

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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World Headquarters: The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri

Program Number 205
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The Sermon: COME UNTO THE FATHER IN MY NAME

Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 16:4

Take upon you the name of Christ, and speak the truth in soberness, and as many as repent, and are baptized in my name which is Jesus Christ, and endure to the end, the same shall be saved. Behold, Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father, and there is none other name given where- by man can be saved; wherefore, all men must take upon them the name which is given of the Father, for in that name shall they be called at the last day; wherefore, if they know not the name by which they are called, they can not have place in the kingdom of my Father.

I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name

What's in a name? In our Western civilization, a name is usually just a convenient legal designation to distinguish one man from another. And yet we recognize that a name is much more than that; we say that a man has a good name, or a bad name, and those expressions tell us a great deal about his character and reputation. Names have associations and meanings and connotations, both good and bad. No one would think of handicapping his son with the name Judas, or his daughter with the name Jezebel, for example.

In the thinking of Eastern peoples, the name shares the essence of the personality. It is our western custom to name the baby as soon as possible after he is born. Many peoples either wait to name the baby, leaving him with no name at all as a protection against evil spirits who might use his name as the basis for a magical spell, or give one name at birth and then change it or add another expressive of his personality after that personality has had time to develop.

The people of Israel shared the concept that the name shares the essence of the personality. They were most reluctant to speak or to write the ineffable name of Jehovah, because the name was thought to indicate the whole of divine manifestation -- the complete character of God as revealed in his relationships to his people and his dealings with them. This is perhaps the reason why the Old Testament frequently substitutes the phrase "the name of God" for the name itself. To "call upon the name of the Lord"

is to call upon God; to worship him. To "forget his name" is to forsake him. To "take his name in vain" is to speak falsely or act irresponsibly or rebelliously in his name, or while professing to be one of his children. The name shares the essence of the personality.

In the New Testament, we find the same implications attached to the name of Jesus. To believe in his name is to believe in him as the Son of God, the Only Begotten, the One who by the power of his resurrection and his endless life can offer salvation to all men. The gospel is to be preached in his name; those who believe are to be baptized in his name. Sinners are saved through believing on his name, and are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus. Through repentance and faith on his name, men receive remission of sins. Men have life through his name. We give thanks in his name. We trust in his name. We are promised that where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he will be to bless.

We are commanded to pray and to ask the Father in Jesus' name, and promised that if we ask anything in his name, he will give it and do it. The "name" of Jesus is continuously mentioned in the book of Acts, as men suffered shame for his name's sake, as they preached and taught and baptized in his name, and as they worked miracles and received marvelous answers to prayer through his name. The sick were annointed with oil in his name as the elders prayed over them, and they were healed. Paul exorcised the evil spirit of divination from the damsel

at Philippi in Jesus' name. Whosoever called on the name of the Lord was saved, and the church was composed of all who called on his name. Paul summed it up in his letter to the Colossians: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus....."

A little thought and analysis of all these uses of the name of Jesus will show that it is no light or easy thing to call upon his name, to take his name upon us, or to pray or to act in his name. Coming unto the Father in his name implies more than a casual mouthing of the phrase "in Jesus' name." Prayer in his name means much more than closing our prayer with the formula, "In Jesus' name, Amen." Many prayers which are ritually or formally closed with this phrase are never answered at all because the prayer is not really presented in his name.

To pray in the name of Jesus is to pray as his representative on earth -- to pray in his Spirit, with his aim, his purpose, his objectives at heart. It implies that we abide in him and he in us, so that our thoughts, desires, aims, purposes, and objectives are the same as his. Praying "in his name" is not easy. It is vastly more than saying "in Jesus' name," before the final "Amen" of our prayers. There is nothing magical about that phrase, "In Jesus' name." The 19th chapter of Acts tells the story of certain magicians or exorcists who tried to use the magically correct formula of Jesus' name to cast out certain evil spirits. They suffered ignominious failure in spite of the correctness of their formula, because they were not acting in the Spirit of Jesus, or with his aims and purposes and objectives; therefore they were not truly speaking "in his name." The promise is "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Only thus can we pray in his name.

Modern revelation in the book of Doctrine and Covenants lays great stress on the name of Christ. "All men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ and worship the Father in his name or they can not be saved in the kingdom of God." Repentance and redemption are through faith on the name of the Only Begotten Son. Men are commanded to take upon them the name of

Christ, and to call upon God in the name of the Only Begotten. Men are taught in these scriptures to love God with all their might, mind, and strength, and to serve him in Jesus' name. They are taught to seek the signs following the believer in the name of Christ. They are taught that "All things must be done in the name of Christ, whatsoever ye do in the Spirit." And one of the basic affirmations of all scripture is again reiterated in Section 16, paragraph 4, from which we have already read: "There is none other name given whereby men can be saved; wherefore all men must take upon them the name which is given of the Father, for in that name shall they be called at the last day."

This is more than a good quotable saying -- it is more than the arbitrary statement of a jealous or somewhat fussy God. Men must come unto the Father in the name of Christ, or not at all. No man can come in his own name, or in his own spirit, because he is by nature weak, sinful, rebellious, and under the penalty of death which separates him from God. Because Jesus is the only man who ever lived who united in one personality the nature of Deity and the nature of man -- because he is the only man who ever overcame death -- because he is the only man who ever lived without sin -- he is alive for evermore, and dwells eternally at God's right hand. Any man who would come unto the Father must therefore by the very nature of the situation come in the name of Jesus -- that is, in Jesus' spirit, in Jesus' personality, in Jesus' character, nature, power, and authority -- or he cannot come at all; nor could he abide in God's presence if he came in any other way.

"Jesus" was the name given to the Son of God at birth. After the triumph of his resurrection he was given a new name to designate the nature, the power, the personality, the glory, the Sonship, which had been revealed and attested by the resurrection. The name OF Jesus is "Lord." No man can come unto the Father except by confessing Jesus as Lord, accepting his grace, his atonement, his forgiveness, his love, and faithfully obeying his commandments, which he as Lord has every right to give, and by taking upon himself the name of Jesus, the Spirit, personality, nature, and character of our Lord, Jesus Christ.