

Whoever Calls on the Name of the LORD Shall Be Saved

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Brethren, as we all know, the holy days that God commands us to keep throughout the year give us a general overview of His plan of salvation for mankind. The very purpose of creating mankind in the first place was God's plan to extend His family; it was to offer the opportunity for salvation to all of mankind and to all of those who would follow Him, and follow His rules, to have the chance to be born into His Kingdom. This plan of salvation really got kicked off on the day of Pentecost, described in Acts, chapter 2, when the Holy Spirit began to be made available to mankind, and the New Covenant church was started.

On this day in Peter's sermon, he made an important comment about this process of salvation, saying that those who would receive salvation would be those who call upon the name of the LORD. Today we're going to look at this comment and see what this means, of calling upon the name of the LORD. So if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's Whoever Calls on the Name of the LORD Shall Be Saved.

As I mentioned, the holy days give us the major events and the layout, you might say, of God's plan for salvation for mankind. One of the very important lessons it teaches us, that I think oftentimes we in the Church of God can really take for granted if we've understood it for a long time, is the very basic fact that the plan of salvation plays out in two major stages, that there are two harvests: a spring harvest for the firstfruits—a small group to whom God initially offers salvation—but then later there's a fall harvest that offers salvation to the rest of mankind, and we oftentimes in the Church of God take that basic truth a bit for granted.

If you look at the plan of salvation through the eyes of, you might say, the professing Christian world, of those who at least try to adhere to the Bible and have some idea of what they think the plan of salvation is, by and large they tend to look at it from the standpoint that this life is all there is. In other words, if you don't receive salvation in this lifetime, you just miss out.

So understanding this basic truth has absolutely monumental implications. Let's begin by turning over to Exodus 23—the context is Moses is up on Mount Sinai, receiving all the details of the Old Covenant, which is actually ratified in chapter 24—but here, in chapter 23, verse 14, he gives a brief overview of the holy days. In verse 14,

Exodus 23:14 *“Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year:
15) You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty);*

16) and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. (NKJV)

As we know, there are actually seven annual holy days throughout the year, and he's not listing all seven of them here, he's giving a brief overview. But again, we see this monumental truth here, that there are two harvests: There's a spring harvest, for the firstfruits, and there's a fall harvest for the rest of mankind—two distinct opportunities for salvation. Again, understanding that has monumental implications, if you stop and look at it through the eyes of the professing Christian world, and how they typically conceptualize their view of salvation—whatever their understanding of that may be.

Let's turn and notice this again in Exodus, chapter 34, as we'll see another brief mention of this basic truth being laid out.

Exodus 34:22 *“And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end.
23) “Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the LORD God of Israel. (NKJV)*

Again, notice we have these two harvests, and it mentions one is for the firstfruits. That is pictured today—the Feast of Pentecost, which basically pictures God offering salvation to a small group initially, but then later He offers salvation to the rest of mankind in the fall harvest.

One reason I mention this is really monumental is, if you take a step back from something we've probably understood for decades—you know, the average Church member today has been attending services for literally decades, and we tend to kind of take these things for granted—but if you look at it through the eyes of your average professing Christian, and their idea of how the plan of salvation works, they typically tend to look at it, whether people receive salvation in this lifetime, as a make-or-break deal; you either “get” it in this lifetime, or you're lost.

This tends to cause people to fall, you might say, into one of two major ditches, in terms of how they view God and the whole plan of salvation. You might take what I call the hard-core view; in other words, if people don't receive it, well, they've just lost out on salvation, and if they believe in the idea of burning in hell, which is certainly not a Church of God viewpoint, but if they subscribe to that viewpoint, they might take the more hard-line view of this, that everybody who didn't receive salvation in this lifetime is just going to burn in hell.

This creates a very negative view of God, if you think about it, because if you think back through human history, there have been many, many people over the years who lived in areas of the world where, through the span of their lives, they never saw a Bible, they never heard about God the Father and Jesus Christ, or any of this plan that we know about; the Internet wasn't available then, and if they lived in an area where this

information just wasn't available, they never had a chance in the world of accepting any of this and living according to any of these instructions—they didn't even know about them. So this carries a very negative view of God, of being very unfair.

The opposite view or other ditch people get into, and it's much more of a liberal view, is when they take the standpoint that yes, there's one day of salvation, but the way they deal with all these people who might not have even heard about God or Jesus Christ or may not have ever seen a Bible at all, is to take the viewpoint that as long as these were good people—good-hearted, good to their neighbors, attempting to be a good person as best they understand—well, they'll be in heaven, too. Their idea of salvation is everyone goes to heaven, sits on a cloud and plays a harp—that kind of broad viewpoint.

