

## #139 “The Name of Jesus”

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For the Christian, the name of Jesus is certainly valued. I mean, we pray in His name, we recognize Him as part of the Trinity, and we know He was the sacrifice for sin. But the thought that has been troubling me is whether or not we as a church are continuing to value Him as highly as we ought to. Or, to put it another way, do we value the name of Jesus in the same manner and to the same degree that the early church valued it? I was struck by hearing the following passage from Acts 5:40-42 which says, "They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, *they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus*, and then released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, *rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name*. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, *they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ*" (italics mine). The apostles were boldly preaching the name of Jesus and the gospel of salvation through Him, He being the true Messiah, the Christ, Who had come to deliver Israel and all who would believe from their sins. But there was a huge backlash from the Jews who had refused to accept Jesus because they didn't like His version of the Messiah. It was too convicting, too radical, and too undermining of their lifestyle, self-righteousness, and earthly privileges. The apostles knew Jesus was the true Son of God and that salvation through any other name was impossible. As Acts 4:12 says, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." Despite horrific beatings, they kept on preaching the name of Christ, even rejoicing that God found them worthy to suffer shame for His name. They didn't bail out and start talking about God and finding common ground with the Jews who believed in Jehovah. Their message remained Jesus the Christ and preaching, healing, praising, praying, serving, singing, and so on in His name. There is something of utmost importance in the name of Jesus, and the apostles knew that and didn't back down from declaring Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

It was an angel who told Mary and Joseph to name the child in her womb Jesus because He would save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). Jesus is Savior. Indeed, even the literal name of Jesus means "Jehovah is salvation" indicating Jesus' primary purpose of salvation and clearly implying the divinity and deity of Jesus. That He was called Christ emphasizes that He was indeed the Messiah, the promised one of God sent to redeem Israel and to one day free them to live under His peaceful rule (Micah 5:5). But before He comes back to rule, He had to first come in the form of a man to die for our sins (Philippians 2:5-7). It was His submission to the plan of salvation deemed necessary by the Father that enabled Him to be given by God the name which is above every name and the name before which every knee must at some point bow and every mouth declare Him to be Lord (Philippians 2:8-11). Those who bow to Jesus and confess Him as Lord and Savior while they are yet alive will live in heaven, while those who do it before the Great White Throne Judgment, whether in a recognition that is too late or in a bitter, non-submissive manner will end up in hell. The name of Jesus is the watershed issue in salvation. Luke 2:34-35 says, "And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother,

‘Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed-- and a sword will pierce even your own soul--to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.’” What a person decides about Jesus reveals the true state of his or her heart before God. Some will "rise" into heaven, while others will "fall" into hell. It is not what a person does with a generic "Higher Power," but it is all about Jesus. This is what Scripture teaches in Hebrews 1:1-2, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, *in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world*" (italics mine). Jesus is the final and definitive means of salvation because He is the culmination of God's revelation to us as given by the New Testament Scripture. Why doesn't a generic Creator God or Higher Power suffice? Because, as this passage clearly states, it was through Jesus that Jehovah God created the world. Jesus has been there from the beginning, being both God and the Son of God. So today, given that we have the New Testament account, we cannot really know Jehovah unless we know Jesus. This is why the apostles couldn't stop preaching in His name. They knew that the gospel wasn't the gospel without Jesus and His work on the cross. It is not good enough in New Testament times to have faith in God; rather, we need to have faith in Christ (Colossians 1:4,13-14).

If we read the New Testament long enough, we will recognize that everything is by Him, through Him, for Him, in Him, unto Him, because of Him, etc (Romans 11:36). Jesus is indeed the foundation of the church and the keeper of it. He deserves the highest place in our hearts and in our worship. May we never devalue His name, and may we only exalt it today as we will in heaven, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." *Worthy are you, Jesus. All power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing are Yours. What the world has fades, but Your's endures forever. Forever we will praise You, and may that praising be heard loud and clear in our lives today. In Jesus' name, Amen.*