

Introduction:

- A. *“To many, Jesus Christ is only a grand subject for a painting, a heroic theme for a pen, a beautiful form for a statue or a thought for a song. But to those who have heard his voice, who have felt his pardon, who have received his benediction, he is music—light—joy—hope and salvation—a Friend who never forsakes, lifting you up when others try to push you down. There is no name like his. It is more imperial than Caesar’s, more musical than Beethoven’s, more conquering than Charlemagne’s, more eloquent than Cicero’s. It throbs with all life. It weeps with all pathos. It groans with all pain. It stoops with all condescension. It breathes with all perfume. ... Oh! That you all knew his sweetness.”* Thomas Talmadge wrote that in 1894ⁱ and Billy Sunday, the baseball pitcher turned evangelist, liked to quote it. Our songs in every generation are inspired by the name of Jesus. *“Jesus is the sweetest name I know.”*
- B. Jesus’ name is God-given and angel-delivered. **Matt 1:18-25...**

I. “YOU ARE TO GIVE HIM THE NAME JESUS.”

- A. *Yeshua*, Joshua, Jesus. This was not a new name, of course. We think of Joshua who led Israel to conquer the Promised Land. There were several other Joshua’s mentioned in the Old Testament. And, of course, it is a strong and good name today. Joshua, Jesús, a noble name in any language, quietly preaching the gospel, if anyone stops to listen. Because Jesus—*Yeshua*—means *the LORD saves*. Yahweh, the God of Israel, saves.
- B. Many parents choose a name for their child simply because they like the sound of it, or because it is meaningful in their family or culture. But some parents choose a name because of its meaning. They hope it gives shape to their son or daughter, that it reminds them and others of a noble truth. But when Joseph was instructed to give Mary’s child the name Jesus it was different from that. It was more like an

announcement: *Let the LORD's saving begin! Or, The LORD saves, and this child is how he will do it. This is "the LORD saves" child.* It was a name that was more of a verb than a noun.

- C. Other rulers acquire names that boast and bully. *Illus.:* Last spring I read where the head of the Cambodian government declared that journalists could no longer refer to him as Prime Minister Hun Sen. Now all media is expected to use **Lord Prime Minister and Supreme Military Commander Hun Sen.**

Our Messiah is named *The LORD Saves.* It tells us that Jesus *is* himself the saving LORD and that he is the Servant of the saving God. There is no bombast in that name, yet it speaks of greater power and love than any other name given in heaven or earth.

- D. On its own this is a name that seems open to a predicate. *The LORD* (subject) *saves* (verb) ____ (saves *what* or saves *from what*?) What most people in Israel hoped for was that the LORD would save them from the Romans, from poverty, from insignificance.

If you could ask people around us what they'd want the LORD to save them from I suppose we'd hear, *from my sickness, or from the violence in Chicago, or from the Democrats or the Republicans, or from my messed up family, from finals!* But I think you'd have to talk to a lot of people before anyone would say, *from my sins.* It's not that people don't think they have sins but it is kind of like the national debt. It would be great to have a government pay off our national debt but it isn't really on our minds nearly so much as how we're going to afford Christmas. Our sins are like that. Serious, perhaps, but not front burner.

II. "YOU ARE TO GIVE HIM THE NAME JESUS BECAUSE HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE *FROM THEIR SINS.*"

- A. We need to be saved from our sins because they are catastrophic. There is nothing worse, nothing that so ruins life and eternity, than our sins.

- Our sins, like those of Adam and Eve, shame us so that we hide who we are and what we've become—trying to hide from God and others. We dare not face even ourselves.
 - Our sins poison our relationships with pride, insecurity and lies. We are toxic people. We harm others by our sins. Sins are contagious like the plague.
 - Our sins spoil our human nobility, tainting everything about us the way mold gets to bread, rendering our judgments suspect, our loves self-serving, our desires disinterested in the love of God.
 - Our sins burden our bodies with guilt, with excesses, with stresses they weren't created to bear till even our bodies condemn us. Sins sap our strength like heat in summer.
 - Our sins embed within us terrible untruths about God and how he governs lives. We become unwitting idolaters. We doubt God's goodness, his wisdom, his personal care for us. We come to rationalize our guilt and assume a goodness we've never had.
 - Our sins drive us toward the darkness rather than light.
 - Our sins—yours and mine—contribute to the mess the world is in. As G. K. Chesterton wrote, "*What's wrong with the world? I am.*"
 - Our sins condemn us before God. "*The wages of our sins is death.*" The indictment of the Bible is, "*There is no one who seeks God. All have turned away.*" Having cut ourselves off from God we face God's judgment without hope. Death is but the door to hell where we die forever in darkness of our own making.
 - Our sins kill us, body, mind and soul, once and forever.
- B. **We need to be saved from our sins because they are catastrophic and there is absolutely nothing we can do to save ourselves.**
- C. When you think about it, how can anyone save us from what is already done? Sins cannot be undone. Time cannot

be restarted. Who can save you from last year's lie, from yesterday's anger. What's done is done. Guilt is more permanent than a tattoo. Once guilty, always guilty. No one can put enough distance between them and their sins so that they are no longer sinners. And contrary to the popular idea, no good deeds can atone from our bad ones.