Understanding these holy days clarifies this whole picture for us, in that there are specific standards we have to meet, but this is not the only day of salvation. One of the keys of this is over in Acts, chapter 2; we're going to start off just looking at the end of Peter's comments here, because we're going to back up later and look in more detail at his sermon, but for the moment, let's just look at Acts, chapter 2, and verse 37, as he's kind of concluding here:

Acts 2:37 *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"*

They're responding and asking, what do we need to do to be saved? Notice how Peter responds, verse 38:

38) *Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (NKJV)*

Notice he tells them they specifically have to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ; they have to have heard about Him, obviously, for that to happen, and they have to go through this, but he also says, you have to repent. That's an entire change of life. This negates this whole idea, of, well, as long as you were a good-hearted person, whether or not you've heard of Christ at all, you're going to be saved. Well, it doesn't quite work like that. The key to this is in the next verse, in verse 39:

39) *For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." (NKJV)*

The key to understanding this is God is not calling everybody at this time, He's calling only a small group of firstfruits who are being offered salvation at this time, and He's going to offer this to all the rest of mankind later—that's the fall harvest—that's when they receive the opportunity for salvation, and the opportunity to receive God's Holy Spirit. This is mentioned briefly in John, chapter 7, verse 37. It says,

John 7:37 *On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.*

38) He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

39) But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (NKJV)

Christ is foretelling the day of the fulfillment of the fall harvest, when salvation is offered to all mankind. Just understanding that, we don't have to struggle with the idea of God's fairness, because He gives everyone a fair chance, and He's not calling everyone today, He's just specifically calling the firstfruits. That's what this day of Pentecost is about, the spring harvest, when He's offering salvation to a small group who will also be involved in helping the rest of mankind when their day of salvation comes.

What we want to focus on today is a comment that Peter made in his sermon, in Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, that applies to both of these harvests, because he says those who will receive salvation are those who call upon the name of the LORD. What we're going to look at, again, is this statement, to really understand what all of this means. Let's turn back over to Acts, chapter 2; let's look in more detail at Peter's sermon that he gave that day.

We're going to pick it up in verse 14, but let me take a moment to kind of set the scene here. This chapter starts off telling us, when the day of Pentecost had fully come—a number of miracles are taking place that day, dramatic events that really get people's attention, because, as you can imagine, this is a day when they're introducing the concept of the very Spirit of God being placed inside carnal human beings to really transform who they are, to change their thinking and their character. To validate that this is real, you can understand why God would perform a number of miracles to get people's attention, because, otherwise, there are just the apostles here making some wild claims as far as a lot of people might assume—yes, these guys are making these bold claims, but how do we know this is real? So God performs a number of miracles to really get people's attention, so they'll realize these aren't just some guys making some boastful claims; something real is happening here.

One of the things that took place, one of the miracles that was happening that day, is all these different people who came from different backgrounds, different languages, were all hearing what was spoken, in their own language, and this really shocked people—what's going on?—they're really trying to make sense of this in their minds. That's important to understand, because when we start here in verse 14, Peter is speaking to this very issue:

Acts 2:14 *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. (NKJV)*

15) *For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.* (NKJV)

That was one of the things they were speculating—maybe we’re just dealing with drunk people—because they’re trying to make sense of what they’re seeing and hearing, in terms of what’s taking place that day.

16) *But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*

17) *‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.*

18) *And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.*

19) *I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.*

20) *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and [notable] day of the Lord.*

Here’s the verse we’re going to focus on:

21) *And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’* (NKJV)

Peter is quoting from Joel, and he mentions that these are the people who will receive salvation: *whoever calls on the name of the Lord*. As firstfruits, this is our day of salvation; this is our opportunity to make it into the Kingdom of God or not. So what does it mean to call on the name of the LORD? And how do we do that in our own lives, to make sure that we’re among the people who enter into the Kingdom of God and receive salvation?

The first thing I want to address, that we’re going to see today, is that when he says to call upon the name of the LORD, there’s a specific name we’re talking about. It has a specific meaning; it refers to a specific individual. One of the ditches we want to make sure we don’t fall into is reducing this statement down to what I like to call “saying the magic word”—in other words, just reducing it down to something like, “I said this word and I pronounced it right, and I said it in a prayer, so that’s calling on the name of the LORD.” That’s a very superficial way to look at the subject.

To illustrate this point—if you live in the United States, in our culture—you’ve probably, throughout your lifetime, known people who are from a Protestant viewpoint, who take the scriptures that refer to Jesus Christ’s death and His sacrifice as our savior, which enable us the chance of salvation, coupled with those statements in the Bible that refer to the fact that we have to believe in this and profess that we believe in this, and those who do this will be saved, and they oftentimes erroneously reduce that down to a kind of intellectual awareness or an understanding in that they just profess their belief with their mouth but don’t demonstrate it with their actions; in other words, just saying, well, yeah,

I really believe that Jesus Christ walked the earth; He was a truly historical individual, and He died for the sins of mankind; I believe that, I've accepted Him as my savior; and so they kind of look at it like, well, just saying that and intellectually professing that means I'm saved—that fulfills that. Well, no, it doesn't, because there's a lot more meaning packed into that than just a profession or an intellectual statement or a vague awareness.

