

Christ's Wonderful Names

By Malcolm H. Watts

Our Lord Jesus Christ is called by many names and titles in the Bible. William Goode, a minister of the last century, wrote six large volumes of sermons on 155 of these names. In his 'Self-Interpreting Bible', John Brown of Had-dington listed 208 of them. More recently, T. C. Horton of the Bible Institute, Los Angeles, collected together as many as 365. No doubt there are even more to be found within the Bible's sacred pages.

It is possible to become so familiar with these names that we fail to recognise their great importance and significance. In this article we will take another look at just five of the most common.

God

No truth of the Bible is more clearly revealed than that of the true and proper Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. In a number of places he is expressly called 'God'. Isaiah, the prophet, declares that the coming Saviour, miraculously born, would bear the name 'Emmanuel', 'God with us' (Is 7:14; cf Matt 1:21). Later, he predicts that this child-deliverer would be justly called 'the mighty God', a title indicating ultimate deity (Is 9:6; cf 10:21; Deut 10:17; Jer 32:18); and he further reveals that, one day, in the desert part of the land, someone (a reference to John the Baptist) will appear as an herald to announce the arrival of the Christ as 'the Lord' (Jehovah) and 'our God' (Is 40:3; cf Matt 3:1-3).

Divine names are also given to him in the New Testament. As 'the Word', God's self-revelation, he is authoritatively identified as 'God' (Jn 1:1; cf 1:14). He himself claimed, of course, to be 'equal with God' (Jn 5:18) and Thomas, one of his disciples, addressed him with the words, 'My Lord and my God' (Jn 20:28). As for the apostle Paul, he does not hesitate to assert Christ's essential deity, saying that 'Christ Jesus came, who is over all, God blessed for ever' (Rom 9:5) and 'God was manifest in the flesh' (1 Tim 3:16).

Other references to his deity include the following: 'God our Saviour' (Titus 1:3), 'the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ' (2:13), 'God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Pet 1:1), 'the true God and eternal life' (1 Jn 5:20), and 'the only wise God our Saviour' (Jude 25). Although some may deny it, this truth stands as the central doctrine of our Christian Faith.

Since Christ is God, there is about him an infinite dignity. Seeing 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor 4:6), men's hearts are profoundly affected and brought to a holy awe and reverence of him. When Isaiah saw him (in pre-incarnate form), worshipped and adored by exalted seraphim, it was more than he could endure, and he cried out, 'Woe is me! For I am undone ... mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts' (Is 6:5; cf Jn 12:41). Similarly, when the apostle John beheld him, he received such impressions of his

divine excellence that he fell prostrate and motionless before him. 'When I saw him', he writes, 'I fell at his feet as dead' (Rev 1:17). There can be no doubt that as God, Christ deserves this profound respect. He should be worshipped and adored. He should also be obeyed.

The fact that God, in the person of Christ, found it necessary to come into this world suggests that men and women were in some kind of trouble or danger. The fact is, they had broken the Moral Law (summed up in the Ten Commandments), and, as a result, were subject to its severe penalty of everlasting punishment; but God, in his great mercy, came to their rescue, prepared himself to take the place of sinners and to suffer their dreadful judgement. This is the Christian Gospel: 'God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (Rom 5:8).

When he became man, the great thought of his heart was to bring his people to himself, that they might enjoy his grace in this world and his glory in the world to come. As for this world, he says, 'Lo, I am with you always' (Matt 28:20); and as for the next, he says, 'thou shalt be with me in Paradise' (Lk 23:43). What a glorious prospect for believers! 'So shall we ever be with the Lord' (1 Thess 4:17).

Son

The Lord Jesus is often referred to as the 'Son'. In Scripture, while others angels

and men - are called 'sons' (Job 38:6; Rom 8:14-17), Christ is identified as the Son in a sense far beyond that in which it is applicable to any other (Jn 8:36; Heb 1:8; 1 Jn 5:12).

Scripture speaks of him particularly as 'the Son of God', but it also speaks of him as 'the Son of Man' and 'the Son of David'.

He is the Son of God. He is described as God's own Son, his only Son, his only begotten Son (Rom 8:32; 1 Jn 4:9), names which imply that he has the same nature as the Father and that he is one with the Father in being, essence, and perfection. On one occasion, when our Lord used the expression 'My Father', even the Jews perceived that, in saying that he was God's Son in this unique sense, he was, in effect, claiming to be God as the Father is God. 'The Jews sought the more to kill him', we read, because he had 'said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God' (Jn 5:17,18). On another occasion, he actually asserted his essential unity with the Father, saying, 'I and my Father are one (that is, one in nature)' (Jn 10:30) and, again, incensed Jews tried to stone him on the ground of 'blasphemy', because, they said, 'thou, being a man, makest thyself God' (10:31-33).

