



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

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"I am the Alpha and Omega. I am the First and the Last. I am the Beginning and the End." (Revelation 22:13) These were Jesus words to John, when he began to write the Book of Revelation.

Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, in which John wrote, and omega is the last letter. So, in English, that's like saying, "I am the A to Z." The First and Last, the Beginning and the End—it's all like saying, "I am the whole thing, from start to finish."

In fact, when John wrote his Gospel account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he began with this: "In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh." (John 1:1-3)

He identified Jesus as the Word at the beginning—the first Word, the creative Word from God. That Word was with God, and, at the same time, that Word was God (God speaking). And it was that same Word (God) that became flesh, a man (Jesus). That describes the nature of Jesus (the God-man).

When an angel announced to Mary that she had been chosen by God to bring His Son into the world, the angel also said, "You will call His name, Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." And that's what she and Joseph called Him: Jesus.

At least, that's the English pronunciation of His name, which sounds like His name in Greek, the original language of the New Testament: *Iesos*.

Both Joseph and Mary were born to Jewish parents. In their Hebrew language, the child's name was *Yeshua* (which came from the Old Testament name, Joshua). In whatever language His name is spoken, it still bears the same meaning that the angel gave: "He Saves" or "God Saves."

Names don't always have God-given meanings, but many do, especially in the Bible. Jesus was His given name, but He was and is also called by many other names that illustrate His character and mission.

“Word of God,” “Bread of life,” “Light of the world,” “Water of life,” “Lamb of God that takes away the world’s sin,” “Redeemer,” “Savior of the world,” “King of kings,” just for starters.

That’s not to say that any name will do, or that all names for God have the same value, but it does say that many names for God have been revealed in the Bible, all of which help us to understand Jesus better.

For instance, “Word of God” tells us that Jesus is the human expression of God’s heart and mind to the world. One book in the New Testament (Hebrews) begins with these words: *“In the past God spoke to our ancestors at many different times and in many different ways through the prophets. In these last days he has spoken to us through his Son.”* All that God has to say to mankind, in human terms, can be seen and heard in Jesus Christ. No one else can do that for us.

“Bread of life” tells us that Jesus is food for the soul, like bread is food for the body. Jesus nourishes and strengthens our spiritual life, just like bread nourishes our physical life. We need Him.

We have just shared a season of fasting (doing without certain, or all, foods for a while), but we must begin eating food again, or we would become sick and eventually die. We can go without food for a while, but we need food to live.

One time I fasted for 40 days without any food at all. I was surprised to discover that I could live well for so long without food. But we can only live for a few days (less than a week) without water.

Jesus also is known as the “Water of life”—He is as important to our spiritual health as ordinary water is to our physical health. Don’t try to go many days without connecting with Jesus through Bible reading and prayer. It’s unhealthy for your soul.

One of the most special names given to Jesus is the one by which John the Baptizer introduced Him: *“Look! There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!”* That name described the reason that Jesus came into our world, as He Himself said, *“I have come to seek and to save those who are spiritually lost.”*

He preached and taught and gathered people who would listen to Him. He invited them to follow Him and get to know Him. Then, at the right time, He surrendered His physical life to die on a wooden cross to take away the sins of everyone in the world.

When I was younger, we sang a short song that said:

*He paid a debt He did not owe
I owed a debt I could not pay*

*I needed Someone to wash my sins away
Now I can sing a brand new song, "Amazing Grace"
Christ Jesus paid the debt that I could never pay
Yes, Jesus paid the debt that I could never pay.*

That debt was my guilt and shame for the ways I had ignored and disobeyed God. So much of the time I just preferred to live the way I wanted to, and I didn't care what God wanted me to do. Jesus took my punishment for living that way, so that I could receive God's forgiveness.

Jesus also gave me a new kind of life, so that I began to want to please God, my real and eternal Father. That's what it means to be saved! It's a supernatural change of heart and mind.

Jesus identified Himself by some other significant names. I'm thinking right now of these three:

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)

In His love and mercy, Jesus included all kinds of people in His plan of salvation. God doesn't want ANYone to perish. EVERYone can be saved! His grace is all-inclusive!

But the path to salvation is exclusive: NO ONE comes to the Father except through Jesus. He said that.

Jesus is the way to God (the only way).

He is the truth about God (the only truth).

And Jesus is the life that comes from God (the only eternal life).

He is the Way; without Him, there's no going.

He is the Truth; without Him, there's no knowing.

He is the Life; without Him, there's no growing.

Have you given your life to Jesus Christ yet? If not, what are you waiting for? Today is the day of your salvation!

Jesus has already done all the hard work; all you need to do today is believe and receive.

Believe that He came to save you.

Believe that He paid the price to save you.

Believe that He lives today to receive you.

Then, receive His gift of forgiveness and everlasting life. And begin to follow Him and get to know Him.

It's. That. Simple.

Jesus will send His Holy Spirit to live with you and help you every day.

And the Church is here to help you grow and worship Him.

Then, you can begin to call Him by some of His many names, like "Savior," and "Lord," and the "King Who is Coming Again."

What's in a name? The many names given to describe Jesus Christ tell us who He is, what He has done for us, and they give us many ways to praise and worship Him.

Pause right now and write down 10 names of Jesus Christ. Then, as you read through your list, offer Him praise and thanks for what each name reveals about Him and how it speaks of His care for you.

From now on, as you read the Bible, take note of the names for God and Jesus that you find, and when you do, pause to praise and thank God for each one. If you're not sure what it means, pause to look it up in a Bible dictionary, or on Google. It will enrich your life!