NAME** and leads them out.” John 10:3 (NLT2) Jesus **is** the Boss—and this Boss **knows your name**. Not only that, but He wants to have a personal relationship with you—and wants you to get to know Him better. Jesus wants you to

know that: ⁹ “God elevated Him to the place of highest honor and gave Him **THE NAME ABOVE ALL OTHER NAMES**, ¹⁰ that at the **NAME OF JESUS** every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:9-11 (NLT2)

On this 1st day of December, the month of Jesus’ birth, say His name with reverence. Say His name in prayer. Say His name knowing that the baby in that Bethlehem manger preexisted time itself and is the Lord of all things. And no matter what—never be afraid to tell the world of the greatness of the name of Jesus Christ!

Let us pray.

Forest Hill Baptist Church
December 1, 2019
Darvin Satterwhite, Pastor
©2019 All Rights Reserved

¹ Goo Goo Dolls, “Name,” John Rzeznik, Album: *A Boy Named Goo* (Released 1995: Warner Bros.).

² Isaiah 9:6 (NKJV) And *His name will be called Wonderful*, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

³ David Jeremiah, “Thou Shalt Call His Name Jesus,” *On This Holy Night: The Heart of Christmas*, Thomas Nelson: Nashville (2013) p. 55.

⁴ Luke 1:13, 18-20 (ESV) ¹³ But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John . . . ¹⁸ And Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” ¹⁹ And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰ And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.”

⁵ James 4:5 (NET1) Or do you think the scripture means nothing when it says, “The spirit that God caused to live within us has an envious yearning?”

⁶ Luke 12:48 (ESV) Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

⁷ 2 Corinthians 4:7 (NLT2) We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

⁸ Dale Ellenburg, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), s.v. “JESUS CHRIST,” WORDsearch CROSS e-book.

⁹ David Jeremiah, p. 58.

¹⁰ See: *Holman Concise Topical Concordance*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2011), s.v. “Name,” WORDsearch CROSS e-book.

¹¹ Acts 8:16-17 (NLT2) ¹⁶ The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹² John 20:30-31 (NASB) ³⁰ Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

¹³ Daniel 7:13-14 (NASB) ¹³ "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴ "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

¹⁴ John Piper, "Why Is Jesus Called 'Son of Man'?", Desiring God: www.desiringgod.org (April 4, 2008).

¹⁵ "Names and titles of Jesus in the New Testament," Cruden's Concordance, Wikipedia.org.

¹⁶ Mark 6:3 (ESV) Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

Matthew 13:55 (ESV) Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?

¹⁷ Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1466-1536) Edythe Draper, *Draper's Book of Quotations for the Christian World*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 346.

¹⁸ Revelation 21:5 (NASB) And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

²⁰ Robert Clark Seger, "Feel Like a Number," from the album, "Stranger in Town," © Gear Publishing Company Inc. (1978).