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The Name Above Every Name

John 4:25-26

Intro: Did you ever notice that quite a lot can be surmised about an individual just by the various names and titles that are given to them through the course of their life. Sometimes it's possible to give a brief autobiography of a person just through these names alone. Consider Dwight D. Eisenhower: his surname alone shows he was born of German descent. He graduated West Point as an officer, eventually becoming a Brigadier General. He oversaw the successful invasions of North Africa and Sicily and then became the Supreme Allied Commander, leading the Allies to victory in WWII. After the war, he was the Army Chief of Staff, became the president of Columbia University and the first Supreme Commander of NATO. After all of that, he became the President of the United States.

The same is true of the names of Jesus, only here the names are much more important. The names Eisenhower acquired were given by men in recognition of his work. The names of Jesus have been given by God to reveal His divine nature and the significance of His ministry. We know Jesus as the Word of God; the Lamb of God; the Son of God; the Son of man; the Savior; the Light of the world; the Lord; our great High Priest; the Conqueror; the King. Some of these names we've looked at briefly in the first chapter but now we come to a name that is greater than all.

25-26 – Up to this point, Jesus has been speaking to the woman of Samaria about her sin and of her need for living water. She then tried to change the subject a couple of times, first by bluntly telling Jesus that she had no husband and then by asking Jesus where He thought the correct place to worship was—Jerusalem or Samaria—Then finally, here, by delaying any final decision on the question of worship until the time that the Messiah would arrive. She said, “***I know Messiah is coming***” (who is called Christ). ***When He comes, He will tell us all things.***”(25) This remarkable stranger had given a ruling on the true worship of God but in her mind, the absolute authoritative ruling would be given by the great prophet of the new age Jesus' response was brief but profound, “***I who speak to you am He.***”

If she had begun to have an inkling about His true identity, it was now

confirmed. Apparently, this truth finally broke through to the woman's consciousness because it would compel her to leave her water pot and go back into the city to tell everyone what she had found (29). Clearly, these words of Jesus were the turning point in her conversion.

Of course, the full force of His response is obscured in our translation. In English, it seems that the words express no more than the claim: "Yes, I'm the Messiah" Which, on its own, is important and we touch on that later. But, it really is less than the words imply. Actually, the words are a title. See, Jesus didn't say, "I am he." The **he** was added by the translators. He simply said, "I am." The force of His claim is that **I am** was similar to, if not identical with, Jehovah.

Now we can see why its possible to call this title (**I am**) the greatest of all names for the Lord Jesus Christ. We can now understand why Paul wrote this of Jesus in (Phil 2:9-10). The name which is above all other names is "**Lord**," which means Jehovah. This is an exact equivalent of "I am." This is God's own name. That's why the name is above all earthly names, and it's at this name (Jehovah, Lord, I am) that all beings in heaven and earth will bow.

How much of this the Samaritan woman grasped, we're not sure. We do know that several other times during His ministry Jesus used the words "**I am**" to refer to His **deity**. He made this claim to the Jews in (John 8:24). This meant they wouldn't be saved unless they recognized that He was God. The Jews themselves even took the words in this way, for later in the same conversation, after Jesus had explained more clearly who He was and had said, "**Before Abraham was, I AM**" (v. 58), those Jews listening to Jesus tried to stone Him for blasphemy because of this claim.

In all, Jesus claimed to be the great "**I am**" no less than seven times in John's Gospel (4:26; 6:20; 8:24,28,58; 13:19; 18:5), and it was always as an expression of His claim to be God. There are also seven very important instances where the words are coupled with a noun describing Him as the *source of all good and the answer to all man's needs*. Jesus said, **I am the bread of life** (6:35); **the light of the world** (8:12; 9:5); **the door** (10:7, 9); **the good shepherd** (10:11, 14); **the resurrection and the life** (11:25); **the way, the truth and the life** (14:6); and **the true vine** (15:1, 5). Now, none of this was known by the woman but the use of God's name (Jehovah) had to grab her

attention and in fact, it sent her testifying!