When we look at calling upon the name of the LORD, we have to use the same understanding here—that there's a much deeper meaning here than, you might say, involves saying the magic word, if I can put it that way, because sometimes people fall into that ditch. And to see how these two are connected, turn over first to Romans, chapter 10; we'll start in verse 1. What I want you to see as we read through this, is we're going to see in this section of scripture, and in some of the scriptures that people refer to, of just thinking, well, I've accepted Jesus as my savior, so therefore I'm saved—statements that people take out of context and interpret like that—we're going to see that mentioned, and also this statement of calling upon the name of the LORD. Part of my point here is that we can't reduce either one of these to a kind of surface level that really misses the meaning tied to these. So, turn to Romans 10:1.

Romans 10:1 *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.*

2) *For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.*

3) *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.*

4) *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

5) *For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them."*

6) *But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above)*

7) *or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).*

8) *But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):*

9) *that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (NKJV)*

As I mentioned, a lot of people take that verse there, and think, well, I believe, and I've said with my mouth that I believe, so I'm saved.

Well, there's a lot more to that than just, yes, we have to believe that and to profess that, but there's a whole lot more involved in that, and I won't take the time, at this point, to go through James, chapter 2, but that chapter is very pivotal in understanding the subject of faith; faith isn't just saying, I intellectually believe something; it's something you prove through your actions, in how you live your life and the works that you do that show that you really have faith in something because you're committed to it and you

show it in your life. So there's a much deeper issue at play here than just an intellectual belief and an intellectual profession. We'll continue now in verse 10:

Romans 10:10 *For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

11) *For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."*

12) *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.*

13) *For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."* (NKJV)

So notice here, we have this same statement, that *whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved*. Our focus today is to understand what exactly this means. As we're going to see here, there's a specific name, with a specific meaning that's being referred to. But first, to kind of set the context, we have to understand that in Israelite culture, particularly in Old Testament times, names meant a whole lot more than the way we typically use a name today, in our modern-day culture.

Let me just use myself as an example. My name is James, which is kind of the label that I go by, but there are lots of people who have that name, and it's not like that name, in itself, says anything significant or meaningful about me as an individual. It's just the name my parents happened to give me when I was a child. In fact, the only real reason I have that name is because it was my grandfather's name; James was my mother's father's first name (but he typically went by his middle name), and when I was born my mother wanted to name me after her father, and that's how I got the name James. The name itself doesn't tell you anything meaningful or significant about me as an individual, and there are thousands, if not millions of people who have that name as well.

So we need to understand, in Israelite culture in the Old Testament, that is not how names were used. They were typically much more meaningful, and when a name was given to an individual or a place, a lot of times it had specific meaning, that is, that the very name itself transmitted. I won't go through all the examples, but I'm sure we're familiar with examples like Abraham, or Jacob, where God actually changed their names, and gave them a new name because that new name had a very specific meaning that said something about them or their character, or the role that they were going to play, so there was a lot of meaning packed into that name.

To just express this idea, I'd like to quote from a book titled, [Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith](#), by Marvin Wilson, and the quote I'm going to read is from page 180-181.

In Hebrew thought, the name of an individual was considered to be more than a title or a label for identification. Rather, a name was believed to reveal the essence, character, reputation, or destiny of the one to whom it was given. This is why the moral law of Moses forbids defamation of another's name by false witness (Exodus 20:16). Indeed, "a good name

[i.e., reputation] is more valuable than great riches” (Proverbs 22:1). Thus the name of every Hebrew sent out some sort of message with it.

So again, we need to understand this when we start to look at the name being referred to here. Let’s realize it’s a lot more than just a label, a lot more than just saying, “My name is James.” Calling upon a name or proclaiming a name has a whole lot more meaning packed into it than just saying an individual word, and that’s very important to understand when we start to look at this subject.

Now let’s look at what name we are talking about. We started off in Acts, chapter 2, reading from Peter’s sermon, but in the section of scripture there where Peter talks about calling upon the name of the LORD, he’s directly quoting from the Old Testament; he’s basically, word for word, quoting from Joel, chapter 2. So to see specifically what name he is referring to, we need to go back to the source, and see exactly where he was quoting from. So let’s turn over to Joel, chapter 2, and we’re going to start in verse 28. You’ll notice this is almost an exact, word-for-word quote; what Peter stated in Acts 2 is taken from Joel 2. In verse 28,

Joel 2:28 *“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.*

29) *And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*

30) *“And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.*

31) *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.*

32) *And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. (NKJV)*

If you notice and you compare this to Acts 2, it’s just about word for word; there are a few, small differences in how this is quoted, but this is very obviously where Peter was quoting from. He even says, in Acts 2, *this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel*. So if we want to know what name he is referring to, we just have to look at the Hebrew here. If you’re reading from an English-language Bible, you’re probably seeing that it says *the LORD* (which is in all caps [all capital letters]). It’s actually two words in English, but if you look at this in Hebrew, it’s just one word, and the name here is the Hebrew word *YHVH* [speaker pronounces it “Yehovah”].

