

Lent 2014
The Christian Symbol of the Fish
“The Name Jesus”



Text: Philippians 2:5-11 (ESV)

⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Theme: The Greatest Name of All

In the New Testament era, the name Jesus was one of the most popular names for Jewish boys. There are a few cases of men in the new Testament whose names were Jesus. The first name of Barabbas, whom Pilate set free, was Jesus. Jesus Justus was a coworker with Paul (Col 4:11) Jesus was the Greek form of the Hebrew name “Joshua,” which means “The Lord saves.” Because of Jesus Christ, this is the name that is above all names. Jesus is the greatest name of all.

I. It is great because it is the name of our Savior.

The Gospel is simply the story about a man named Jesus. I did a quick search through Matthew’s Gospel, and it is impossible to miss that Jesus is the main character. His named in mentioned hundreds of times. Every story is about Him. It begins when the angel comes to Joseph and tells him to name this child Jesus, because He will saved His people from their sins. When Jesus was 30, He went to the Jordan River to be baptized and the Holy Spirit sent Him into the wilderness to be tempted. Most of the Gospel is about how He preached the good news of the kingdom and healed many people. But there were those who rejected Him. Already in Matthew 12:13 the Sanhedrin plotted how they might kill Him.

But He continued on until He arrived in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The whole city was stirred, and the people asked, “Who this is? The answer was, “This is Jesus.” (Mt 21:10) A few days later He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. While Jesus was on trial, Peter was asked three times whether He was with Jesus, and He denied it. It was at that time that the Sanhedrin sentenced Jesus to death. Then when we was before Pilate, the people were given the choice of setting Jesus or Barabbas free. They chose Barabbas. Then Pilate asked, “*What shall I do them with Jesus, who is called Christ?*” They all answered, “Crucify Him.” (27:22) So they nailed Him to a cross with this sign over Him, “***This Is Jesus, The King of the Jews.***”

However, the grave could not hold Him. On Sunday when the women went to the tomb, they were greeted by an angel who said, “*Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as He said.*” (28:5) The Gospel of Matthew ends with Jesus promise to His disciples, “*I am with you always to the end of the age.*”

The Gospel which we preach is simply the story of what Jesus Christ did for us. He is the Son of God who took on our flesh and went to the depths of suffering and dying on a cross in order to save us. That is why His name is the greatest in heaven and on earth.

The book of Acts goes on to show how the name of Jesus saves us. In Acts 2:36 Peter ended His Pentecost sermon with these words, *“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.”* When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and asked the disciples what they should do. Peter answered, *“Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* The forgiveness of sins and rebirth as the children of God come alone through faith in Jesus’ name. Baptism in His name washes away our sins and clothes us with His righteousness. As Peter writes in Acts 4:12, *“There is no other name under heaven, given to men by which we must be saved.”*

II. This name of Jesus is either something that we have or we love.

There are many people who cannot stand the name of Jesus. There are many instances in the book of Acts when the disciples were forbidden to speak in Jesus’ name anymore. (5:40) When we studied the book of Acts a few years ago in Bible class, I found it interesting that the people never rejected Paul and his message when he preached the law. It was always when he started to talk about Jesus and that He is our Savior, that Paul was thrown out of the synagogues, beaten, and thrown out of town. When people rejected salvation through Jesus, they hated His name. We have been looking at that very thing in our Bible classes on Sunday. Last week Jesus said to His disciples, *“All men will hate you because of me.”* The apostles were persecuted first by their fellow Jews for believing in Jesus’ name.

Then they were persecuted by the Romans. The first century Roman historian describes Christians in this way when he talks about their persecution by Nero, *“Nero fastened the guilt [for the burning of Rome] and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind”.* The Romans considered the followers of Jesus, abominable, mischievous, and hateful.

Today those who reject Jesus also hate His name. There are many people who don’t mind if you talk about God in a generic way, but the hair on their necks begins to stand up when you talk about Jesus. Many people cannot stand it when they hear Jesus’ name.

But the Christian loves the name of Jesus. It is in His name that our sins are forgiven. We bear His name in our baptism. We pray to our heavenly Father in Jesus’ name. We give His name our praise, honor and glory. Our text says that every knee shall bow at the name of Jesus. Some will eventually bow unwillingly, but as His people we will bow in praise to His glorious name. There is no greater sound than to hear the name of Jesus because He is our Savior. The Bible ends with His promise,

“I am coming soon!” His people respond, “*Amen, come Lord Jesus.*”

When the early Christians came up with the symbol of the fish, the acronym’s first word was “Jesus.” Jesus is our Savior. His name is the name which is greatest of all, now and for all eternity.

Amen.

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