

You Shall Call His Name Jesus

In the first three verses of our text, we saw last week that the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is essential to our faith because it is essential to our salvation; and, when we believe in this miracle, our lives, inwardly and outwardly, are forever transformed.

Matthew 1:18-25

² Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from 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 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Today we want to look closely at the next verse: "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (v. 21) Let's notice three truths from this verse.

I. Jesus came to save.

The name "Jesus" was a very common one in first century Israel. In fact, this name in Hebrew is actually "Joshua," which means "Yahweh is salvation." Jesus didn't come to condemn the world, but to save it. Furthermore, Jesus differs from Old Testament Joshua in that Jesus, unlike Joshua, comes Himself to save! No man in the history of the world had been able to do that. God alone saves. He uses men in the process, but He alone accomplishes salvation; but here we read "he will save."

II. Jesus came to save His people.

Notice that the angel didn't say that Jesus came to save every individual ever born, regardless of his or her religious affections. No, he said that Jesus came to save "His people." Who are His people? In the Old Testament, God's people are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who have remained faithful to His covenant, along with those in the world who have believed and joined the covenant people. In the New Testament, Jesus and His apostles teach clearly that all people groups in the world are invited to be His disciples. We become His people through simple trust in Jesus. He came to save us all!

III. Jesus came to save His people from their sins.

This is a radical turn from the dominant Old Testament idea of salvation. In the OT, we are saved from the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Babylonians, the Greeks, and the Romans. That is, we are saved by God from the wickedness perpetrated against us by other wicked people. But here, we read that we are being saved from our own wickedness. (The worst problems in life are the ones resulting from our own foolishness.) This salvation will be deliverance indeed!

The New Testament teaches us about the three major aspects of this great salvation:

- 1) Jesus saves us from the condemnation (the penalty) of sin. This is called "justification."
- 2) Jesus saves us from the corruption (the power) of sin. This is called "sanctification."
- 3) Jesus saves us from the conquest (the presence) of sin. This is called "glorification."

We are no longer humiliated, helpless, and hopeless because of our sin, but rather we are free from condemnation, loosed from the bonds of corruption, and full of hope. The Incarnation has gloriously reversed every self-imposed misery. Glory to God in the highest indeed!

Discussion Questions

1. In God's plan of salvation, why was it necessary for Jesus to come?
2. Why, do you think, did the angel say to Joseph that Jesus will save "his people," rather than saying that he will save "the world?"
3. How can someone become one of God's people?
4. Of all the things from which human beings need to be saved, why are our sins the most important? How does our sin affect us? How does salvation affect us?
5. What are the daily, practical implications of this salvation for those who believe?

Going Deeper

1. Have you clearly focused your Christmas holidays on celebrating the truths revealed in Matthew 1:21? What can you do to accomplish that?
2. Do you have a plan to pray for and to share with your lost friends that they might become "his people?" How can you do that more effectively in the new year?