

**“You Shall Call His Name Jesus,  
for He Will Save His People from their Sins”**  
Matthew 1:21

**PART 1**

after reading selections from Isaiah 42-43

- I. Here we are again celebrating the birth of the Lord into our natural world.... So in this first reading we are reminded that this “Lord” is really and truly the same “Lord” who is Jehovah, the almighty God, Creator and Ruler of all in the universe – infinite, all-knowing, all-powerful and everywhere present (although invisibly) all at once. This very God that we cannot see with our natural eyes came into the world as a natural Man to redeem and save the human race from its own mistakes – it’s own errors, it’s own evils and misunderstanding.
  - A. To see that very clearly we have to remember that the word, LORD, in the Prophets in Hebrew is actually JHVH ... (explain).
  - B. HE is our Saviour, and there is no other. So when the angel told Joseph that they should call the baby Lord’s name JESUS because He would SAVE His people from their sins, he was talking about God appearing in the body of a person they could see and understand.
- II. Why did God do this?? – because He loves every one of us, and He could see that no one else in the whole world would be able to do the things He had to do to save us – because no one else would have enough love or enough understanding, or enough power to make things right. But He knew HE could, if only people would listen, and follow Him.
- III. So as we read together in the recitation from Luke, “He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us....” A horn is a symbol of power and strength – like the horn of a ram or perhaps a rhinoceros. Of course the Lord was not an ordinary horn, but He WAS tough; He was powerful and strong when He faced the mean people who hated Him and tried to persuade people not to listen to Him. And He was especially tough – powerful and strong – in fighting within Himself against the evil spirits of hell who were really out of control and causing problems everywhere.
- IV. This is why the Lord was born. HOW He is our Savior we will see in a few minutes.

- continued...

**PART 2**

after reading Matthew 1:18-25 &amp; AC 3004

- I. Now in our reading from Matthew we are reminded that the angel told Joseph they should call the name of the Child who would be born to them JESUS. And in our last reading we were reminded that JESUS is a word that means SAVIOR. They were to call His name JESUS “because He would save His people from their sins.”
- II. But what does it mean to be saved from our sins?... And how does this work?
- A. Well, first of all, remember that JESUS is a name that represents (or reminds us of) the qualities of Divine Goodness or Love. In other places in the Word, esp. in the Gospel of John, He is called CHRIST and He is said to have come “to bear witness to the TRUTH,” or to bring LIGHT into the world and make wise JUDGMENTS. But here, in both the stories of His birth (in Matthew and in Luke) He is called JESUS to remind us of His LOVE.
- B. And it is VERY important for us to remember that it is really LOVE that saves us, not truth! Oh yes, we need the truth to learn how to live well so that we can receive the Lord’s love, and the Lord Himself needed to know the truth so that He could give His love wisely to all of us. But it is still LOVE that saves us.
1. How else do you think the Lord can forgive us for all our stupid mistakes? If He didn’t love us He would just leave us to hurt and maybe even destroy ourselves and each other. It is because He loves us that He can say, “It’s alright; I know you will make mistakes, but I am here to help you.”
  2. The truth by itself actually would condemn everyone because nobody can be right all the time, and so if the Lord judged us only by the standards of truth none of us could ever be blessed or saved.
  3. But because He teaches us the truth with love we can always learn, and grow, and change – little by little – and He never gets ANGRY with us and He never actually wants us to suffer for making our mistakes (it’s just that sometimes this is necessary so that we can learn from them).
- C. When the Lord was first born He was a lot like other babies, that is, He didn’t know anything, He couldn’t walk or talk, and He certainly couldn’t do any miracles. But ONE THING made Him different than all other babies, and that is His infinite LOVE. He came into the world because He LOVES every one of us (He made us, after all) and He wants us to be happy and well. So it is this LOVE that also inspired Him to grow in wisdom and power all His life so that He could overcome the hells and free us from their awful influence.
- III. But... how does He save us from OUR sins when we weren’t even born when He lived in the world? What does it mean to be saved from our sins?

- A. To be saved means to be healthy or well. And we are NOT WELL when we are feeling miserable about all the mistakes we have made, and we are NOT WELL when we are still making those mistakes – being selfish, concentrating too much on worldly things, saying or believing things that might not be true, cursing, coveting or being unkind to others, in general forgetting about the Lord, His love and what He has taught us.
- B. Of course we all have these problems! – just like the people living when the Lord came into the world. But if we can somehow accept that the Lord loves us anyway, and that His truth or wisdom ALWAYS comes from His love, then if we believe in HIM we can begin to believe in ourselves as well – not that we are anything special by ourselves, but that with His help we can learn and grow and gradually overcome the things that keep us from being happy and useful and well.
- C. We can let go of the past and focus on the present – on the LORD’s presence in our hearts and in His Word; even on the Lord’s presence among those who mistreat us (usually because they don’t know any better) – and we can let His heavenly teachings lift us up out of our worldly limitations and concerns.
- III. Now it may occur to some of you that this seems a lot like the teaching of certain evangelical churches that focus on being “born again” and saved by the Lord without really doing anything themselves. Those churches have a point, of course, because they know the Lord loves them and that He came to help them. And knowing that is very, very important. It has helped millions of people get over millions of problems.
- A. But here’s the difference: – in the New Church we know that the reason the Lord came was not just to show His love by suffering *for us* but to teach the truth with love so that we could have the knowledge and understanding we need to get well – by believing that He believes in us, by accepting His help, and by doing the right thing as much as we can – a little more each day, each week, each year until we really start to feel good because we have allowed HIS goodness to affect us.
- B. What a joy and what a relief it is to know that in spite of everything we may have done or suffered, in spite of all the DUMB things that we may have said or thought, the Lord loves us and cares enough to come to us, to stay with us, to work with us, in fact to SAVE us from our sins if we are willing.
- IV. This is the great message that the angel brought to Joseph, and in fact to Mary as well: – “You shall call His name JESUS because He will save His people from their sins.” When we’ve tried everything else and nothing else works, when time has run out and we continue to struggle, when we come to realize that we can’t save ourselves, His love will save us because His love will inspire us – as it inspired HIM – to learn and do what we need to do to get and stay well.

Amen.