- D. The angel said, "He will save **his people** from their sins." Jesus the Messiah has *his people*. Here is a king whose entire population are alienated from him, who have *all gone astray*. A Shepherd whose entire flock is lost. As John wrote, "*He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*" Yet they—we—are still *his people*, the sheep of his pasture. He has come to seek and to save the lost—and such were we.
- E. How will this King whose only subjects are condemned sinners save? *Illus.*: There was an interesting article in the paper this week. **Jesse Jackson Jr**, who along with his wife has served a prison sentence for misuse of campaign funds, posted an open letter to President Obama on Facebook. He asked the President to consider pardoning all former prison inmates who have completed their sentences. He wrote that "*the great 2016 pardoning of the masses will create a resounding echo in history and will mark you as the greatest Christian president ever to serve.*" He said doing this would be greater than the Emancipation Proclamation and that this was "*the only response congruent with the redemption story of Christ.*"ⁱⁱⁱ I was intrigued with this letter. It's startling to think how the President with the stroke of a pen could actually do that—could lift the charges of guilt off every ex-con. Think about what that would mean for those men and women!

Couldn't Yeshua—The LORD Saves—do that? Couldn't he just declare sinners pardoned? Can't the LORD do anything? Frankly, the President could more easily pardon all the ex-cons in America than God could pardon sinners, because God is the Judge of all the earth.

- F. **Nothing in all heaven and earth is so difficult as saving sinners!** Nothing Almighty God has ever done so taxed his power, wisdom and love. Nothing required so many remedies, so much sacrifice, such great patience.
- The *only* way the infinite mind of God could find to save sinners was through substitution, the righteous for the unrighteous. But *“there is no one righteous; not even one.”* Only God is righteous but how could God die for man and still remain God?
 - God himself—God the Son—took on human form. He was Immanuel, God with us, fully human that he might be our substitute, and yet was fully God in order to be a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world. He was tempted as we are and suffered as we do.
 - To be the substitute for sinners the sinless Jesus had to be reckoned guilty of the sins of sinners and then to die for those sins. 2 Cor 5:21 says, *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*
 - Jesus was rejected by the people he came to save. They saw his death as God’s punishment for his own sin and mocked him, taunting him to come down from the cross. *“He saved others,” they jeered, “but he cannot save himself.”*
 - But worse, God himself turned away from his own Son, forsaking him in his suffering, because he was the sin-bearer. Hell surrounded Jesus there, alone, on the cross in that shroud of dark suffering and judgment.
 - **But when Jesus died, sinners were saved.** His blood, spilled there on the ground, atoned for sins. His righteousness was transferred to the unrighteous. A way was opened to God so sinners can come boldly to his throne. Jesus’ last words, *“It is finished,”* spoke of the work he was named to do, *The LORD Saves*. He had done it!

G. Oh, my brothers and sisters, whatever other burdens you have, whatever lays you low and weighs heavily upon you, rejoice that you have put your faith in Jesus—*The LORD Saves*. If you have no other reason to sing, sing for that. If you have no other hope, stand on that. If you feel you are of no account to anyone, stand tall in this.

- *“He forgives all your sins” – “Every debt that you ever had has been paid up in full.” “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*
- *“He heals all your soul’s diseases”* All that sin poisoned within you, all the lies that give you spiritual vertigo, all blindness and lameness and leprosy of your heart—Jesus the Savior has medicine for you.
- *“He redeems your life from the pit.”* Your freedom from death has been paid for. Jesus holds the keys of death and he has paid for your freedom. Hell has no hold on you. The dungeon of your past is not your home, and that home is bright and eternal and warm with the Father’s love.
- *“He crowns you with love and compassion.”* Your past, your sins, are forgotten. You are part of Jesus’ royal priesthood, made regal by the Lord’s own love for you and by his great Father’s compassion for you. You, the found sinner, are the reason for angels’ songs, for the feast being spread, for the Father’s gladness.
- *“He satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”* Your heart’s hunger for love, dignity, meaning, hope, joy, peace—all satisfied, now and forever, because Jesus saved you from your sins.

What a wonderful birth announcement Joseph was given: *“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.”*

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- ⁱ Thomas DeWitt Talmage, *The Pathway of Life*, pp.490-491; also Billy Sunday in *Praise! Our Songs and Hymns*, #644
- ⁱⁱ “Jackson Jr. urges Obama to pardon millions of ex-cons”, Kim Janssen, *Chicago Tribune*, 12/2/16