We’ll talk a little bit more about this later, but *the LORD* there, even how it’s worded, you can see that it is like a title, used as a substitution for the name. But the name here is the name *YHVH*. If you do a search throughout the Bible, looking at how and where this word is used, what you’re going to see is this is a proper name, because if you do searches on things like “My name is” or “His name is”, and look anywhere where God’s name is referenced, you’re going to see that *YHVH* is the name that shows up, basically every single time; it’s a very clear trend. If you study that, what you’ll see is all the other

phrases we typically reference with God, such as “the Almighty”, “the living God”, “the Most High”—these words are all titles, but His actual name is YHVH. We’ll see that this name has a very specific meaning, and if we correctly understand the meaning, the meaning of the name itself identifies exactly to Whom it refers, because, by definition, it can refer only to one individual, if we correctly understand the meaning of what it says.

There’s a scripture over in Exodus 3; it’s the account of the burning bush, where this is explained, and because of the way it’s oftentimes worded in English, sometimes people stumble over this and think that the explanation of the name is actually His name. Because oftentimes you’ll hear people say, well, God’s name is “I AM”. Well, in reality, as we’re going to see here, that’s not His name, that’s the explanation of His name, as He was basically explaining this to Moses. Let’s notice here, in Exodus 3, in verse 13,

Exodus 3:13 *Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” (NKJV)*

As we’re going to see in the verses after this, God not only gives Moses His name, He explains what His name means. In verse 14,

14) ... *God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’*

Notice He has stated this, but He hasn’t said, “This is My name.” If we keep reading, He’s going to say, “This is My name” and He’ll tell us what His name is. In verse 15,

15) *Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.’ (NKJV)*

Notice when Moses asked the question, he said, “So I tell them ‘the God of my fathers sent me to you’ ... what shall I say is His name?” God responds and says [as recorded in English, the LORD God of your fathers, in Hebrew, YHVH], the God of your fathers, but notice, he’s filling in the blank; Moses already had “the God of our fathers”; He fills it in, saying, it’s YHVH, God of your fathers—this is My name forever.

If we understand what YHVH means, we’ll realize what all of this verse is saying here; He was actually explaining what His name means, and to clarify that, I’d like to quote from a book called Shattering the Conspiracy of Silence, by Nehemia Gordon. The section I’m going to read here is from page 66, and the author is specifically addressing the verses we just read in this quote. He says,

When God said at the burning bush, “I am that I am”, He was explaining the significance of His own name. The Hebrew word for “I am” is *Ehyeb*, derived from the Hebrew root meaning, “to be”. In biblical Hebrew, “I am”

really means something like “I exist”. By saying “I am that I am”, God is declaring that He is the one who is, the one who really exists. He is different from other gods who only exist in the imagination of men. God’s name YHVH derives from the exact same Hebrew root as “I am”. Strictly speaking, this name is a combination of three forms of this Hebrew root: *Hayah*, *Hoveh*, and *Yihyeh*. These three words mean, respectively, “He was,” “He is,” and “He will be.” When we call Him by His name, we are essentially saying, “He has always existed, He exists now, and He will always continue to exist.” God says “I am” about Himself but we are to call Him YHVH, meaning, “He was, He is, and He will be.” What all this means is that “I am” is not God’s name; it is the explanation of His name.

As I’m sure you know, even in the Church of God we’ve gotten tripped up by that at times, in thinking, when He’s saying “I AM” He’s saying His name, then we try to connect that with “I AM” statements in the New Testament—a connection that only really works in English; it doesn’t work in the original languages—and we get tripped up with that, not realizing that’s the explanation of His name, it’s not actually His name; His name is YHVH.

If you think about that, when He gives the meaning here, and He says, what this means is, “He was, He is, and He will be”, that phrase should sound very familiar, because there is a very, very similar phrase used in the book of Revelation, five times, and it’s used specifically as a descriptor of God the Father.

Let’s turn over to Revelation, chapter 1, and we’re going to see, if we understand that definition, “He was, He is, and He will be”, there is only one individual in all of existence Who matches that meaning.

Revelation 1:4 *John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come ...*

Notice that’s basically saying the exact same thing as “He was, He is, and He will be”, but let’s notice with Whom this is contrasted:

4 continued) *and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,*
5) *and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.*

Now notice we have *He who is and who was and who is to come*, and, *from Jesus Christ*; he’s contrasting Them, but also notice the deeper meaning here. We have Him Who has always continually existed, and then we have *the firstborn from the dead*—we have a distinction here.

