

## THE NAMES OF JESUS

### Background

The Lord Jesus (*Iesous* [Greek]; *Yeshua* [Hebrew]) was given many titles, which can be seen as both affirmations of who he is and confessions of faith in him. W. Graham Scroggie, in his *Guide to the Gospels*,<sup>1</sup> refers to fifty-two such titles, but it is the simple name 'Jesus' by which the Lord is most often referred to in the Gospels – almost six hundred times, in fact. The name emphasises the real humanity of the Lord. Whilst to us it has become a sacred name, and many would consider it irreverent to give it to any child today (though in some Latin societies this is not an uncommon practice), in New Testament times it was one of the most common names for a boy. 'Jesus' is the name by which the Old Testament name 'Joshua' is translated. Whilst it was a common name in the first century AD, by the second century it was rapidly dying out. Among Jews it had become a hated name and among Christians it was too sacred for common use.

Ordinary though the name 'Jesus' was, it was nevertheless significant. In the ancient world a name was sometimes seen as describing something about the person to whom it was given. It was given to our Lord by the direct instruction of God (see Matthew 1:21). Indeed, the name might have been thought somewhat irregular by people at the time as it was customary to name eldest sons after their father. We would note, in this regard, that Jesus had no biological father, so in his name may be found some clue as to his heavenly Father. The rabbis had a saying: 'Six persons received their names before they were born, namely, Isaac, our great lawgiver Moses, Solomon, Josiah, Ishmael and the Messiah.' Jewish belief was that God would directly command what the name of the Messiah must be.

In both Hebrew and Greek forms, the name Jesus has a special meaning, being in a sense, a one word summary of the work that the Lord was sent to do. In Hebrew the name 'Joshua' means, variously, 'God is my help' or 'God is rescue' or 'the help of God'. In Matthew 1:21 we read, ". . . you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." The very name Jesus, therefore, marks him out as Saviour. 'He is God's divinely appointed and divinely sent Rescuer,' writes William Barclay, 'whose function it is to deliver men from their sins. He came to rescue men from the estrangement and the alienation from God which is the consequence of their past sins, and for the future to liberate them from the bondage to sin, from the moral frustration and the continuous and inevitable defeat which are the result of sin. He came to bring friendship for fear, and victory for defeat.'<sup>2</sup>

To the Greek mind a connection was made between the name Jesus and the verb *iasthai*, which means to heal. The connection between the two words is only in the sound, but the Greeks made much of the idea of Jesus as the healer of the bodies and souls of men – the one who alone could bring health to the body in its physical pain and cleansing of the soul polluted by sin. It was no accident that Jesus was given his name, for it summarises the things he came to do and which *only* he could do. He came to be the divine rescuer of men from the consequences and the grip of sin.

### The Son of Man

Jesus' often-used self-designation was 'Son of Man'. Used in the Gospels over 80 times, it is a reference to Daniel 7:13, *bar anash* (Aramaic, son of man; only found in this verse). Jesus applied this verse to himself in Matthew 26:64; *ben ha-adam* (Hebrew) or *uion tou anthrou* (Greek), son [of the] Man, as coming before the Ancient of Days to receive eternal dominion. *Ben enosh* (Hebrew, son of mortal man) is used in parallel with *ben adam* (Hebrew, 'son of mankind'). See Daniel 7:13; Psalm 144:3; Ezekiel 2:1; Matthew 26:64.

### **The prefix 'son of' is one of four main titles of the Lord Jesus:**

*Son of Abraham* – Matthew 1:1; Luke 3:34.

*Son of David* – Matthew 1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15; 22:42; Mark 10:47, 48; Luke 18:38, 39; Romans 1:3; [and, 'I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star'; see Revelation 22:16b].

*Son of man* - Matthew 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41; 16:27, 28; 17:9, 12, 22; 19:28; 20:18, 28; 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 24, 45, 64 (see also in Mark, Luke and John); Acts 7:56; [see also Revelation 1:13; 14:14, "like a son of man"].

*Son of God* – Matthew 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 16:16; 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54; Mark 1:1; 3:11; 15:39; Luke 1:35; 4:3, 9, 41; 22:70; John 1:34, 49; 5:25; 11:27; 19:7; 20:31; Acts 9:20; Romans 1:4; 2 Corinthians 1:19; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29; 1 John 3:8; 4:15; 5:1, 5, 10, 12, 13, 20; Revelation 2:18.

Also: *Son of the Most High God* (Mark 5:7; Luke 1:32; 8:28); *Son of the Blessed One* (Mark 14:61) and *Son of Mary/Joseph* (Mark 6:3/John 1:45).

