

That Beautiful



“She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Matthew 1:21

SHAKESPEARE’S JULIET put the question, “What’s in a name?” And the Bible answers: Savior. God.

Names have lost some of their currency in this era. Today a name is little more than a convenient label: by it you answer your mom’s call through the screen door; with it your teacher calls on you in class; with it you sign checks. You use it to identify yourself when calling someone on the telephone (“Hi. This is John.”). Unless you are of the favored ilk who are known worldwide by their first name alone (Cher, Elton, Newt, Hillary), a name is worth little beyond its ability to winnow you from an immediate crowd.

But in the eras of Scripture, from the time of the Old Covenant patriarchs to the time of the New Covenant epistles, a person’s name represented the fullness of who a person was. It was synonymous

with his or her character, personality, occupation, worth. So King David in a song can declare—

I will praise the name of God with song
And magnify Him with thanksgiving.
Psalms 69:30

—because to praise the *name* of God is the same as praising God Himself.

*I know of a Name,
A beautiful Name,
That angels brought down to earth;
They whispered it low,
One night long ago,
To a maiden of lowly birth.*

*I know of a Name,
A beautiful Name,
That unto a Babe was given;
The stars glittered bright*

*Throughout that glad night,
And the angels praised God in heaven.*

God the Father, through an angel, gave a name to the incarnate God the Son: Jesus. Joseph, betrothed to Mary, was told that this name would be appropriate because of who and what this child would be: a savior.

Joseph, himself in the Davidic line, understood that the name Jesus (Greek, *Iesous*), though common in the day, had a holy lineage. The origin of the name is the Hebrew *Yehoshua*, which is comprised of the two words *Yehovah* and *yasha*, meaning, “the Lord is salvation,” or, as the angel put it, “He who will save His people.”

Salvation is His name, and salvation is who He is. And Jesus saved us by refusing to save Himself.

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”

John 10:11-15

*The One of that Name,
My Savior became,
My Savior of Calvary.
My sins nailed Him there,
My burdens He bare,
He suffered all this for me.*

How simple, how odd, this business of salvation in God’s economy. The Lord Jesus did not specify individuals from the cross: *I’m dying for Harry and Susan, but not for Frank*. Indeed, the apostle Paul declares that God wants all of mankind to be saved.

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4

Even so, not everyone *will* be saved. Jesus died *for* all, but not all will come, for not all are called. And we must come to Him; we must answer the call—the “whisper”—of the Spirit calling us to believe in Him by faith.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.

John 1:12

*I love that blest Name,
That wonderful Name,
Made higher than all in Heaven.
’Twas whispered, I know,
In my heart long ago—
To Jesus my life I’ve given.*

*That beautiful Name,
That beautiful Name,
From sin has power to free us!
That beautiful Name,
That wonderful Name,
That matchless Name is Jesus!*

Jean Perry



*Being found in
appearance as a man,
He humbled Himself by
becoming obedient to
the point of death, even
death on a cross. For
this reason also, God
highly exalted Him, and
bestowed on Him the
name which is above
every name, so that at
the name of Jesus every
knee will bow, of those
who are in heaven and
on earth and under the
earth, and that every
tongue will confess that
Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the
Father.*

Philippians 2:8-11