Messiah— No matter what the woman’s understanding was of Christ’s claim to be God, there’s no doubt that she fully understood that He was at least claiming to be the Messiah. The Samaritans were actually expecting the Messiah, just as the Jews were. When the woman said, “**When He comes, He will tell us all things,**” she was likely thinking of the prophecy of the coming Messiah found in **Deut 18:18**. In some ways, the Samaritan expectation of Messiah was purer than that of the Jews, because it didn’t have all the political overtones that the Jews held. Jesus was always careful not to admit to being the Messiah in the sense the Jews gave it. In Judea and Galilee, Jesus always referred to Himself as the Son of Man. Although the Samaritan view of the coming Messiah was imperfect, it was not false. They simply and honestly looked for a prophet. Thus, Jesus was willing to accept this title when they gave it to Him.

The Hebrew word *mashiach* (Messiah), means the anointed one, as does the Greek *Christ*. This refers to the fact that during certain periods of OT history a man chosen by God for a special ministry was consecrated to that ministry by a ceremony in which his head was anointed with oil. That how kings were set apart for their royal office (Samuel of Saul, David). This was also the way the high priests were installed in their office (**Ex 28:41**) and it was even true that on some rare occasions, prophets were also anointed (Elijah of Elisha **1 Kings 19:16**). The anointed one; whether prophet, priest, or king; was a person set apart by God for a special task.

Eventually, this general meaning of “messiah” became more specific, for God had promised to send a deliverer who would embody everything the previous anointing could only faintly symbolize. He’d be a great prophet, for He would fulfill God’s words to Moses in (**Deut 18:18**). He’d be a great priest, for He would present the perfect sacrifice for man’s sin. Finally, He’d be a great king, for He would reign forever on the throne of King David (2 Sam 7:11-16).

A prophet! A priest! A king! This is what Jesus claimed in His brief response to the woman of Samaria. He claimed that all the promises concerning a deliverer of Israel and of the nations were fulfilled in Him. He was the One that the entire human race had been waiting so long for.

But here's the thing most people fail to realize: either Jesus of Nazareth is God's Messiah, as He claimed to be, or there will never be a Messiah. The evidence lies in the two genealogies of Jesus found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. According to these accounts, Jesus exhausts all messianic lines of descent from King David. The proof of Jesus' messiahship has long been established by many scholars by these genealogies and we don't want to get too far into the weeds with this so let's try to keep it simple.

The two genealogies run parallel from Abraham to David, but then Matthew gets to Jesus through Solomon, the son of David, while Luke gets to Jesus through Nathan, another son of David. Thus, the two genealogies are the lines of two brothers and the children are cousins. The whole point of the difference lies in the fact that Solomon's line was the royal line and Nathan's line was the legal line. Nathan was the older brother of Solomon, but the younger brother took the throne. Nathan's line ran on through the years, and ultimately produced the virgin Mary. Solomon's line ran on through the years and ultimately produced Joseph. Matt doesn't say Joseph begat Jesus, but just that he was the husband of Mary who bore Jesus (Mt 1:16). Luke uses a word for son that includes son-in-law as part of its use.

Now, the stickler in all this, the real proof, comes in one of the names appearing in Matthew's list: **Jeconiah (1:11)**. This is why the genealogy of Jesus' step-father is given, because it proves that Joseph couldn't have been Jesus' father for if he had been, Jesus couldn't have been the Messiah. Jechonias was accursed of God with a curse that took the throne away from any of his descendants (**Jer 22:30**). Not one of his seven sons ever possessed the throne (**1 Chron 3:17-18**). No physical descendent of this man could ever be king because of this curse from God. If Jesus had been the son of Joseph, He would have been born under this curse and could never be the Messiah.

