

WHAT'S IN A NAME?
By Rev. Lawrence Baldrige
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MT 1:18 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.

¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

MT 1:20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Christmas has ended, but the message is clear—a Son, a Savior, named Jesus. Jesus? A common name was Jesus in that day; and a common name today, especially in the Latin world. What's in a name? Perhaps we'd better ask, what was in a name in the time of Jesus. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* tells us:

"In biblical thought a name is not a mere label of identification; it is an expression of the essential nature of its bearer. A man's name reveals his character. Adam was able to give names to beasts and birds (Gen. 2:20) because, as Milton says, he understood their nature (Paradise Lost, bk. VIII, ll. 352-53). This was a concept shared by the peoples of the ancient world. Hence to know the name of God is to know God as he has revealed himself (Ps. 9:10). The full disclosure of his nature and character is given in Jesus Christ, who has manifested his name (John 17:6, 26)."

Joseph was confronted with a hard reality. The maiden to whom he was engaged was pregnant. He had decided to divorce her privately, since divorce was the only way an engagement could be ended other than by stoning. He fell into a troubled sleep. Then an Angel, a messenger of God, Gabriel, 'appeared to him in a dream', told him to marry the young pregnant maiden, and gave him the sex of the child, and then gave him a wonderful name by which the child would be known. "His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sin."

Living in the scientific age, the age of reason, the age of doubt, most of us have trouble believing in angels or in dreams, so we read the Christmas story and we think inwardly that the story is a nice story for children, a Santa story, but beyond that not terribly believable or significant. His name shall be called Jesus. So what? After all, what's in a name?

I am naïve enough to believe in the visitation of angels, even in dreams, and to believe that this story, recorded in St. Matthew, actually did happen.

Be that as it may, the question I asked, 'what's in a name?' I will now attempt to answer. When the character and achievements of a person become widely known, he gains a reputation. This is, as it were, an extension of his personality; it is his name writ large. Hence "name" comes also to mean "renown," "glory," "fame."

I. THE NAME OF JESUS HAS SIGNIFICANCE AND MAGNIFICENCE, WHICH WILL LAST FOREVER.

Actually this is the fulfillment of a prophecy that started in Isaiah regarding the Name of Jesus. Listen to Isaiah's powerful words:

ISA 9:6 For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

ISA 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

The Name of Jesus is Significant and Magnificent. The Son of whom the angel spoke to Joseph was the very One spoken of in Isaiah—"unto us a Son is given." The government is to be upon His strong shoulders, this Son of David who will one reign in history upon David's throne, and reign forever and forever, bringing about justice and righteousness 'from that time on and forever.' John the Baptist spoke of Him and said, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent and believe the Gospel." Many of the Jews understood his sayings. They knew that Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, the three great prophets, had all prophesied of the final covenant of God. This everlasting covenant would include all mankind. Matthew speaks of 'saving his people from their sin.' He was writing for the Jews; but the angel knew better. His people were all people everywhere.

But look at the Significance, the Magnificence of His Name: First, Wonderful Counselor; then Mighty God; then Everlasting Father; then Prince of Peace. All these are a part of His Name. He is the Wonderful Counselor. He alone teaches us how to live our lives in a way that will be best for us and which will glorify the Heavenly Father. He is the Mighty God. This designation is given to no other in all the *Bible*. To the Jews it would be absolute blasphemy to call any human being Mighty God, but Isaiah calls Jesus that. Then He is named Everlasting Father. Jesus is the First and the Last. The Ancient of Days. He is also called Prince of Peace. He is our contemporary, giving us peace of heart and peace of mind. *The Zondervan Reference Bible* says, "If the child of Isaiah 7:14-16 (see extended comment there) typifies the ultimate divine Christ, the child of these verses is that Christ." If you remember, Isaiah 7:14 is also quoted by Matthew: ¹⁴ "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Immanuel means 'God with us.' Jesus was indeed that, He was God with us!

Clearly, however, Matthew took this prophecy to mean that the Christ had been born, for Mary was indeed a virgin impregnated by the Holy Spirit.

When I hear the words of Isaiah, recalled and reverberated by the Apostle Matthew, I am amazed at the Significance and the Magnificence of Jesus. What's in a Name?

II. THE NAME OF JESUS HAS EXCEEDINGLY GREAT WORTH AND ALL THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN AND ALL THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN WORSHIP HIM!

