

THE NAME OF JESUS
Written by David Platt

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THE NAME OF JESUS

- 25 DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT -

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Introduction

I remember the days when my wife and I decided on names for our six children. With each of them, as soon as we found out they were on the way, we settled on their names. In the months and sometimes years (through adoption) we waited for their arrival in our family, we mentioned their names constantly, wondering and dreaming about who they would be and what they would be like. On the day they finally came into our family, we were ecstatic to put a face with a name and begin the indescribable journey of discovering the depth of who they are.

As we approach Christmas day, the moment when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, I want to invite you to pause each day to meditate on his name. From the beginning of creation and for centuries prior to his arrival, God the Father told us about the name of his Son. Then, when Jesus finally came, angels announced his name with fanfare the world had never seen. Ever since that day, people have witnessed the unparalleled wonder of Jesus' name in the way he lived, died, rose from the grave, ascended to heaven, and now continues his work through his Holy Spirit.

That's what this Advent book is about. Advent refers to the arrival

of someone highly anticipated, the coming of someone extremely significant. This book is a journey through a small portion of the many names of Jesus in the Bible. It is intended to guide us, encourage us, challenge us, and fill us with hope as we anticipate the celebration of Jesus' birth.

At the same time, this book is a reminder that there are approximately 3.2 billion people spread across over 7,000 distinct people groups who still don't know the truth about his name. Some of them have never even heard his name. I've met men, women, and children in villages from the Amazon to the Himalayas whom I have asked, "What do you know about Jesus?" only to hear them respond, "Who is that? I don't know anything about him." Others have heard the name of Jesus accompanied by falsehoods about who he is. Multitudes of people have been told Jesus is merely a prophet among many prophets, or even a god among many gods. They've never heard the truth about who Jesus is, and they currently don't know someone who can share that truth with them. They are considered "unreached" by the gospel, the good news of Jesus' name.

Before Jesus left the earth, he gave us a clear command to make his name known among all of these people groups (Matthew 28:19). So

as we walk through this Advent journey, let's celebrate the name of Jesus. Each day, let's read a verse or passage of Scripture that describes one of Jesus' names, let's meditate on what it means, and let's reflect—either alone or through discussion with family or friends—on the wonder of who Jesus is and how his name has unique power to transform our lives. Then let's pray, praising Jesus for who he is, then asking God to make Jesus' name known among some of the largest unreached people groups in the world, and ultimately surrendering our lives and resources to God as an answer to that prayer.

In the end, let's look forward to the day when Jesus will return and we will see the glory of Jesus' name like we never have before, and we will join with men and women from every tribe, language, people, and nation to praise his name for all of eternity.

Day 01

⋮

Jesus

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

⋮

Matthew 1:21

Can you imagine how shocking this message was to hear? First, for Joseph to find out that his soon-to-be wife was pregnant? Then second, for him to learn that the son she was going to have—and he was going to adopt—would save people from their sins? That’s what Jesus’ name means: “Yahweh, the Lord, saves.” And when you think about it, this is shocking for all of us to hear.

Most people don’t think they need to be “saved.” Most people I talk with either don’t believe in God or they believe that when they stand before God one day, he will allow them into heaven because their good deeds will outweigh their bad deeds.

But it’s not true. God does exist, and all of us have sinned against him. To sin is to turn from God and his ways to ourselves and our own ways. Over the course of 39 books in the Old Testament of the Bible leading up to this announcement in the first book of the New Testament, this message was crystal clear: even the best of people sin against God. And no matter how many good deeds any one of us does, we cannot erase this reality.

This is bad news for all of us. Because just one sin against an infinitely holy, eternally just God leads to infinite, eternal judgment from him. That means we all need to be saved from our sins.

And that leads to the best news for all of us. God loves you and me so much that he has made a way for us to be saved from our sins. God has come to us in the person of Jesus, and with the first announcement of his name, God communicated to you and me: “I want to save you from your sins.”

