

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! In this edition I'll be discussing...Jesus!

I would encourage you to go to <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info> as I continue to update the site. I have links to several specific features below. Let me know what you think, whether you have any suggestions, or any requests.

As always, I'm extending an invitation for submissions to be published in The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN). Additionally, if you have a subject or a question that you would like to have covered in a future edition of TGNN, feel free to send me a note and I'll do my best to address it.

The primary criteria for inclusion of articles are these:

1. It should be oriented towards the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. It should use the scriptures as a source of information.
3. It should include references for any quoted 3rd party sources.
4. It should not be political.

If you have a testimony to share, please send that to me and let me know if you would like it to be included in a future edition of the newsletter. Please keep in mind the four criteria listed above where applicable.

You can view previous editions of The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN) in PDF (Portable Document Format) at <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/TheGospelNotesNewsletter>

Or you can access other educational/informational/inspirational resources at <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources>

You can find the current preaching schedule for the Springfield, Missouri Restoration Branch at https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources/Service_Schedule.php

If you do not wish to receive the newsletter, please let me know. All responses to me will be treated confidentially unless you tell me otherwise.

Jesus. The name above all other names. At its mention we think of the person of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World, the Son of God and the Son of Man.

I remember taking a class in French when I was in high school, and in the beginning of that class we learned how to perform some basic introductions. The textbook we used started with this:

Je suis Pierre Legrande.

The translation of that sentence is “I am Pierre Legrande.” I often think of that when I see the name of Jesus because it reminds me of the way that the Lord told Moses to explain who it was that sent him to deliver Israel out of Egypt.

Exodus 3:14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

I cannot help but imagine that the French use of the name must be derived in some manner from this same beginning phrase: I AM = “Jesus” versus Je suis = “I am”. I say this because English is quite the contrived language, consisting of elements of German, French, Norse, Spanish, Latin, and other language components.

This is my speculation of course, but something tells me it is not far from the way the name should be understood.

In fact, let us look for a moment at a key verse of scripture in English and in French for the sake of comparison.

(English)

John 8:58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, **I am**.

(French)

Jean 8:58 Jésus leur dit: En vérité, en vérité, je vous le dis, avant qu'Abraham fût, **je suis**.
(Louis Segond bible, 1910)

Jean 8:58 Vraiment, je vous l'assure, leur répondit Jésus, avant qu'Abraham soit venu à l'existence, moi, **je suis**^[a].
(La Bible du Semeur, 1992)

Both from

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jean%208%3A58&version=LSG;BDS>

It's slightly different I admit, but it still strikes me as interesting nonetheless.

The Greek version of “Jesus” is “Iesous”, and the earlier Hebrew form is transliterated as Yeshua, Jeshua, Joshua, Jeshua, or even Jehoshua.

(see <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/origin-of-the-name-of-jesus-christ-10572>)

The Hebrew language lacked grammatical vowels like “A” “E” “I” “O” and “U” (ignoring “Y” for reason that will become apparent), but they were implied and could be suggested through tic marks in the written language. The Hebrews used the four-letter name of

Yahweh which is transliterated (or in other words, character for character, word for word translated) as YHWH, known by many as the tetragrammaton. Tetragrammaton literally means “four letters,” and the use of these four letters was the Hebrew way of referencing the name of God. Using one of the pronunciations with the “implied” vowel sounds we get the word “Jehovah” from the tetragrammaton.

All of this is just to provide some background about Jesus Christ, the savior of the world, and we still haven’t begun to discuss him.

We call him Lord and Master, and in the Book of Mormon it calls him the Father and the Son:

Ether 1:77 Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son.

Jesus appeared to the Brother of Jared and introduced himself in this way. Keeping in mind that this took place nearly 2,000 years before Jesus was born to Mary, it is a very interesting statement indeed.

Of particular importance is this use of this phrase, “Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world...” It has been argued by some that this “clearly” shows that Jesus was a created being – since he was “prepared from the foundation of the world.” And yet the prophets and apostles clearly taught that it was Jesus who created the world.

