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Days of Praise

First Advent Names

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“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)

Matthew records two names for Mary’s first child: Emmanuel and Jesus. In today’s verse, an angel told Joseph to go ahead and marry Mary since her pregnancy was divine. The name Jesus transliterates the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew *Yeshua*. The Hebrew *yasa*, “to save,” lies at its root. Jesus is not just a savior but the Savior! “Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour” (Isaiah 45:15). “We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1 Timothy 4:10).

What qualifies the Lord Jesus to be our Savior? First, He must be one of us—born of a human mother—our kin. We’ve known of this since the Curse: “And I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). We needed the seed of the woman, and God supplied Him!

But each human’s own sin requires propitiation. This disqualifies us from saving ourselves, let alone others. Second, therefore, we need this man to also be sinless God, hence the second name from Matthew, quoting Isaiah: “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:23). The one and only holy God “was made in the likeness of men....Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Philippians 2:7,9). What name? Jesus, God with us, our Savior. BDT

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