Now let me be very careful how I say this, because, oftentimes, in the Pacific Church of God these days, we get accused of teaching that Christ is a created being, or that we’re about to teach that Christ is a created being. That’s nonsense, because none of us has

ever believed that or ever stated that at any time. But there is an important distinction being made here between God the Father and Jesus Christ, because both of Them have eternally existed in that They never had a starting point—you can't go back to the beginning with Them because there isn't one; They have always existed, however, Jesus Christ died. He was dead for three days and three nights, and He had to be resurrected. They never had a beginning, and They are never going to have an ending point, but Christ had an interruption in the middle.

So if we think about it, there is only one individual Who can say, "He was, He is, and He will be"; He has perpetually, always existed, with no interruption, because, yes, Christ is not a created being—He eternally existed and had no starting point—but He did die; He is called *the firstborn from the dead*, and this distinguishes the two from each other. So when you look at the meaning of the name YHVH, and it is "He was, He is, and He will be", He has perpetually always existed with no interruption. There is only one individual in all of existence Who meets that definition. We've seen the first contrast of this; let's notice the second time this contrast is made here in Revelation, chapter 1. Skip down to verse 8; it says,

Revelation 1:8 *"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

Now, if like me, you've got a version of the Bible that has the words of Jesus Christ in red, you're probably going to notice in that verse they actually have it in red, and that's a mistake. To understand that, you have to notice it says, *the Almighty*, as a title. Do a word search on "the Almighty" and look up all the other references with that, particularly in the New Testament. In every other reference, it's very obvious, from the context, that this is referring to God the Father; it's a very obvious, very consistent trend, and you'll see that throughout the Old Testament as well—that is a title of God the Father, so that clarifies Who we're talking about here. Because of the way this section of scripture is worded, people oftentimes get tripped up and think it is referring to Christ.

If we skip down to verse 17, we'll notice again "He who was, who is, and who is to come" being contrasted with Christ, the one Who died and Who came back to life:

Revelation 1:17 *And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18) I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

Notice, Christ is First and Last; He didn't have a beginning, and He'll be alive forevermore, but He died. He was dead for three days and three nights, and so you have this distinction between Him and God the Father. When you look again at the meaning of the name YHVH, and if you follow this through the Bible and do a study on this you'll see very clearly it is the personal name of God the Father.

In Psalm 83:18, it tells you there is only one individual Who has this name—that's directly stated in the Bible—and again, even the meaning itself, "He was, He is, He will be" verifies for us that there is only one individual Who meets that definition. So this is the personal name of God the Father. Calling upon the name of the LORD is calling upon the name of YHVH.

We also need to understand that in calling upon His name we can't reduce this down to, as I said, "saying the magic word", because there is so much more meaning in using this name than just a word itself, or a string of letters; there is a whole lot more that comes with this. To see this, let's just notice, when God Himself is proclaiming His name, everything He says in proclaiming His name. If I were to tell my name to somebody, I might introduce myself by saying, "Hi, my name is James", and I'm just giving the label that I am known by, but God does so much more than this when He proclaims His name.

Turn to Exodus, chapter 34, and we are going to read a section where YHVH Himself is proclaiming His name, and notice what He says while proclaiming His name, because He is doing so much more than just saying, "My name is YHVH"; when He proclaims His name, He is telling us so much more about Himself than just saying a word.

Exodus 34:5 *Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.*

Now this is YHVH Himself, proclaiming His name, and notice all that He says:

6) And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, 7) keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

Notice, in proclaiming His name, He talks about His character, His justice, how He administers it, Who He is, His role and His authority, and all that He is about. It's much more than, again, just saying the magic word. It's important that we understand this, so that when we look at calling upon His name we understand that this is a much bigger concept than just saying a word. If we reduce this down to "saying the magic word" we've really missed the point of the meaning of what this is getting at.

We've looked at an example of God Himself proclaiming His name; let's notice an example of Moses proclaiming God's name, because we're going to see the same thing. Turn over to Deuteronomy, chapter 31, and we'll start at the very end of the chapter, in verse 30. Again, proclaiming the name is a whole lot more than just expressing a word, it's all about Who He is, His authority and His character, and all that He does is wrapped up into proclaiming His name.

Deuteronomy 30:31 *Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song until they were ended:*

Now chapter 32, verse 1:

Deuteronomy 31:1 *“Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.*

2) *Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass.*

3) *For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God.*

4) *He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He. (NKJV)*

Notice when Moses says he’s proclaiming His name, he doesn’t say, well, I’ll tell you His name—it’s YHVH—and that’s it, that’s all. Moses says God’s name, but he also says this is His character; He is the definition of righteousness; He is our strength; He is the Almighty, the all-powerful God. Moses is telling us all these things about God, because, again, that is what is packed into the concept of proclaiming His name; it’s much more than just saying a word. So we need to understand that when we think about what calling upon His name means, it’s going to have a much broader meaning than just the idea, well, I said a prayer, and I said the magic word, and I pronounced it right, and so that means I called upon the LORD; well, there is a lot more packed into that than just reducing it down to a word.