John 1:3 (Inspired Version) All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made which was made.

The Book of Mormon goes further:

Mosiah 1:102 And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary.

Helaman 5:66 And also that ye might know of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and that ye might know of the signs of his coming, to the intent that ye might believe on his name.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews puts it this way:

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ--the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

At this season, nearing Christmas, we are reminded of Isaiah’s prophecy about Jesus by hearing the words included in the Hallelujah chorus from George Frideric Handel’s “Messiah”:

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

It is not by accident that Isaiah put all these descriptions upon one person, whom the New Testament and the Book of Mormon name as “Jesus Christ.”

But what is this about being “prepared from the foundation...”? Many times we think of the term preparation in the sense of creating something, such as how you prepare a pumpkin pie. But the term preparation also has another sense that is often overlooked in reference to Jesus, yet it is used in our common everyday language. For example:

“I was prepared for that test and I got a high score.”

“I was prepared to make a terrible decision, but in the end I avoided it.”

“I was prepared with all the necessary supplies for a long journey.”

We could just as easily substitute the word “prepared” with the word “ready” without losing any value to the meaning – in these instances. But is this the understanding to take when talking about how Jesus was “prepared from the foundation of the world...”? With the additional understanding of how Isaiah, John, the prophets in the Book of Mormon, and others described Jesus as the Son and the Father, and as the creator of the heaven and the earth, it seems likely that it does apply rather well. Jesus was “ready” from the foundation of the world to make the necessary sacrifice for our salvation to be made possible.

Too often we get tied up into thinking of Jesus as a purely human being, but that is clearly not the case, and for some the idea that Jesus was both human and divine at the same time is a very foreign idea. How can Jesus have both human and divine characteristics, without losing anything of either?

It is the divine nature of Jesus that is part of the great mystery of Who He Is because we can relate very well to those very human characteristics that he possessed. He was born, he ate, drank, slept, walked, talked and did other basic human type things. If we are being honest with ourselves, that is the point, is it not? If Jesus could not be fully both, then the atonement he made for us could not carry the power necessary for our salvation. If he lacked in anything of either, the crucifixion would have been a brutal, sure end to the religion of Jesus Christ.

Throughout his mortal (or should I simply say, pre-crucifixion?) life, Jesus prayed to the Father, and this leaves many with the strange dichotomy of how Jesus is the Son and the Father, while talking to himself in the process. It is truly a mystery, yet Jesus clearly told the apostle Philip something very profound:

John 14

8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? **He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.** And how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?

10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

There are many counter arguments that have been made to this view, but it is still very striking that the Brother of Jared spoke with a being who, many years before his birth to Mary, identified himself as being “the Father and the Son.”

If it is difficult to accept in modern times, imagine how the Jews felt when Jesus, whom they knew as a child, a young teenager, and a young man, looked upon him and heard him say he was the Father and the Son, and that before Abraham was, “I AM”? They took up stones to cast at him because it was surest sacrilege to identify oneself with God. It was a death penalty under the Mosaic law, and so it was with Jesus, despite being the only legitimate claim holder to that title.

Today it remains a very difficult mystery that we each must grapple with, yet the words of Jesus must be true.

1 Peter 1:25 But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

What is added to this mystery are the writings of Nephi, who, late in his life, had some interesting things to say about Jesus:

2 Nephi 13

14 And **the Father said**, Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my beloved Son.

15 And **also, the voice of the Son came unto me**, saying, He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me and do the things which ye have seen me do.

At times it seems that the prophets struggled to describe what they understood about God. In this passage it has all the appearance that Nephi heard two different voices. And indeed, at Jesus’ baptism, there was a voice from heaven that declared,

Matthew 3:46 And lo, he heard a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him.

How can this be, and are we getting contradictory accounts from these holy prophets? Indeed, how can Jesus be both the Father and the Son when there is more than one voice being described?