The importance of this truth lies in the fact that God the Son alone could save us from perishing. Only God could make a sufficiently valuable sacrifice (Eph 5:2; Heb 10:5-7); only he could bear the

terrible guilt and judgement for so many sins (Mk 14:33,34; Lk 22:44); and only he could triumph over death, the grave, and hell itself, so that we might be brought to everlasting life (1 Cor 15:56,57; Col 2:15). Is it any wonder that Scripture describes him as 'the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ'? (Titus 2:13)

He is also, however, the Son of Man. This name occurs over 80 times in the Gospels and it is practically always found on the lips of Christ himself (the only exceptions being when others quote him, Jn 12:34 (twice) and Lk 24:7). Christ used this name more than he did any other. 'The Son of man hath not where to lay his head' (Matt 8:20); 'The Son of man must suffer many things ... and be killed' (Mk 8:31); 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost' (Lk 19:10). Now just as 'Son of God' denotes identity of nature with God, so 'Son of man' denotes identity of nature with man. Long promised as 'the seed of the woman' (Gen 3:15), he was eventually 'conceived' in the virgin Mary and became 'the fruit of (her) womb' (Lk 1:31,42). He became a partner with us in 'flesh and blood' (Heb 2:14). He was 'found in fashion as a man' (Phil 2:8).

This is undoubtedly true, but he was not just a man among men. He was 'the Son of man', in the sense that he was a covenant Head and Representative. Adam had once been given this role, but he misera-

bly failed and brought the whole race to ruin. 'In Adam all die' (1 Cor 15:22). But he was the 'figure of him that was to come' (Rom 5:14). Adam was only 'the first man': 'the second man is the Lord from heaven' (1 Cor 15:45). 'Christ', observe Alexander Patterson, 'cannot be called the second man in any other sense than as he is the federal (covenant) head of his spiritual offspring, as Adam was of his natural posterity'. Jesus Christ was set apart on behalf of his people. He became legally one with us. He acted for us.

only as 'the man' that he could be a compassionate and sympathising Saviour, having experienced for himself our human weakness, temptations, and sufferings (Heb 2:17,18; 4:15,16). For these reasons, then, God's Son was 'made of a woman, made under the law' 'to redeem (or, save) them that are under the law' (Gal 4:4,5).

One further name which deserves comment in this connection is the Son of David. Many Old Testament scriptures taught that the promised Saviour would

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'Therefore as by the offence of one judgement came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life'(Rom 5:18).

So why did the Lord become the Son of man? It was in order that, as a Representative, he might discharge our responsibilities in life and in death. As Son of man, therefore, he appeared in a holy human nature (Lk 1:35; Heb 7:26), yielded a complete and perfect obedience (Rom 5:19; Phil 2:8), and suffered a cursed and agonising death (Gal 3:13; 1 Pet 2:24). Only as 'the man' could he have done these things. And, remember, it was

be of Davidic descent (2 Sam 7:12,13; Is 9:7; Jer 23:5) and those scriptures found wonderful fulfilment in Christ, whose genealogy could be traced back to David (Lk 3) and who was therefore 'made of the seed of David according to the flesh' (Rom 1:3). Hence, we find that during his public ministry our Lord was often addressed in this way. At one point, two blind men followed him, shouting out, 'Thou Son of David have mercy on us' (Matt 9:27); and, on entering Jerusalem at the end of his life, he was surrounded with cries of 'Hosanna (lit., save now) to the son of David' (Matt 21:9).

What did it signify? It meant that like

David before him, Christ was a great King with a great kingdom. If sinners would only receive him and become his subjects, he would welcome them into his present kingdom of grace (Matt 6:33) and promise them a place one day in his future kingdom of glory. 'Lord', said the dying thief, 'remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom'. Our Saviour replied, 'Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise' (Lk 23:43). 'For so an entrance shalt be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Pet 1:11).

Christ

In the Old Testament, the official name for the coming Deliverer was 'Messiah'. It occurs over 40 times and, although generally translated in our Version, the actual name 'Messiah' occurs twice in the book of Daniel (9:25,26). The corresponding word in the New Testament is 'Christ', a word which can be found more than 560 times. Now both Messiah and Christ mean the same thing: 'the Anointed'. What does that signify?

