

12-22-13

MATTHEW 1:18-25

"The Name of Jesus"

Matthew 1:**18-25**

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.

21 *"She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.* Romeo asked the question, "What's in a name?" Nowadays, there may be big bucks in a name, if you are having a child. There is a new market out there. I think you can access it through E-bay. People will pay you for the right to name your baby. I heard of one deal that went for \$30,000. I thought, "Man, where was this when I started my family?" But some folks think it is almost sacrilegious to sell naming rights to your child. Normally though we don't usually take names very seriously. The most serious we do get about it is when we have a baby to name. Parents think of family names, Bible names, friend's names, pretty names, all in an effort to land on the perfect name for their child. Sometimes parents have strong disagreements. I wanted to name our first son, Soren Linus. Soren Kierkegaard was one of my favorite writers; Linus was my favorite comic strip character. I thought it was a great name but Beth just wouldn't go along with it. On our second child though I got my way. Beth wanted Hannah Elizabeth, and I wanted Sarah Beth. So, we put it to a church vote. Voters got three options: Hannah, Sarah or Jezebel Delilah. Sarah Beth won. We had similar problems with our fourth child. Beth wanted Jerusha Lynn, I wanted Sharon Leigh so again we put it to a church vote with Sharon Leigh being the hands-down winner. Now, psychologists do recognize that names can cause problems in children. They may develop a complex. Not always is that true however. I had a friend in seminary whose name was Stuart Gordon Barnhill, and it never seemed to bother her. I can imagine there must have been some discomfort for her fiancée however when they sent out the wedding invitations, or when they file their income tax statements with full legal names. Names can be problematic and parents are cruel to name children in funny ways. But

really it is rare to find a Peter Piper or an Ima Hogg walking around. Most names given to children are harmless and meaningless. But not the name *Jesus*.

Names can be used to denote a person's character or describe their mission. For example, William the Conqueror. Alexander the Great, John the Baptist. By the way, do you know what John the Baptist has in common with Winnie the Pooh? They both have the same middle name. But, those are names that describe, they are meaningful. They give you some idea of what that person is all about. And although it is lost in translation so also does the name - *Jesus*. It is from the Hebrew "Joshua" and it means *Savior* 21 *She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins*. This is His mission, His special task.

Now, you've gotta figure that a person born like this is going to have some special mission. He was conceived in the womb of a virgin, not by a scientific trick, but by the Holy Spirit. To say this baby is special would be a gross understatement. The miracle child comes to men bearing the name - *Jesus*, *Savior*, and He is presented in Scripture as the Savior. But what's in a name? So what if many call Him Savior - it's a title, but where is the reality? And, ah, it is here my friend where Jesus is very special. Many people and many things have born the name "Savior." They have been hailed as the savior of men but they could not live up to that exalted title. Many have thought that education would save us and that it would abolish all hatred, and all crime, solve all problems. It was named "Savior" but it could not save. Others thought and think that government can save us. Remember how in the 60s we were told that federal welfare would usher in the great society? This would end poverty and as you destroy poverty you destroy all problems with it. This savior has millions of preachers. Socialism wears the title "Savior" but it cannot save. Other men have their own Savior. You may see money as Savior and prestige and pleasure as savior or you may view your church as savior. These bear the name but can't hold the claim. Religion can't save you. All these things are phonies; they are impostors. There is only one who is worthy of the name. Peter said, Acts 4:12 *And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved*. Simeon in Luke 2, after seeing the infant Jesus said, "OK Lord you can take me home, for my eyes have seen your salvation."

