

“Basic Truth” series, #7

Understanding God’s Purpose in Sending His Son¹

By Daryl Wingerd

... and you shall call His name Jesus,
for He will save His people from their sins.
(Matthew 1:21)

God the Father sent His Son into the world with a definite purpose. It was a purpose that can even be seen in His name.

When the angel spoke to Joseph, he told him to name the baby “Jesus” because He would save His people from their sins. The name *Jesus* is the Latin form of the Greek name *Iesous*, which is derived from the Hebrew *Jeshua*. *Jeshua* is a shortened form of *Jehoshua*, which means *Jehovah is salvation*. In the shorter form (*Jeshua*) the emphasis is on the *action* of saving. Therefore, the name *Jesus* means, **The Lord Will Certainly Save**.² So when the angel spoke to Joseph, he was saying this: You shall call His name “*The Lord Will Certainly Save*,” because He is the one who will certainly save His people from their sins.

The world does not need to be further condemned by God. All people since Adam and Eve have been born in a state of condemnation (Rom. 5:12-19, cf. John 3:19-20). God sent His Son, therefore, not to condemn, but rather to save (cf. John 3:16-17). Also, the Father did not risk failure in sending the Son. Jesus came with a clear saving purpose and mission—one that would assuredly be fully accomplished. To better understand God’s saving purpose in Christ, it will be helpful to look closely at the last eight words of Matthew 1:21, emphasizing each word or phrase individually.

♦ **He will save His people from their sins.**

Jesus is the only Savior. As He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). Peter also pointed men only to Christ for salvation, saying, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

¹ This material adapted from the commentary section of the catechism for Christ Fellowship of Kansas City entitled, *Questions and Answers for Learning and Living the Christian Faith*, Copyright © 2004, Christ Fellowship of Kansas City.

² We are indebted here to William Hendricksen’s *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1973), *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 108.

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Jesus did not leave the glories of heaven merely *hoping* that many would believe and be saved. He did not come to seek and *perhaps* save some who were lost. He came “to seek *and* to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10, emphasis added). He was not sent merely to *offer* eternal life to *all men*, but rather to actually *give* eternal life to *all whom the Father had given Him* (John 6:37-39; 17:2).

♦ **He will save His people from their sins.**

Jesus was sent to save *completely*. He did not come in order to *show the way* of salvation or *open the door* to heaven, making salvation ultimately dependant upon a human response. If salvation depended ultimately on the will of the natural man, a will that is hopelessly enslaved to sin, no one would be saved. As we said in the last issue, dead people (cf. Eph. 2:1) cannot follow someone to safety or walk through an open door, no matter how persuasive the invitation. A person who is enslaved to sin is “helpless” and “without strength” (cf. Rom. 5:8) and cannot assist in his own deliverance. He must be *completely* saved by another.

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There is often confusion regarding the intended objects of Jesus’ saving work. Was it His mission to *try* to save as many people as possible? Or was He sent to *actually* save many specific people? Another way to ask these two questions is like this: Was Jesus trying to save *all* people so that many would *become* His? Or was He saving *the many* because they were *already* His? Passages like Matthew 1:21, Matthew 11:25-27, John 5:21, John 6:37-39, John 10:14-16, John 17:1-3, 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and many others, strongly affirm the latter. (We will address this in greater detail in the next issue of the Basic Truth series.)

♦ **He will save His people from their sins.**

Was it unfair of God to send Christ into the world to *intentionally* and *definitely* save many undeserving sinners? Does He have any moral obligation to even *try* to save the rest? It is important to remember that no one *deserves* to be saved. We all deserve to die because of sin. If God had determined to save no one, but rather to punish every person eternally in hell, He would have been perfectly just. Therefore, in determining to save *some* people—*His* people—He cannot be accused of injustice. Instead of pouring out His wrath on *every* sinner who deserves to die, He lovingly and mercifully sent his Son into the world to save many. Anyone who would cry “unfair” should remember that it was the holy and blameless Son of God who left the glories of heaven to suffer and die as a man, all for the sake of *unholy* and *undeserving* people. If anything is “unfair,” (humanly speaking, of course) it is that.

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