In other words, God has said to us, “I have come to do what you cannot do yourselves.” That means we can’t—and don’t need to—overcome our bad deeds with enough good deeds in our lives. Instead, we need to stop trusting in ourselves altogether. We’ll never be saved from our sins because we’re good enough. We’ll only be saved from our sins because God is gracious enough. Thankfully, God has shown his grace to us in Jesus, who came to live a life of no sin, to die on the cross for our sin, and to rise from the grave in victory over sin.

The greatest news in all the world is that you can be saved from your sins—and from infinite, eternal judgment due your sins—by turning from your sin and yourself and trusting in Jesus as your Savior. Trusting Jesus—whose name means “the Lord saves”—is without question the most important decision you can make in your entire life.

REFLECT

Have you trusted in Jesus as your Savior? If not, what is keeping you from trusting him? Every follower of Jesus I know has had questions or reservations before they followed him, so talk with a Christian friend about the questions or reservations you might have. Or if you have already trusted in Jesus as your Savior, identify a friend, family member, or neighbor who you can talk to this Christmas season about the One who came to save them from their sins.

PRAY

Praise Jesus for saving you from your sins, and pray for opportunities to share Jesus with friends, family members, and neighbors this Christmas season. Then pray for the Shaikh people who mainly live in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. They comprise over 102 million people, almost all of whom are Muslim and have never heard that Jesus is the only One who can save them from their sins.

Day 02

⋮

Snake Crusher

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and
between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise
your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

⋮

Genesis 3:15

The first time we ever see the gospel—the good news that Jesus will save all who trust in him from their sins—is in the third chapter of the Bible. In Genesis 3:15, God delivers a promise that will shape the rest of the story of the Bible and all of human history, including each of our lives.

Everything was good in the first two chapters of the Bible. God and men and women existed together in perfect harmony with each other and all of creation. But at the beginning of Genesis 3, sin entered the world when Satan—through the form of a serpent—tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God. They gave into that temptation in a moment that became known as the “fall” of humanity.

From that moment on, everything that was good became spoiled by sin. Man and woman were now separated from God, and their relationship to God was marked by guilt, shame, and fear. Man and woman’s relationship with each other and all of creation was also marred. Ever since Genesis 3, the curse of sin has affected all of human history, leading to natural disasters, moral evil, horrible injustices, unimaginable suffering, and ultimate death.

Yet here in the middle of what is in some ways the worst chapter in the Bible, God gives a promise. He tells the serpent that there will be “enmity,” or hostility, between his offspring and the offspring

of the woman. All who will come after Adam and Eve—including you and me—will experience a battle with sin in our hearts and the effects of sin in our lives. At the same time, God promises that eventually an Offspring from Eve will come, and though Satan would harm his heel, this Offspring would “bruise,” or as some translations say, “crush,” the serpent’s head. In other words, God promised to send someone who would decisively destroy sin and Satan himself.

Jesus is the fulfillment of this first promise, and his coming makes clear that God does not leave us alone in our battle with sin. Jesus, “born of a woman” (Galatians 4:4) named Mary, lived a sinless life, never once giving in to temptation. Then, although he had no sin of his own to pay for and no curse for which he deserved to die, Jesus chose to die. As Galatians 3:13 says, he became “a curse for us.” He took the curse of our sin upon himself on the cross so that we could be forgiven of all of our sin against God. Then he rose from the grave, defeating sin and death and triumphing over Satan (Colossians 2:15).

Jesus is the Snake Crusher, the fulfillment of God’s promise in Genesis 3:15, and he gives all who trust in him freedom from the power of Satan today and the penalty of sin forever.

REFLECT

How does Jesus' victory over Satan affect the way you battle sin in your own life? In what specific ways do you need to trust Jesus to give you power over sin and Satan today? If you haven't already, identify other followers of Jesus who can encourage and pray for you as you battle against sin with the power of Jesus in you.

PRAY

Praise Jesus for his victory over sin, Satan, and death, and pray for his help in your battles with temptation and sin. Then pray for over 119 million Japanese men, women, and children who live in Japan, most of whom do not know—and have not even heard about—the victory of Jesus over sin and death.