So with that in mind, let’s begin to look at what calling on the name of the LORD means. We started in Acts 2:21 (in Peter’s statement, quoting from Joel), saying, all those who call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved. Let’s first look at the Greek word that he used that means to call upon the LORD. It’s the Greek word *epikaleo*, Strong’s #1941, and according to The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament, by Spiros Zodhiates, it’s defined as “to call upon for aid, generally to invoke, pray to, to worship”. Notice that last phrase, “to worship”; what I want you to see is that it means a whole lot more than, again, just saying a prayer and saying the name YHVH, because that can be referred to as calling upon His name, but there’s a lot more meaning packed into this. Let’s look at a couple of examples. Turn over to Genesis, chapter 12, and we’ll start in verse 1.

Genesis 12:1 *Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.*

2) *I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.*

3) *I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

4) *So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.*

5) *Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in*

Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan.

6) Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land.

7) Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

8) And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. (NKJV)

So here we have Abram calling upon the name of the LORD. Notice what this isn't: I said a brief prayer, and I called Him YHVH, and that's calling on the name of the LORD. Well, there was a lot more to it than that. Notice he is building an altar and worshipping Him, but also notice the context that leads up to this. God has commanded Abram—pack up all your stuff, uproot your life, leave this comfortable city, go that way, and I'll tell you when to stop; I want you to sojourn for a while now, and change your whole life for Me, and Abram obeys—he does all this. Notice again the context of all this; this wasn't just an intellectual exercise in which he mouths the magic word; he is actually, through his life, obediently changing his whole life for God, and is very dedicated to this. When he's calling upon the name of the LORD, this is part of his worship, but notice how he is living: It's not something as simple as I said a prayer, and I said the magic word, so I'm good. It's not how this works. It was a way of life for him, in living a life of obedience.

Let's notice also in Psalm 116, we'll see another example of this, that makes it very clear that calling upon God's name can be praying, and can be just calling for Him to be involved in your life, but it's also a way of life, of worshiping Him and being obedient.

Psalm 116:1 *I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my supplications.*

2) Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.

3) The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow.

4) Then I called upon the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!"

5) Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful.

6) The LORD preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me.

7) Return to your rest, O my soul, for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

8) For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

9) I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

10) I believed, therefore I spoke, "I am greatly afflicted."

11) I said in my haste, "All men are liars."

12) What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits toward me?

13) I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.

14) I will pay my vows to the LORD now in the presence of all His people.

- 15) *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.*
16) *O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have loosed my bonds.*
17) *I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.*
18) *I will pay my vows to the LORD now in the presence of all His people,*
19) *In the courts of the LORD's house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD! (NKJV)*

Notice here that as the psalmist is going through this, he doesn't say, I said a prayer, I said the magic word, and that was calling upon the name of the LORD—no, he's saying, I am His servant, and I will trust in Him; I will sacrifice; I will endure through whatever He requires of me; I have dedicated my life to Him.

That's what calling upon the name of the LORD means; it's spending your life worshipping and obeying Him, and again, it also means praying to Him and asking Him to be involved in our lives, but it's something that we do and show in our actions and in how we live our day-to-day lives. It's not just that we mouth the words, we show it through how we live our day-to-day lives. So when we call upon the name of the LORD, we have to realize that it's dedicating our lives to Him, of being His servant, and following Him, because we have to realize, as Christians, as those He has called as firstfruits, we carry the name of the LORD in our lives, and we need to conduct our lives in such a way that gives honor to Him and sets a good example to others.

One of the things we oftentimes do as well—as I said, there is the danger of simply reducing it down to just a word, a magic word, or how we say a word, and that's really missing the point. Oftentimes we do that with the third commandment as well. So let's understand this. Turn over to Exodus, chapter 20. We'll see here that the third commandment is typically translated into English as not taking God's name in vain, and oftentimes we reduce this down to how we say a word, and it misses the point of what this commandment is really about. Let's start in verse 7:

Exodus 20:7 *"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.*

Notice again, if you're reading from an English-language Bible, like I am in the New King James translation, you'll see here twice it says, "*the LORD*", and it's in all caps. This is, again, a title that is substituted for the actual name of God. When it says, don't take the LORD's name in vain, oftentimes when people look at this, they focus on the use of the word "God" or the word "LORD". Both of those are titles; they're not actually His name, and oftentimes this is associated with profane or irreverent uses of those words, and that's really not what this commandment is getting at, at all. Please understand that I am not in any way saying that we should be using these titles in profanity or irreverently—I'm not advocating that at all—I'm just saying that that's really missing the point of what this commandment is saying, because, first of all, those are not His name; those are titles. His name is YHVH. We also have to understand that the way this is

translated into English really misses the point of what this commandment is saying in the first place. To clarify what I mean, I'd like to quote from a commentary called The Rational Bible: Exodus, by Dennis Prager, and I'm quoting a section from pages 245 and 246:

Do not "take" is not what the commandment actually says. The Hebrew verb in the commandment, *tisa*, means "carry." The commandment therefore reads, "Do not carry God's name in vain." And who carries God's name in vain? Any person who claims to be acting in God's name while doing the opposite of what God wants—evil. Obvious modern examples would include Islamist terrorists, who shout, *Allahu akbar* ("God is the greatest") when they murder innocent people; or a priest or any other clergy who, utilizing the respect engendered by his clerical status, molests a child. There is little question Islamist terrorists and molesting clergy have both played a role in the rise of atheism in our time. When any person commits evil, it reflects badly on the person. But when a person commits evil in God's name, it reflects badly on God as well. The result is the only solution to evil—God based morality—is thoroughly undermined ... No atheist activist is nearly as effective in alienating people from God and religion as are evil "religious" people.