"On the other hand, the line of Nathan was not the royal line. Any son of Heli would have faced the fact that there was a royal line that would've possessed the crown and would've contested any claim that came from the line of Nathan. How was the dilemma solved? It was solved in a way so simple: the line that had no curse on it (Nathan's) produced Heli and his daughter Mary and her son Jesus Christ. He is thus eligible through Nathan and exhausts that line. The line that had a curse on it produced Joseph and

exhausts the line of Solomon, because Joseph's other children now have an older brother who, legally (by adoption) is the royal heir. How does this scenario make Jesus the only possible Messiah? The fact of a divine curse on one line and the lack of reigning royalty in the other.

When the Holy Spirit begat Jesus in the womb of Mary without any use of a human father; the child that was born was the seed of David according to the flesh. When Joseph married Mary and took the unborn child under his protecting care, giving Him the title that had come down to Him through His ancestor Solomon, Jesus became the legal Messiah, the royal Messiah, the uncursed Messiah, the true Messiah, the only possible Messiah. The lines are exhausted. Any man that comes professing to be the Messiah will be nothing but a liar and the child of the devil.

There's another significance in this passage. Clearly, Jesus is revealing Himself to this woman as the Samaritans long awaited Messiah. What is so significant about this is that this is the only occasion, prior to His trial, in any of the Gospels, where Jesus applies this title to Himself. He could never do this among His own people, the Jews, because their concept of the Messiah was charged with so many political overtones. I think it's reasonable to say that the Jews held a false concept of the Messiah and thus, Jesus could not present Himself as such. Sure, this woman's idea of the Messiah was vastly incomplete and imperfect – but it wasn't false. She at least believed what Moses had said concerning the Messiah without inserting and demanding all her desires and expectations to be met by Him.

The point is: you don't need to possess a completely accurate knowledge of Jesus before He will reveal Himself to you. If you seek Him with an open and honest heart, not for what you expect Him to be but for Who He really is; if you seek Him in spirit and in truth, He will reveal Himself to you. When you open your heart and invite Him to come in and take His proper place as Lord and Master of your life; you will discover by experience that everything the Bible says about Him is the truth and you will find Him to be more than you had ever dared imagine.

The truth is, Jesus is more than the Jews or the Samaritans had ever comprehended in the word Messiah. He is more than a prophet, He is more than a king – He is God's answer to the problem of sin in the world. Do you know this to be true? Have you discovered the real and only solution to sin

that has been provided by the real and only Messiah? If not, I must warn you, these words of Jesus are not just truth to be received; they are a challenge to respond to. They are nothing less than another form of the invitation: **“Come unto Me!”**

The name “Messiah” is also a lesson in patience. It is linked to the expectations of those whom God’s been dealing with for thousands of years. When Adam and Eve sinned God came to them in grace, clothing them with skins and promising a deliverer who would come from the seed of the woman. They looked for the Messiah. God appeared to Abraham, promising that from him would come one that should bring blessing to Israel and the nations. Abraham looked for the Messiah. God appeared to the prophets and through them repeated the promise to the Jewish people. They looked for the Messiah. In Jesus’ day people were still looking: Simeon, Anna, Elizabeth, and others. For all these long years there had been no fulfillment. It was only at the end of this period of waiting that Messiah actually came and fulfilled the promises given. Through this process we can discern the pattern of God’s ways. As it was with the Lord’s first coming, so it will be for His second coming. We can see enough in the past to understand our present and comprehend to some extent what the future holds.

The title of Messiah, Anointed One, Christ teaches us to wait; teaches us to watch; it teaches us to hope. When we interpret what Jesus has done through the church in preparation for His second coming by the light of what He did through Israel in preparation for His first coming, we can wait and watch and hope, knowing with confidence that in every trial and storm; Jesus shall reign till all enemies are put under His feet.

Trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will not only save you; it will transform you into a person who has no fear of an unknown future but instead possesses and lives out a quiet confidence in God.