Clearly, it refers to the fact that, in former times, certain persons were anointed to office with material oil, symbolising the influence and virtue of the Holy Spirit. The persons so anointed were prophets, priests, and kings. God spoke to Elijah, for example, and told him: 'Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint

to be prophet in thy room' (1 Kgs 19:16). In a similar way, he spoke to Moses, saying, 'Thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister to me in the priest's office (Exod 30:20). And an unknown prophet was sent to Ramoth-gilead to pour oil on the head of Jehu and to say, 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel' (2 Kgs 9:6).

Now, the Lord Jesus was anointed by the Spirit (Lk 4:18; Jn 3:34) that he might exercise the three offices of Prophet, Priest, and King.

As Prophet (Jn 6:14; Acts 3:22-24), he is able to speak for God with absolute authority. While in this world, he did this immediately, in his own person (Mk 1:15; Heb 2:3), but now he does it immediately, through his ministers (Matt 28:19; Eph 4:11,12). Furthermore, in addition to both these forms of external teaching, there is his internal teaching through the Holy Spirit. He is able to open men's understandings, so that we see the beauty and feel the power of divine truth (Lk 24:45).

What then does Christ teach us? He teaches us the truth about man, that an evil nature is within him, the source of all known corruption. 'Out of the heart', Jesus once said, 'proceed evil thoughts' (Matt 15:19). He teaches us the truth about the Law, declaring that God, as Creator and

Governor, has given to man a perfect, unalterable, and perpetually binding rule for obedience. In his words, 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail' (Lk 16:17). And, in particular, he teaches the truth about the way of salvation. Even though all are sinners, condemned by the Law, God has not left us to perish in our misery but has sent his Son to lay down his life as a ransom for many, and 'he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life' (Jn 3:36).

As Priest (Ps 110:4; Heb 4:14), he deals with an offended God on behalf of guilty sinners, in order to effect a real and lasting reconciliation. Since God is a righteous Governor and men are rebellious creatures, someone was required to meet all the legal claims standing out against them. Accordingly, 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many' (Heb 9:26). He gave up his body, to be spat at, struck with fists, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross, and pierced with the spear (Heb 10:10). He also gave up his soul, declaring that it was 'troubled' and 'exceeding sorrowful, even unto death' (cf. Is 53:10,11). Thus, his whole person was offered up as an all-sufficient sacrifice; and only through him, and what he has done, can sinners draw near to God. We have 'boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus' (Heb 10:19).

The other part of Christ's priestly office is to 'make intercession for us' (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25). This is not to be under-

stood as supplication (which would be beneath his present dignity), but rather in terms of his appearing before God the Father, with all the merit of his sacrifice, in order to secure and bestow the benefits of his redemption (Heb 9:24; 12:24; Rev 5:6). As long as Christ is in the Glory, God will grant us all manner of blessings and receive our worship, praises, and prayers.

As King (Ps 2:6; Lk 1:32), he changes men's hearts by the power of his grace and constrains them to yield to him. 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power' (Ps 110:3). Once brought to faith in him, he rules them by his Word (Exod 20:3-18; 1 Cor 9:21) and defends them from all evil (Ps 89:18; Jn 10:28) until, at last, they find a place in the eternal kingdom. 'The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom' (2 Tim 4:18). So, in the King's care and keeping, believers are absolutely and eternally safe.

Jesus

Our Lord's personal name was 'Jesus'. It literally means 'Jehovah (is our) salvation'. According to the Gospel of Matthew, it was an angel who announced that this was to be the name for the Son of God. 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus', the angel said to Joseph, 'for he shall save his people from their sins' (Matt 1:21).

That name 'Jehovah is our salvation' im-

plies some kind of danger. Since all had sinned, the Law denounced a terrible sentence against us. Condemned to a state of separation from God and to dreadful suffering and sorrow, we were totally helpless and quite unable to rescue ourselves. That is what the Bible means when it speaks of us as being 'without strength' (Rom 5:6). Nor was it possible for a friend or relative to effect our deliverance. As sinners, they all had to face the same judgement. 'None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him' (Ps 49:7).

Although it appeared that we are facing a dark eternity, without a single ray of hope, the Gospel proclaims that God has become our Saviour. 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' (1Tim 1:15).