Jesus is it. No other is the true Savior. We Christians know that. When I was six years old my mother was the National Chicken Cooking Champion and appeared on the TV program, *To Tell the Truth*. And my mom was "it." She was the real Martha Hendley. But they had these two other women parading around up there saying, "my name is Martha Hendley." I was indignant. How dare these

people claim that glorious name?! And what made it worse was that three of the four judges believed those impostors. I knew there was only one real Martha Hendley and she was my mom. Don't let yourself be fooled by the false claims of imposter Saviors. The name of Jesus is too precious to be given to another. God has given that title to only one and only one is worthy of it 21 *"She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."*

This is the role of the Christmas child. If you miss this you have misunderstood Christianity; you've misunderstood Jesus, you've misunderstood Christmas. It is amazing to me how false religions view this Jesus. He is to them a teacher, a great leader, a great example, maybe even God incarnate, but the One thing He is not is a Savior. But when you deny this function of Christ you have missed the very essence of His mission which should be as plain as the nose on your face because it is also the meaning of His name. 21 *She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.* The name of Jesus is so precious to the Christian church because it points us to the high office of our Lord, to His role as our Savior. I am convinced that when we stand before the throne of God and face eternity, this is the title of the Lord that will be most precious to us. Because this is the meaning of the name assigned by the angel to the Christ-child, Bernard has said that the name of Jesus is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, and joy in the heart. So, in the teaching of Matthew 1:21 we see first of all then that Jesus is the Savior. Let's call that pt.#1 and it answers the question, "who saves?"

Question and point #2 is "From what does He save?" Luke 2:11 says, "Unto you is born this day a Savior." but so what? What is He coming to save us from? Good question. You know, if Jesus is the answer, what is the question? Well, if you listen to some popular TV preaching you will get the idea that Jesus came to save you or to deliver you from financial worries or from bodily illness. We hear a lot these days about deliverance ministries, deliverance from what? From arthritis and gout and ulcers and poverty and so on. Is that what Jesus came to save us from? Others will give you the impression that Jesus came to save you from bad relationships or loneliness or meaninglessness or powerlessness or the dangers of missing God's wonderful plan for your life. There is a tremendous market for this kind of Savior. Who doesn't want deliverance from debt and sickness and loneliness and weakness? But is that what it says Jesus came to do? I wonder, you know, in Luke 2 the angels told the shepherds, "unto you is born this day a savior." I wonder what they thought they would be saved from? Maybe they thought this man will deliver us from the shackles of Roman rule, from Roman law, from Roman taxes. There was a big market for such a Savior in Jerusalem at this time.

Such a savior would be extremely popular, but was Jesus extremely popular? With some sure, but not with all. Why not? He did not come to save His people from Rome. They wanted very much to get rid of Rome. But He came to deliver them from sin. Were they so anxious to be saved from that? No. Savior, Savior, who needs a Savior? A Savior from Rome, yeah, a military Savior, yeah, an economic savior - yeah, a Savior from sin? "We'll pass, who needs one of those?"

That problem is even worse now. We live in a society that is fast becoming sinless. Not in practice of course, but in theory. Some years back we heard the story of the 20 year old who murdered eight people in a mall in Omaha. One of his friends was interviewed about it and said, *I don't think any less of him for having done this. He just wanted to go out in style.* That's all. Who am I to pass judgment? Over a century ago Fyodor Dostoevsky said, *Centuries will pass and humanity will proclaim through the mouth of their wisdom and science that there is no crime and no sin - only hunger.* Folks, that time is now. The tax supported high priests of American education are drilling it into the minds of a whole generation. "There are no absolute rules. What is right is what you choose to call right and nobody can say you are wrong." The only absolute is that there are not absolutes and of this we are absolutely certain. In our day when the concept of sin is a joke who in the world needs a savior? A Jesus? When the modern secular view holds forth Jesus becomes a cosmic Maytag repairman with nothing to do. Jesus, the Savior from sin, is only needed or wanted where sin is the problem and that wasn't first century Palestine and it certainly isn't 21st century America.

Who has a sin problem? Not me. Oh we admit we have problems - depression, divorce, drugs, sickness, war, debt and so on. We feel these things and are open to help. And Jesus will help with these but how He goes about it is very unpopular. He says, "I'll deal with your sin." "But Jesus, it's my family problems I want to go." "Yes, but I must cut out your sin." I have found that sinners will often demand to be helped, but only in the way they want to be helped. I spoke with someone recently who is angry with every doctor in her town because none of them will treat her like she thinks she needs treatment. I was reading Readers Digest once and ran into this piece that describes real calls received by police departments. Here is my favorite. In Fort Bragg, California a caller reported there was a man at her house forcing her to exercise. An investigation uncovered that the man in question was a physical therapist assigned to the woman by her doctor. There you go. Some of us just don't want the help we need, especially if it doesn't feel good. We are like the man whose leg is paralyzed and the surgeon wants to operate on his back, "Dr., not my back, its my leg that's bad." Here's my point - the symptom is not always where the sickness is. The pain is not always where the problem is. We say,

"Jesus my budget hurts, my family hurts, my conscience hurts." Jesus says, "We have to operate on your sin. I've come to save you from sin. That is what you need." That is what **you** need.

