

Weekly Reflection - Can you trust this baby? - "Jesus."

Have you ever asked this question? The Word of God is claiming that this baby is the Savior of the world, that this baby is God, that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life and not eternal death. Those are some pretty lofty claims to put on this baby. Can you trust this baby? The only way YOU can get an answer to that question is if YOU get to know who this baby is. Yes, I will try to help you get to know Him, and others can help you get to know Him, but ultimately, YOU need to know Him.

Matthew 1:18-24

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Matthew 1:21 ESV

Joseph was visited by an angel through a dream and was instructed to take Mary as his wife and not to divorce her. Joseph was planning to divorce her quietly, saving her from public disgrace, thinking she had become pregnant by another man. Yet the angel reassured Joseph that her pregnancy was from the Holy Spirit. Joseph and Mary were both instructed by God through an angel to name the child Jesus.

Jesus means "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh is salvation." It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name Joshua. The English spelling of the Hebrew Yeshua is Joshua. But when translated from Hebrew into Koine Greek, the original language of the New Testament, the name Yeshua becomes Iēsous. In English, Iēsous becomes Jesus. So, is this just another baby with the name Joshua (Jesus); or is there something more to this baby and this name Jesus?

In Matthew 1:21 we hear the angel filling up what that name means, the angel tells Joseph and us why this baby is to be called Jesus; ***"for he will save his people from their sins."*** "He" is emphatic in Greek, essentially saying "He and no other" will save people from their sins. Many men were named Joshua and that name means Yahweh saves, but the angel was being very clear, this baby is different, the angel is claiming that this baby is not just pointing at the God who saves but He is the God who will save His people from their sins.

Savior of who?

The verse says He will "Save his people..." Who are "his people?" Initially, it references the Jewish people: The preceding verses of Matthew's gospel provide the genealogy of Jesus through Abraham and the line of Jewish kings, establishing His connection to the Jewish nation. Ultimately, it includes people from all nations: The Gospel of Matthew closes with Jesus saying, ***"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."*** The purpose of Jesus is to save "His people," which the New Testament makes clear includes all who believe in Him, regardless of their ethnic background. So, at this point everyone still qualifies. But we find that there is another qualification stated in this verse. We discover that qualification when we answer the question, "Jesus is a Savior from what?"

Savior from what?

The angel told Joseph exactly why Jesus was coming to earth: to "save his people from their sins." He wasn't going to save His people from the tyranny and oppression of the Romans. That wasn't the mission of Jesus. As the angel told Joseph, his primary mission was to, "save his people from their sins."

When we understand that Jesus came to save His people from their sins we see the second qualification, you must be a sinner to be saved from your sins. Before you or I can be saved by Jesus from our sins we must know that we have sinned and that we need to be saved from the consequences of that sin. It seems to me that pretty much everyone is willing to admit that they're a sinner who makes a

few mistakes here and there. But many don't understand or are unwilling to admit is that their sin condemns them. For many, the reality that eternal punishment is the just penalty for sin is a tough pill to swallow. And yet, that's precisely what Scripture teaches. ***"For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23 ESV)*** Paul opens the salary bag of a sinner, and all he finds in there is death. This death, we must emphasize, is not just physical death but also eternal death – the second death ***"But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."*** (Revelation 21:8 ESV) I'm keenly aware that no one likes to hear that. It's awful, terrible news. But it's absolutely critical that you and I grasp the seriousness of our sin. We must understand our spiritual condition. If you don't understand the seriousness of sin, then you'll never understand why Jesus would take on human flesh, born of a virgin, and lie in a manger. If you don't understand the seriousness of sin, then you'll never understand what you need to be saved from. You and I must see sin as it truly is, the thing that separates us and condemns us before a holy God.

Did Jesus Accomplished His Mission?

So, we have learned that the name of Jesus means "God saves." And that the angel claimed that this baby named Jesus is the one and only one who can save people from their sins and the consequence of their sins, death. But we can't stop there. It's one thing for an angel to make that claim about this baby; it's another thing for this baby named Jesus to actually fulfill this mission to save His people from their sins. Before I will trust and abide in this Jesus, I want more than just a claim made by an angel. I want to know if He accomplished this feat.

I wonder if as Jesus hung there on the cross His disciples thought, "What was I thinking following this guy for three years. He claimed to be the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior and here He is dying on a cross." But I'm confident their thoughts changed three days later. On the third day Jesus rose from the grave. He really did rise from the grave, there is historical evidence that this really did happen, this event has never been able to be disproven. His sacrificial death and then resurrection demonstrated that everything went perfectly according to plan. The cross was God's plan all along.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23 ESV) "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV) Jesus lived a sinless life, went to the cross and took the punishment for our sin (death) and by faith we can receive the righteousness of God. ***"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10 ESV)*** Propitiation means making an atoning sacrifice that appeases God's wrath against sin and satisfies His just judgment, making Him favorable to sinners.

This means He is trustworthy; He did what He said He would do; we can trust Him.

Abiding in God's Word

"So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32 ESV

Mediate on Matthew 1:21

***“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”
Matthew 1:21 ESV***

Ask and think through the following questions:

**Understanding the Bible:*

1. What do we learn about God?
2. What do we learn about people?
3. What do we learn about relating to God?
4. What do we learn about relating to others?

**Applying the Bible:*

1. What does God want me to understand?
2. What does God want me to believe?
3. What does God want me to desire?
4. What does God want me to do?

How am I doing?

1. Am I living in light of this?
2. What difference does this passage make?
3. Am I taking this seriously?
4. If I believed and held to this, how would that change things?

**Matthew Harmon: Asking the Right Questions: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Applying the Bible*