Now, Christ is able to save. As the Mighty God, he was, in every respect, capable of performing the great work of redemption. 'I looked', he says, 'and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me' (Is 63:5; cf 59:16) No mere man could have saved us. Only God could have done it. And 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself' (2 Cor 5:19). Redemption being now accomplished, he is 'able to save' and, furthermore, 'able to keep' (Heb 7:25; Jude 24).

He is also willing to save. Who can doubt his willingness? Think how he bore his cross up the steep ascent to Calvary, how he let them fix and suspend him on it, and how he endured externally and internally all that sin deserved. Willing? Of course he is willing! If sinners, awakened to a sense of their guilt and danger, turn to him and trust in him, he will receive them as his people and save them by his grace. We have his word for it. 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out' (Jn 6:37).

He is even ready to save. That is exactly what the Bible says: 'The Lord (is) ready to save' (Is 38:20; cf Neh 9:17). Perhaps you feel a complete failure; perhaps you are ashamed of what you have done; or perhaps you have become almost desperate in your search for rest and peace. Why don't you call upon Christ and entrust yourself to him? Only he can meet the deepest need of the human heart. 'Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here am I' (Is 58:9). He is ready to save. The question is: Are you ready call upon him?

Lord

The term 'Lord' often occurs in the New Testament. Although it can simply denote an important person (like a Roman Emperor, Acts 25:26), it is often used religiously as an equivalent for 'God' (as in the title 'Lord God Almighty', Rev 16:7). In this latter sense it is often used as a designation of Jesus Christ. Hence the apostle

Paul's reference to 'the princes of this world' who 'crucified the Lord of glory' (1 Cor 2:8).

The title 'Lord' implies infinite power and authority; and Jesus Christ declares of himself, 'the Son of Man is Lord' (Mk 2:28). This is not so much the lordship which belongs to him as God, but his mediatorial lordship, conferred upon him as the God-man and our Saviour. In this re-

with the person of Christ who once died for sinners but who is now alive to bless us with his great salvation. To become real Christians, we must respond to Christ in faith, as the Scripture says: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16:31). Saving faith (or the faith which saves) receives and relies upon Christ as both Saviour and Lord. It enables us to

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spect, he is 'Lord of all' (Acts 10:36). Furthermore, this title is expressive of the honour and glory which are always due to him. We read that David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, 'called him Lord' (Matt 22:43) and also that Isaiah, in a prophetic vision, saw the holy angels adoring him, and saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts' (Jn 12:39-41; cf Is 6:1,3,10).

It is most important to remember that Christ is Lord throughout the entirety of our Christian lives.

Christ is Lord when we begin the Christian life. What exactly happens in that experience of conversion? Well, the Gospel (or Christian message) is brought to us and, through the Gospel, we are confronted

look to Christ alone for forgiveness and acceptance; and it constrains us to surrender our hearts and lives to the lordship of Christ. In other words, we trust him to save us and to rule us. As Paul wrote to some new believers, 'Ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord' (Col 2:6).

Christ is Lord when we live the Christian life. Christ expects his believing people, not only to be grateful for what he has done for them, but also to be obedient to what he has commanded them. It is right that we call him 'Master and Lord' in our praises, prayers, and in our professions of faith; but, as says himself in the Gospels, 'Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?' (Lk 6:46).

My friend, are you a real Christian seeking

to live in obedience to Christ, or are you a nominal Christian who pays mere lip-service to Christ and who only half-heartedly follows him? Do beware of a dead faith! The Bible says, 'What doth it profit, though a man say he hath faith?' (James 2:14).

Genuine faith in the heart produces sincere obedience in the life. It is exactly as our Lord said, 'If ye continue in my word (i.e. in obedience to it), then are ye my disciples indeed' (Jn 8:31). Knowing this, let us be much exercised to evidence faith in such matters as strict observance of the Sabbath, spiritual separation from the world, and sacrificial service to our God. 'Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments' (Ps 119:6).

Christ is Lord when we end the Christian life. If we have trusted in Christ alone for salvation, and evidenced the reality of that faith in a life of consistent (although, sadly, not perfect) obedience, the Lord will be with us at the end to calm our fears and to give us hope. He will not fail us. He will open the kingdom to us, there to bless us for evermore. Let David speak for us here: 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me ... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever' (Ps 23:4,6).

In conclusion, we must say that the Lord Jesus Christ has these and many other wonderful names. Each sparkles like a rare and precious jewel in his crown. Yet as the Christian poet wrote:

**Join all the glorious names
Of wisdom, love, and power,
That ever mortals knew,
That angels ever bore;
All are too mean to speak his worth,
Too mean to set my Saviour forth.**