You don't primarily need a military, political, economic, or biological savior, you need a moral Savior, a Savior from sin. That is what the first century needed, because more than Roman taxes could, sin drained their resources. More than Roman guards their sins held them captive. Sin is an awful tyrant, a cruel taskmaster. You can never escape it, you can never defeat it. It is the root cause of all heartache, all pain, all human anguish. And finally the penalty for sin is death. And let's face it, let's face it, when you come face to face with death what do you need? When all that separates you from the eternal highway is the toll booth of God's judgment - what do you want at that point? What do you need to face the sure but overwhelming reality of death? A diploma? You'd spit at a diploma. A cashier's check for a million dollars? Hand a drowning man a big check and see if he thanks you for it. At the point of death all else is rubbish. There is only one thing you will desire and one thing you will need: a Savior, and a Savior from sin. Jesus tells of the rich man whose crops were prospering and he said to himself, "*I'll build huge barns and store my food and say to my soul, "You have many goods laid up for many years, take it easy, eat and drink and be merry."*" This is the man who looks to wealth as his Savior and God calls him a fool - why? Because his time to die had come and his barns were worthless.

What do you need this Christmas? What do you want to find wrapped up and under the tree tomorrow morning? Some socks? A new jacket? A laptop? A smart phone? Or do you have more "spiritual" desires. Do you want a family, all healthy and at peace? It doesn't matter what you think you need, the truth is you need a Savior who can deliver you from sin. Everything else is so much junk until you have a Savior. This is the message Joseph received. There is such a one - his name is Jesus and He came to save his people from what? From their sins.

Finally, let's ask our text who does this Jesus save from their sin? 21 *She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save **His people** from their sins.* You gotta be His people to be saved. You must become one of the Jesus people right? Get yourself some old jeans, grow a beard, buy a guitar, hang out by the campfire and sing, "Kumbaya." That's a Jesus people right? Well, not necessarily. Jesus describes His people in another way. He says He came to seek and save the lost. You gotta be lost. He says He came to call sinners to repentance. You gotta be a sinner. He came to find stray sheep. You gotta be stray sheep. How you doing so far? Do you see yourself as a lost, wretched, hopeless, sinner with the self-help capabilities of a stray sheep in a jungle? Well, good, you

may be His people. But if you are righteous all by yourself. If you think you're a good Joe, a nice fella, an upright man in God's eyes, Jesus didn't come for you. Look at John.10. Jesus came for his sheep. The ones the Father gave him **11,14,15** *"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 14 - I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.* The sheep are His people. Can you say, "bah." But listen, you're no sheep if you want to cling to your moral goodness. That's what the Jewish leaders did. **27,28,26** *27- My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 26- But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.* Jesus is not available to the self- righteous.

I offer two other marks of Jesus people. 6:**37-40** *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.* Jesus talks about those the Father gave Him and they are one and the same with those who believe. The final mark of Jesus people is that their belief leads them to do God's will. In John 10 He said the sheep hear His voice and they follow. In Matthew 12:**50** *whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."* Are you a doer? His people are lost sinful sheep who have been found and so believe and so obey.

The Christmas story says there is one born named *Jesus* who will save His people from their sins. You had better make sure that you will be in that number when the Lord calls for His own. Are you one of His people? Do you belong to Jesus? Does He belong to you? Can you, with the full understanding of what the name means, say from the heart, "My Jesus." I asked at the start, "What's in a name?" In that name, there is eternal life, not earned but offered as a gift. Acts 4:**12** *And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."* Prayer