Jesus has many names in Scripture, which reflect his character, nature, deity, humanity, identity, apostolic calling, mission, etc., including those listed below. [Note: Biblical references provided are intended as helpful pointers to passages for study, and there may be overlaps and multiple instances, so are neither necessarily in order nor always to complete verses, so please see the context and exact rendering in the Bible in each case; also, capitalisations may differ from those used here]:

*Almighty, Author & Perfecter, Beloved, Branch, Bread of Life, Bridegroom, Bright Morning Star, Carpenter, Chosen One, Cornerstone, Counsellor, Door, Immanuel, Everlasting Father.* See Hebrews 12:2; Ephesians 1:6 [KJV]; Isaiah 11:1; John 6:35, 48; Matthew 9:15; 25:6; Mark 6:3; Luke 23:35; Isaiah 28:16; 9:6; John 10:9 [KJV]; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6. Also: *faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth* (see Revelation 1:5); *the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation* (see Revelation 3:14).

*Firstborn, God, Head of the Church, High Priest/Apostle, Holy One, Hope, Image of God, Jesus, Judge, Lamb of God, the Lamb, Lord of lords and King of kings.* See Colossians 1:15, 18; John 1:1; Ephesians 5:23; Hebrews 3:1; Mark 1:24; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Matthew 1:21; John 5:22; 1:29; Revelation 17:14.

*Last Adam, Light of the world, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, Living Water, Man of Sorrows, Master, Messenger of the Covenant, Messiah.* See 1 Corinthians 15:45; John 8:12; Revelation 5:5; John 4:10; Isaiah 53:3; Luke 8:24; John 13:13; Malachi 3:1; Daniel 9:25, 26; John 1:41.

*Mighty God, Prince of Peace, Prophet, Redeemer, Resurrection and Life, Saviour, Shepherd, Shiloh, Son of God, True Vine, The Way the Truth and the Life, Wonderful.* See Isaiah 9:6; John 6:14; Job 19:25; John 11:25; Luke 2:11; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4; Genesis 49:10; Luke 1:35; John 15:1; John 14:6; Isaiah 9:6 [KJV].

### Other titles and attributes of Jesus

Scripture adds many other attributes, titles and names of the Lord Jesus, and a search for these is most rewarding as they enlighten the eyes of our heart and help us to be found in him and know him better (Ephesians 1:18; Philippians 3:9–10) –

**The Word of God** *memra* (Aramaic), *logos* (Greek), *dvar haElohim* (Hebrew); see Genesis 1:1 (Targum Yonathan); John 1:1, 14.

**The Angel of the Lord** *malach*, (messenger) – see Genesis 16:7; Exodus 3:2; 14:19.

**The Anointed** [One] *mashiach* (Hebrew, Messiah, anointed) – see Daniel 9:25, 26 [KJV]; 1 Samuel 2:35; Psalm 2:2; Isaiah 61:1; John 1:41; 4:25; Acts 4:27; 10:38.

**Christ**, *christos*, (Greek, anointed) is used throughout the New Testament – see Matthew 1:1, 16; 16:16, 20; Mark 8:29; Luke 2:11; 9:20; 24:46; John 11:27; John 20:31; Acts 2:36; 3:6, 18, 20; 4:10; 5:42; 9:22; 17:3; 18:28 and often in Paul's letters.

**Rabbi** (*rav*), (Teacher, Master) – see Ecclesiastes 1:1; Matthew 8:19; Mark 12:14, 19.

**King** (of Israel/Jews) – see Matthew 27:42; John 1:49; 12:13 / Matthew 2:2; John 19:19.

**Suffering Servant** – see Psalm 22:13–18; Isaiah 42:1 (cf. Matthew 12:18); Isaiah 53:2–12; Zechariah 3:8; Matthew 16:21; 26:37–38; 27:46; 20:18; 20:28.

Jesus said, *“I and my Father are one”* (John 10:30). Thus stating his identity with God's name as revealed to Moses (expressed as I AM WHO I AM or I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE; Exodus 3:6, 14–15, the four-letter Hebrew name YHWH), Jesus' oneness with the eternal God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was signified.

Jesus' “I am” statements recorded in John's Gospel are:

I AM the Bread of Life	John 6:35, 48
I AM the [real] living Bread that came down from heaven	6:32, 33, 41, 51
I AM the Light of the world	8:12; 9:5
I AM the Gate (Door) for the sheep	10:7, 9
I AM the Good shepherd	10:11, 14
I AM the Resurrection and the Life	11:25
I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life	14:6
I AM the True Vine	15:1, 5
I AM (He)	18:5, 6, 8
Before Abraham was born, I AM	8:58

**Note:** Readers who want to take a fuller look at Jesus' “I am” statements free on the Glory to Glory website are directed to *The Empty Promise of Godism* Chapter 9 and Appendix 2 – both downloadable as PDF files.

<sup>1</sup> W. Graham Scroggie DD, *A Guide To The Gospels* (Pickering & Inglis Ltd, 1948) p. 519.

<sup>2</sup> William Barclay, *Jesus As They Saw Him* (SCM Press Ltd, 1962) p. 12.