The example we set for others, particularly if we are claiming to be a part of God's Church and among His firstfruits, causes our actions to be associated with Him; people who are not believers themselves will kind of correlate that—well, if this way of life is invalid, watch how these people behave. I know in my lifetime, having grown up in the Church all of my life, I've known a number of people who really got turned off from the truth and from God's way of life by the bad example of people who were Church members, particularly those who were in the ministry and who were in leadership, especially if they set a very bad example in how they conducted themselves and how they treated other people, that oftentimes, in some cases, turned people off from God and from the truth. Again, that's unfortunate and a decision they shouldn't have made, but we have to understand that connection. Ancient Israel (God's people as part of the Old Covenant), and the New Testament Church both carry God's name, and our actions reflect upon Him.

Let's turn over to Numbers, chapter 6. We'll read here a blessing that God instructed the priesthood to perform on the people, and what we're going to notice is it specifically mentions placing God's name on the people of Israel.

Numbers 6:22 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:*

23) *"Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:*

24) *"The LORD bless you and keep you;*

25) *The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you;*

26) *The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."*

27) *“So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”* (NKJV)

Notice here he’s saying that he’s placing God’s name—the name of YHVH—on the people. Think about the Old Covenant and what the purpose of this was. God initially started working with Israel—why?—to make them a model nation so that they would be an example to the nations around them. His objective in all of this was that if they faithfully obeyed and set a good example then all the other nations around them would look at them and think, wow, this is working very well for these people; we’d like to get some of that goodness in our lives, too; let’s see what they are doing right. Then they would actually be attracted to this and would want to worship the God of Israel, would want to follow His laws and His ways, because they’re seeing how well this goes.

As you know, if you are familiar at all with the history of Ancient Israel, they typically carried God’s name in vain, because His name was put upon them, but they set horrible examples and were constantly turning away from Him, and worshipping other gods, and perverting His way of life. They set a very bad example to all those who were around them rather than being a nation that others would want to emulate, and they became the bad example that would tarnish God’s name. We have to realize, as firstfruits, when we’re baptized, we become part of God’s Church and receive His Holy Spirit, then we profess to be followers of Him, we profess to be His children; our actions then reflect upon Him, because we have the same way of His name being placed upon us.

Notice this in Revelation, chapter 14, verses 1-5; we won’t go into all the details, but this is a picture of the firstfruits having already been resurrected, before they come back down to earth to start the Millennium. What I want you to notice is in just verse 1, the statement that is made here:

Revelation 14:1 *Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads.* (NKJV)

Notice they carry His name. That’s true of us today, in terms of how we live our lives, as baptized members of His Church as His firstfruits—we carry His name, and we need to think about that in terms of the example we set for those around us, because, as you know, this plan plays out in two stages; the rest of mankind is going to be offered their chance of salvation later. When they have the opportunity to call upon the name of the LORD, to have that relationship themselves, we want them to look back—they may remember us, because there are going to be a lot of people, later, who’ll think, I remember you, you were my neighbor, my co-worker, my friend—and now they begin to understand, you were truly one of God’s Church. We want that association to be good, so they’ll say, “Wow, I remember you—I want to follow what you believe”, rather than, “I don’t want anything to do with you.” We don’t want that negative association. Jesus Christ describes this concept in more detail, in Matthew, chapter 5:

Matthew 5:14 *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.*

15) Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (NKJV)

Now notice He says, they are seeing your works, and they want to glorify Him. They are associating your behavior with Him. You're carrying His name. That's the whole connection here—as firstfruits, we're receiving the opportunity for salvation today, but that's for a specific purpose, so that we can be a part of working with the rest of mankind later, when they have their chance at salvation, and their opportunity to call upon the name of the LORD. So we need to think about how we live our lives today, that we're giving God a good name, in other words, in terms of how they see us and the example that we set, because, again, that's going to become critical later when they have their opportunity to receive salvation as well. We need to make sure that as we live our lives, we are remembering the name of the LORD—the name of YHVH.

Turn over to Jeremiah, chapter 23. This is something for which God corrected Ancient Israel—forgetting His name. That means a whole lot more than just forgetting a word; it's all the meaning attached to it.

