

Family Talk for Christmas Day, 2021

You Shall Call His Name “Jesus”

A Family Talk by Pastor Joel Christian Glenn
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What is today? Today is Christmas. And what are we celebrating? The birth of Jesus. The focus will be on His name. Whenever someone is born, they need to be given a name. A name is how we talk to directly to someone or talk about someone. Imagine if we all had the same name, or no name at all! It would be very hard to talk to each other. So it's important that everyone have a name.

When Jesus was born, it was no different. He needed a name. But not just any name. The angel of the Lord made it clear what Joseph should name Him:

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS. (Matthew 1:18-25)

So what was Joseph supposed to call the baby? Jesus. And that is of course how we still talk about Him, even now: we know Him by the name Jesus.

There is a lot of meaning in that name. It was not just given to Him at random, or because it sounds nice. The name Jesus actually means something: it means Jehovah, or the Lord, saves. And that's exactly what Jesus came to do: He came to rescue, or save people, from evil and selfishness. And even today, when you pay attention to what Jesus taught, and you live it, He is saving or rescuing you from your own selfishness.

But there was an interesting detail about names it what I read earlier that you may have missed. Did you notice that it said they shall call His name, Emmanuel? That's odd. Is His name Jesus, or is it Emmanuel? It's both! The Lord actually has many names, and every name tells us something about Him. Emmanuel means “God-with-Us.” It reminds us that Jesus is God, and that in Him we are close to God. Another passage gives Him all of these names:

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

Each one tells us something about who the Lord is.

But we can go one step further: not just names, but words that describe what the Lord is like. I have already picked a few: Loving, wise, kind, and strong. What other words describe who the Lord is?

Let's finish where we started: back at Jesus. Jesus is just one name, only two syllables. But all these other names are rolled up into that name. And the same is true of the name "Lord." The Lord, Jesus, is all of these amazing things, all of the time; and He was born at Christmas so that we could learn all of these things about Him.

I want to spend a little time with the teens and adults going deeper into names and what they mean. When you were born you were given a name that you had no say in. As you grew you were raised a certain way that you had little say in. And even now, as adults, there is a lot in your life that is outside of your control.

But as you grew, and especially as you became a teenager, you started trying to make a name for yourself. You wanted to be known for who you were and are, not for your parents or the family you came from. Your given name probably didn't change (although in some cultures it would, and some people still take new nicknames to mark a significant shift in their life), but you wanted to be known by something more than what you were given by others. Spiritually, this is what a name means: all the qualities and characteristics that make you, you. The Teachings of the New Church say this is what a name means in the Word:

And since "name" means what a person is like, a name includes everything in its entirety within that person, for in heaven no attention is paid to someone's name, but when anyone is referred to by name, or when a name is used, an idea of what he is like comes up, that is, of all that is his, with him and in him. This is why "name" in the Word means what a person is like. (*Secrets of Heaven* §2009)

There is a connection between the Lord's name and us trying to make a name for ourselves; because the Lord wants us, in a sense, to adopt His name as our own. When we call ourselves Christians we even use His name to identify ourselves. After His resurrection Jesus sent His disciples out in His name:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Notice that Jesus said to baptize them, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." In other words, in the name of the fullness of God, not just one quality, characteristic, or aspect. They were to use the fullness of God's Divinity, His Humanity, and His Truth.

Jesus was born not just so that we could learn who God was, but so that we could also become like Him. He lived life in a way that revealed what it is to be loving and wise and useful. He was, and is, the living embodiment of all these qualities. As we learn about Him throughout our lives, we come more and more to associate His name with everything that is good and true. And because He embodied these

qualities, He was able to send out His disciples to spread His name throughout the world. The name given Him at birth, and all the names given in prophecy, and the names used of Him since that time, can all be applied to us.

So what name will you be known by? In your family, in your workplace, at school, on the sports field, with friends out on the town, in the privacy of your own home, what qualities, characteristics, and attributes will define who you are known as? We are not stuck with what we were given at birth. The Lord can give us a new name, such that we can be known by His. And through this renaming and rebirth, the prophecy of His own name is fulfilled, and we are saved.