

THE WONDERFUL NAMES OF JESUS

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When a beautiful diamond is observed, it is carefully examined with a magnifying lens, and the viewer marvels as its many facets radiate and reflect the light shining upon it. In the same way, Jesus is the “radiance of the glory of God” (Heb. 1:3). As we carefully look at him through the many facets of his names found in Scripture, we can behold the glory of our Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

Jesus is the name that an angel told Joseph to give the baby in Mary’s womb. Jesus means “the Lord saves” because “he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). But Jesus is not the only name for the Son of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is revealed in many wonderful names, titles, and images throughout Scripture.

My goal is not to cover all of the names and titles of Jesus in Scripture, nor to attempt to rank them and cover the most important ones, but to selectively reflect on a few of the many ways Scripture refers to Jesus. Each designation calls us to worship, to trust, and to obey the glorious one behind the names.

The Light of the World

In the book of John, Jesus refers to himself with a whole range of names that point to his unique identity. His “I am” statements echo both God’s revelation to Moses at the burning bush (Exod. 3:14), as well as the litany of “I am” proclamations in Isaiah’s Book of Comfort (chapters 40-55). Among these statements, Jesus announces, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12).

When Jesus was born, light came into the world: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:4). Jesus is the life-giving light who delivers us from the kingdom of darkness and makes us children of the light. Those who follow him will not walk in darkness but have the light of life (John 8:12).

We once dwelt in deep darkness, and we loved the darkness because our works were evil (John 3:19). But the true light has enlightened us, giving us the light of life and guiding our path. I must remember this as I confront the daily darkness of living in this fallen world. Trials, failure, and the uncertainty of life can darken our hearts with sorrow, worry, and despondency. But the light of the world has come, and he promises to turn the darkness before me into light (Isa. 42:16).

The Good Shepherd

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It is also in the gospel of John that Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11). He is the one who leads the sheep (John 10:3) and lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11). In Psalm 23, David calls him “my” shepherd and concludes, “I shall not want” (Ps. 23:1). If Christ is our shepherd

leading us and caring for us, what more can we want?

As our shepherd, he lovingly oversees his church and each one of us. We hear his voice and follow him; He gives us eternal life, and we will never perish (John 10:27-30). All who belong to him are secure in his sovereign care, and he has promised that no one can snatch us from His hand (John 10:28).

It is this name that I must always remember when I see our congregation and evaluate my own work as His under-shepherd. I must remember that ultimately it is Christ who leads his sheep—it is he who cares for them and feeds them and protects them. What a wonderful feeling it is to rest under the knowledge that he is our great shepherd and that we will never be led astray under his tender care.

The Prince of Peace

Centuries before his birth, the prophet Isaiah spoke of the one to come as the “prince of peace” (Isa. 9:6), for in him God has reconciled sinful men to himself and each other (Eph. 2:14-18). As a prince, he conquers his enemies and reigns victorious; as the prince of peace, his victory issues not a reign of terror for his subjects but a reign of peace, unity, and joy.

Because Jesus is our Prince of Peace, we are no longer children of wrath. God is for us. We were reconciled to God through our Savior’s death while we were still sinners and thus enemies of God (Rom. 5:8-10). Now that we are reconciled, we can be sure that we will be saved by his life, for Christ lives as our peace and intercedes for us at the right hand of God. He also gives us peace with each other, empowering his church to live in harmony and to maintain the bonds of peace. How we need our Prince of Peace every day!

The Rock of Refuge

There are various ways Christ is described as a rock or stone, each with distinct significance. Peter calls Jesus a Living Stone upon which we are being built up (1 Pet. 2:4-5). Paul identifies Jesus as the “Rock”—the spiritual rock from which Israel drank and was refreshed (1 Cor. 10:4). The Psalms speak of a stone that would be rejected (Ps. 118:22). The prophet Isaiah points forward to Christ when he describes the one who will be like “the shade of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa. 32:2). Jesus Christ is, therefore, our foundation and strength, our strong fortress and deliverer, our stronghold and shield in whom we take refuge.

I can’t count the times I have needed him to come to be my refuge. The enemy “prowls around like a roaring lion” to intimidate us (1 Pet. 5:8), but Christ in us is greater (1 John 4:4). When people oppose us or speak against us falsely, when the economy falters, or we experience loss, we can quickly fall into fear or despair. But it is then that Christ emerges as our great rock of refuge, able to keep us from stumbling (Jude 24).

It is the power of Christ that guards and keeps us. He stands with us to strengthen us in his might so that we can stand firm against all this life throws at us (2 Tim. 4:17). I sometimes look back on my life and consider the many difficulties I have faced. Every difficulty is a testimony to the security and faithfulness of Christ our rock, and I can only praise him.

O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer
Strong defender of my weary heart
My sword to fight the cruel deceiver
And my shield against his hateful darts

My song, when enemies surround me
My hope, when tides of sorrow rise
My joy, when trials are abounding
Your faithfulness, my refuge in the night¹

A Glorious Savior

Jesus is my song, my hope, and my joy. So much more could be said of the glorious names, titles, and descriptions of Jesus. He is the bread of life who alone can satisfy (John 6:35), the true vine who causes us to bear lasting fruit for his glory (John 15:1), the Resurrection, and the Life who gives us eternal life (John 11:25). He is Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8), the Lion of Judah (Rev. 5:5), and the bright morning star (Rev. 22:16).

He is the Lord our Righteousness (Jer. 23:6). He is Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). He is the man of sorrows who was smitten by God (Isa. 53:3-4) and the lamb of God who takes away our sin (John 1:29). But death could not hold the Prince of life (Acts 3:15)! He is the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18), the last Adam who swallows up death in victory (1 Cor. 15:45), the Redeemer who lives forever (Job 19:25). He is the head of the church, the overseer of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25), the founder and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2).

What a glorious Savior! There is no one like him! Jesus is named with many names in Scripture, and the more we learn of him, the more we treasure him. Resolve to study his names and know them well. Explore the majesty and the preciousness of our Lord. In every name he is given, there is something distinct to thrill our hearts and transform our lives.

1. "O LORD, MY ROCK AND MY REDEEMER." MUSIC AND WORDS BY NATHAN STIFF, 2017 SOVEREIGN GRACE WORSHIP.

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