Jeremiah 23:25 *“I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’*

26) How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart,

27) who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal. (NKJV)

Notice again this is a whole lot more than just forgetting a single word, it's forgetting His name, His authority, who He is, His justice, His way of life, because they are abandoning Him to worship Baal, to go after other gods. They are not honoring Him as the Most High God as they should. Realize forgetting His name is a whole lot more than forgetting a word. Let's notice also, in Psalms, chapter 20, a lot of the meaning packed into remembering God's name.

Psalms 20:1 *May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble; may the name of the God of Jacob defend you;*

2) May He send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion;

3) May He remember all your offerings, and accept your burnt sacrifice.

4) May He grant you according to your heart's desire, and fulfill all your purpose.

5) We will rejoice in your salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners! May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.

6) Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand.

- 7) *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.*
- 8) *They have bowed down and fallen; but we have risen and stand upright.*
- 9) *Save, LORD! May the King answer us when we call. (NKJV)*

Now notice here remembering His name is, again, so much more than just remembering a word; it's remembering to faithfully follow Him, and to worship Him and make Him the top priority in our lives; that's all the meaning attached to that.

If we also look at this, you might say, just from the name itself, or from the word, YHVH, all throughout history, great effort has been made to get mankind to literally forget His name. By that I don't just mean his authority, his power, his justice—literally His name, because if you look back through the history of Israel, at least twice during Israel's captivity, and once under the Greeks and later under the Romans, there were times when the nations ruling over them literally outlawed saying God's name or speaking it out loud; that was actually forced upon them by their captors.

Later this got incorporated into Israelite culture itself, and then they came up with the idea that it was too holy to be pronounced. They began discouraging that, even chastising anyone who would actually say it. Then they began making substitutes for it, such as *Hashem*, which just means “the name”; they would say Hashem rather than saying YHVH. To put that into a modern-day context, that's like referring to God as “John Doe”—the kind of anonymous God who has no name or identity—that's essentially what that is. Later His name got replaced with *Adonai*, translated into English as “Lord”, and that is a word that is oftentimes used in the Bible that is attributed to God, but it's a title of His—it doesn't transmit the same meaning; you don't look at the word “Lord” and think, that means “He was, He is, and He will be”. It's a title of respect but it doesn't transmit the same meaning.

That's what happened in our English-language Bibles as well: If you look at them today, what do you typically see? Any place the word YHVH should appear, as we've seen today in the scriptural references, you see “the LORD” (in all caps). At least they made a distinction, so you can kind of see between when it really was Adonai and when it was YHVH, but again, you read it as “the LORD”, and it doesn't carry the same meaning, doesn't tell you that this is He who was, is, and will be, and so it obscures His name.

Not only has this happened in our English-language Bibles, think about the history of the Church of God within our lifetimes. We homogenized Him. We made His name a kind of community name that was shared between the Father and the Son, which again obscures the whole meaning that comes with the name, and we totally overlooked this. Just thinking about this subject, it recently hit me in the last few months that the pronouns that are always associated with it are always referred to as *His* name and *My* name, never as *Their* name and *Our* name—it's always a singular pronoun—it kind of screams at you that it's just one individual's name. The light kind of went on for me, and I thought, how did I miss that for decades of my life? I kind of felt stupid, looking back. It tells you it's one individual's name.

As I've mentioned all throughout this sermon, calling upon His name means a great deal more than just acknowledging a word or knowing how it's pronounced, or just saying it in a prayer. Again, I think it's important to acknowledge the name and what it means, and who it identifies, but there is a whole lot more to calling upon that name than just that word. It's how we live our lives. It's carrying His name with honor, in setting a good example, putting Him first in our lives, truly worshipping Him in everything that we do, and placing that priority in our lives.

The plan of salvation that God has for mankind plays out in two stages: This Feast of Pentecost pictures the spring harvest, the small group that God is calling at this time to receive salvation, but all of us are being called with a job, with a responsibility to work with the rest of mankind later. We need to be planning for that job now, and one of the ways that we do that is by faithfully living our lives as a good example, today, so that all those who are called later, in that autumn harvest, who have the opportunity to call upon the name of the LORD, will have seen our good works and will want to glorify our Father in heaven. The last thing we want is those people to look back and to see our example and think, why would I want to be associated with that, with the way those people acted? We want them to have a positive association; we want to make sure that we're not carrying His name in vain.

So as we go forward from this Feast of Pentecost, and reflect upon its meaning, let's make sure that we're remembering the name of the LORD, that we're calling upon the name of the LORD in how we live our lives in our day-to-day example. We have to remember that later, the rest of mankind, who are not called as part of the spring harvest, will have their opportunity later. We want them to have that association later, when they have the opportunity to call upon the name of the LORD, that they have a positive association with it, because we have set a good example for them in how we have lived our lives, and we have carried His name with honor, and we've not carried the name of the LORD in vain.

As we go forward this year, let's remember to faithfully call upon the name of the LORD.