We are told by the authors of the *Interpreter's Bible Dictionary*: "The word "name" and associated words ("fame," "renown," "memory," "memorial," "remembrance") occur over 800 times in the English versions of the OT and some 180 times in those of the NT."

We can see from this that the name is recognized by the *Bible* according to the deeds one does. What would Jesus do? According to Matthew, He would 'save His people from their sins.' Let's look at that briefly. I turn to Revelation. "Day and night they (the Living Creatures) never stop saying:

"Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come."

REV 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

REV 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being."

Again in Revelation:5: ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" ³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

REV 5:6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each

one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.

REV 5:10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

REV 5:11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang:

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"

REV 5:13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!"

REV 5:14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

The worthiness of the Name of Jesus is found in His works. He is first of all our Creator and sustainer of everything in this physical universe. In Rev. 4:11, the Living Creatures declare His worth as 'our Lord and God' Who created all things by His will and that have their being by His will.

We meet here today in Jesus' Name. Sufficient would it be to worship (worthship) Him because He is our creator and sustainer. When I pray I thank the Creator for giving me my being, don't you? I see the worth of Jesus in every pattern of this physical universe. As Paul told the Colossians, "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." John cried out, "all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made."

To the Jews a man's worth consisted of his deeds. Moses was indeed great, but the writer of Hebrews writes: ^{Heb 3:3} Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. ⁴ For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. That is just another way of saying, "Jesus is worthy because He is God the Creator."

The most poignant example of His worthiness is found in Revelation 5. John the Revelator literally weeps because no one was found in heaven, on earth, or under the

earth who could open the scroll and look inside it. In a word, only the Author of History could know the outcome of history. And He did. Listen to how the saints and angels magnify His worth.

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"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
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What's in a Name. The Name of Jesus is Significant and Magnificent; the Name of Jesus alone is Worthy to be Praised. He both made us and He redeemed us unto God by His blood.

III. THE NAME OF JESUS IS A POWERFUL NAME, AND A NAME THAT IS ABOVE EVERY NAME, AND WILL BE FOREVER.

What's in a name? Let me again quote from *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*: "To speak or act in someone's name is to act as the representative of that person and hence to participate in his authority I Sam. 17:45; 25:5, 9; I Kings 21:8; Esth. 2:22; 3:12; 8:8, 10; Jer. 29:25). Similarly, to be called by a person's name (lit., "to call a name

upon") implies ownership by the person." This is the secular application of a phrase which has frequently a religious significance. That which is called by Yahweh's name is his possession and therefore comes under both his authority and his protection (Deut. 28:10; II Chr. 7:14; Isa. 43:7; 63:19; 65:1; Dan. 9:18-19)" IBD

His Name shall be called Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins. The *Bible* says of Him, (Rom 14:11 KJV) "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." Phi 1: (Phil 2:9 KJV) Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:(Phil 2:10 KJV) That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; (Phil 2:11 KJV) And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The name of Jesus is a powerful name, and will be a powerful name forever. His Name is transcendent over the names of all the sons of men.

One of my favorite stories in the Book of Acts is found in chapters, about the crippled man who sat begging at the temple gate. He wanted money, but what he needed was power. ^{AC 3:6} Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." ⁷ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. ⁸ He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

That was just part of the story. The temple authorities were antagonized by such a thing, and by the audacity of Peter and John's preaching. In 4:2 the Bible says, ² They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead." They were disturbed because they had crucified Jesus of Nazareth; and they were frightened to hear that instead of getting rid of the Name, that Name was indeed above every name. Jesus was alive.

So, after jailing the preachers, they brought them before the Sanhedrin Court, the highest court in the land, the court of 70. Here's what happened:

^{AC 4:5} The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶ Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. ⁷ They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

^{AC 4:8} Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ He is

'the stone you builders rejected,
which has become the capstone.'

^{AC 4:12} Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

AC 4:13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. ¹⁵ So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. ¹⁶ "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name."

Do you think they stopped speaking in His Name? Of course not! There was power in that Name. There was great Authority in that Name. There was healing in that Name. There was Life, Eternal Life in that Name. This is the answer Peter gave them:

AC 4:18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. ²⁰ For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Have we a right to speak in Jesus Power, in the King's Authority? Amen! There is not just a right, there is a must. "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" can we.

What's in a Name? Significance, Magnificence, and Worthiness, and Power and Authority. In Matthew 1: 21, the angel said to Joseph, "Name Him Jesus for He shall save His people from their sin." Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20 ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."