Or was there, in fact, more than one voice? Are we assuming something that is not actual evidence?

We tend to do a lot of reading-in-between-the-lines when we don't have something more concrete to base our conclusions on, just as I often looked at the word "Jesus" and "Je suis" as referring to the same root word, but the reality is that the human mind is capable of drawing connections that may not be there. What appears similar may not be similar. Instead, we have to rely on what has been clearly spelled out in no uncertain terms as our basis of fact and reality.

Jesus testified that he *is* the Father and the Son, both before his birth to Mary *and* after. We may assume a lot of other things based on events, but Jesus' words are the things that matter to our understanding.

The various theories about the Godhead – the "organizational configuration of God's identity" if you will – have been for centuries and continue to be the point of much contention, but would anyone challenge Isaiah's statement about how this Wonderful person, this Counselor, this Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace found himself born near a small village just north of Jerusalem, whom angels announced and sang about in heavenly chorus?

Would anyone challenge the Brother of Jared's testimony about who this person was that showed himself by touching with his finger those 16 small stones that were molten out of a rock?

The inferences that we draw from events recorded in the scriptures don't carry the same weight as the words spoken by the Savior, who is a pretty fair expert about himself.

There are some things we know for sure about Jesus based on the testimonies that have been given about him by those who knew him: there was never any other man who spoke like him.

The scriptures tell us many things about Jesus, but they don't give us a relationship with him. In all the name-calling and confusion that has taken place over past centuries, seldom has it been said, "If you want to know, go ask him!" It is the same problem scholars and heretics have all faced at some point – the missed realization that the man Jesus whom the scriptures call the savior of the world is a *living being*. Unlike some religions which had dumb idols made from stone or wood, Jesus is a living being. He is able to answer for himself. But he is so much more than a human being.

It is little wonder that the Introduction page of the Book of Mormon – written by Moroni himself -- has this included in its mission statement:

“...and also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.”

With that as a key point of intent, the Book of Mormon is, in one sense, a Liahona (or in other words, a compass) for us – intended to point us to this truth. Do we accept it as the truth, or do we try to find a way around it?

William Shakespeare, in his play “Romeo and Juliet” posed this very interesting question, “What’s in a name?” For Christians we need to ask ourselves this same question in relation to the name of Jesus – what is the name of Jesus Christ to us? Who is Jesus Christ and do we understand both who and what he is and what he claims to be?

Mr. Shakespeare may have been using his question as a way to show how words themselves may not have meaning, while the intent behind the words is where the value lies. For us it is a similar state, except that the name itself does have some importance. If we worship a being, (picking a random silly name) whom we call Higgledur and believe him to be born of Mary in the city of David, and that he went on to become the savior of the world, is there a legitimate difference between that belief and worshipping a being that we call Jesus Christ with the same essential traits previously described?

Here we depart from Mr. Shakespeare to say that, yes, it does make a difference. A rose by any other name cannot smell as sweet, and a Savior by any other name than Jesus is not the Savior – not because we think so, but because he said so.

Mosiah 1:16 And moreover, I say unto you that there shall be no other name given, nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.

Substitutions have been tried through the years, and have failed. There is no being that is “equivalent” to Jesus Christ. It may seem like a lot of fuss and trouble to focus on the name of Jesus Christ, but he has gone to great lengths to glorify his name and no others. It is the essence of one of the ten Mosaic commandments:

Exodus 20

2 I am the Lord, thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for **I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me,

6 And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

What Jesus offers you and me is something beyond the value of anything else in this world, and it is beyond the life of this world because all things must be made new. Though we may have limits in our understanding, yet the Lord is patient, long suffering, full of kindness and lacking in nothing to supply for our just wants and needs. If you want to know about the Father and Son in greater detail, or the name of Jesus Christ, don't forget that you can ask him yourself and he will give you an answer sufficient to satisfy your curiosity and to give you new things to consider that you hadn't considered before. He wants you to know about him. What you do with that knowledge will change your life.