

# JESUS

## *The Names of Christ:*

Matthew 1:18-21

December 20, 2009

Wesley J. Gabel

Bethany Church

As mother tells it, I was going to be named John. Dad and Mom agreed that my full name would be John Wesley Gabel. If you are familiar with John Wesley, his passion, life, and impact on England and Christianity, you understand it is quite a name. However, in the community where I was born, many were named John. At the last minute, my parents named me Wesley John.

Since I was known as Wesley rather than John, people often spoke about my name. I remember comments as early as four years old. Over the years, I sensed a special destiny, and began walking a different path. I did not mind being different from my peers. I expected to be. I didn't mind if they treated me differently. I had a sense of calling. At times I acted poorly. I had bouts where I was foolish and un-teachable. I was proud and spoke in arrogance and ignorance. It can be difficult to know whether you are speaking in faith or in arrogance. Scriptures teach us to value the opinions of others, to, at the least, carefully listen. My sense of calling, however, helped me persevere through lots of challenges.

Knowing that, I wonder about the name Jesus. Why did God tell Joseph to name the baby, Jesus? In what way is the name Jesus important and relevant for you and me?

In the Bible we discover that when Joseph learned about Mary's pregnancy, he intended to quietly divorce her. His action would suggest to the public that he was the father of the baby,

but was displeased. His reputation would suffer more than Mary's. His plan was merciful and righteous, but God interfered. As Joseph slept and dreamed, an angel appeared and said:

***Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 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.*** (Matthew 1:20-21, NIV)

Joseph was to name the baby Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. The name Jesus, in early Hebrew – Joshua, or in later Hebrew – Jeshua, was commonly used. It was not and is not unique. The name, however, carries the meaning of deliverance or salvation. Although Moses led the people out of Egypt and slavery, Joshua (Jesus in the Greek) led God's people out of the wilderness into the land of promise, to God's place of provision and blessing. Joshua was the conqueror. Joshua led Israel to experience fulfillment of God's promise.

With every mention of his name, Jesus grew a deeper understanding of his identity and call. Savior, Deliverer in some fashion became part of his consciousness. This calling influenced his choices and activities as a child.

Let me digress for a moment. Parents and grandparents, are you using the names of your children and grandchildren to impart destiny? It is not enough to say: "Don't use drugs," "don't drink," or "keep yourself pure for marriage." Children need a sense of identity and destiny. Who are they that they should abstain? Who are they that they should be different? Who are they to flee some things and pursue other things?

Years ago, I recall sisters whose last names were Hogg. The parents named one Ima and the other Ura. Ima Hogg and Ura Hogg! I later discovered that Ima was daughter of a Texas governor, and Ura was a tall tale, a fiction. The story reminds me that all names aren't suitable. If a name doesn't work, give a nickname, and impart destiny. It's important. At baptism, years

ago, people often gave children new names. Some of my friends received a Christian name at their baptism. This practice was especially helpful in cultures where people were often named after foreign gods. There was power in this practice. By faith, Christians imparted a new destiny at the baptism. If you wed Jesus' name to their given name, you can impart destiny. Their given name can take on a redemptive mission, and your children or grandchildren will begin to choose a different lifestyle from their peers. Talk to kids about their names and their calling.

John gives us an interesting picture of how Mary imparted destiny to Jesus. In John 19:26-27, Jesus directs John, the apostle, to take care of his mother. John immediately took Mary into his home; so it's easy to understand why John would share this story about Jesus' mother.

John writes in the second chapter of his gospel that Jesus attended a wedding with his mother and disciples. At the reception, the wine ran out; and Mary brought the problem to Jesus: ***"They have no wine."*** Jesus responded: ***"Dear woman, why do you involve me?"*** In other words, "Mom, what am I suppose to do?" Jesus speaks further: ***"My time has not yet come."*** He's saying, "This isn't the time or place." What does Mary do? She talks to the caterers, points her finger at her son, and says: "Do whatever he tells you." Only a mother can get away with that!

Jesus' very first miracle is not freeing some tormented soul. It's not healing the sick or restoring some injured person. It's providing additional wine, out of water, for a wedding reception. Jesus' mother set him up to do what he was created to do.

Now, if you had a problem at a party with food or drink, would you think of Jesus? How is someone who saves us from our sins relevant? If God and you are not at odds but close, intimate as a father and beloved child, wouldn't he care about everything involving you?

God used Mary and the name Jesus to not only impart destiny to his human son, but also to reveal the closeness to us that has been lost due to sins, and now is regained through Jesus. God is concerned even about your parties. Since there is now no separation caused by sin or ego, you have a God who cares even about the drinks you serve at your party. Through Jesus, weather is changed and a boat ride is made safe. Through Jesus, taxes are paid from coins in a fish. Food is multiplied. Demons are evicted. Sick people are healed. Even the dead are raised.

Through the name and Spirit of Jesus, his followers later heal every kind of disease and raised the dead. They even change the outcome of shipwrecks.

In what area of life, would Jesus be irrelevant? In marriage? No, God invented it! In jobs? It's God who gives us our abilities and planted us here to work. In health? The keys of death and Hades now belong to Jesus.

Do you understand what the name of Jesus means for you? It's your gift to change the outcome of everything. You are meant to reveal its power in every kind of circumstance. People are to learn from you the answer for their challenges. You are meant to open eyes with the word Jesus.

One day Peter and John went to the temple and found a man crippled from birth begging. They didn't have coins or dollars to give him that day. Instead, they had faith to heal him. They announced his healing and helped him up. At that moment, he was healed. Then the two explained:

***By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see. (Acts 3:16, NIV)***

Has your faith come from Jesus? Do you have faith in his name and what it means for your life? Do you have faith to impart destiny? When you were baptized into Jesus' name, you

were wedded to a new identity and destiny. Don't just think about this. Do something about it. You have a destiny and calling. If you are unsure, join me at the end of the service and we'll help you with it. Second, start talking destiny with your children. Don't just ponder what's been said. Do something out of faith. Think of what the names of your children mean. Speak destiny into them. Have they have been baptized into Jesus' name? Then wed Jesus' name with their name, and let them know how they are to bring honor to that name through Jesus. Speak into their life. Your actions now will alter their decisions later... and change the course of their lives.

Do you remember what I said earlier about Ima Hogg? Although her brother would come home with bloody noses defending her honor and she would tire of explaining her name and correcting the myths that she had a sister Ura or Hoosa, she determined to honor her father and brought great honor to her own name as a result. Indeed, she had been baptized into Jesus' name. Through her generosity, which was like Jesus, she became one of the most respected women of Texas in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Whatever your name, you can be wedded to the name Jesus and change your destiny!