

## *In the Name of Jesus*

*Will God answer your prayer if you don't end with, "In Jesus' name, Amen?" Learn what praying in the name of Jesus really means.*

I taught this week on the call of Abraham and the development of God's missionary call through the nation of Israel as they were responsible to communicate the truth of God to the cultures around them. They were given that great commission. The great commission didn't start in Matthew 28. It started with Abraham in Genesis 12, the first three verses there. "Abraham, chosen by God to raise up a nation who would then be God's priests to the world so that they would be a blessing to all of the nations."

They had a unique role in the great monotheistic religion. The Jews were supposed to reflect morality to the world. Israel was to witness to the name of God. When they talked about the name of God and witnessing to God's name, that does not mean that they were to let everybody know what they called God, "Yahweh." Their goal wasn't to cover the countryside with evangelists who just let everybody know what the right word for God was. It meant something different.

This is where I think Jehovah Witnesses really miss the point by making the big fuss about God's real name, Jehovah. Even the word Jehovah is a conflated name using portions of two different Hebrew words. We're not even sure what the tetragrammaton really was and what it was pronounced like. After you translate it into other languages, it has a different sound anyway.

What is surprising, though, is that Christians, have a very similar practice. We think we are doing something spiritual and end up doing something superstitious. In the process we don't really do the spiritual thing that we intended to accomplish. The "name of God" or "in the name of Jesus" means something different than repeating those words.

Read the New Testament. It says there, "Go out unto all the world, baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit." It says "Anything you ask in my name, that will I do." We have presumed that what that means is that we must add a phrase after both prayer and baptism in order to make it work. We dip them and say, "In the name of Jesus" or "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Just about every time we finish praying we tack this phrase on at the end, "In the name of Jesus. Amen." We do that because we were told to pray in the name of Jesus and God would answer. We expect that in doing so it seals the power of the prayer. I think that is superstitious because praying in the name of Jesus doesn't mean saying, "In the name of Jesus."

I read through the New Testament once looking for every teaching on prayer or example of one. It is a great practice to do. Go down to your local Bible bookstore, buy yourself a little pocket Bible, one of those small, palm-sized New Testaments. I like the New American Standard myself. Start with Matthew and go right through to Revelation. You can skim read if you like, but look for every example of prayer in the New Testament.

"Grace to you and peace in the Lord Jesus Christ." That would be an example of a prayer that you see oftentimes at the beginning and sometimes at the end of Epistles. Paul says, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father", he reflects a prayer there. "I pray that the eyes of your heart might be opened, that you would understand the length and breadth and depth of the love of Christ which is beyond comprehension." Paul gives a prayer there.

One thing you will notice when you highlight every prayer, every supplication on towards God that is uttered in the text of the New Testament is that you will never see a New Testament prayer that ends with the phrase "In Jesus' name. Amen," even though the same text teaches you to pray in Jesus' name. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to draw the conclusion that we are, first, to pray in the name of Jesus, and second, praying in the name of Jesus doesn't mean ending your prayer with the phrase "In the name of Jesus. Amen," because it is never done in the New Testament.

Ending prayers with that phrase might do nothing whatsoever to the efficacy of your prayer. I even submit that it might be hurting your prayer, depending on what you mean by the phrase.

What does it mean to pray in the name of someone if it doesn't mean saying, "In the name of..."? Here's what it means.

The name of someone, in the sense that the Bible authors used it, was what the person stood for, the substance of their character, or their authority. Israel was to witness to God's name, I mentioned. That means they were to witness to His character and who He is. Like it says in Exodus 34:6-7, "The Lord, God, compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness and truth, who keeps loving kindness for a thousand." You see there a phrase that was repeated six times at least in the Old Testament. This is testifying to the name, or nature, or power, or substance of God. When we pray in the name of Jesus or baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, what we are doing is acting in their authority, in their stead, according to their command, and consistent with their desires.

When we pray in the name of Jesus it might be better for us to drop the phrase "In the name of Jesus" altogether because generally we don't mean, "I am praying in the authority of Jesus Christ." You know what we probably mean when we say "In the name of Jesus. Amen"? Practically speaking, it means the prayer is over. That is the Christian exit. Amen. Translated it means, the prayer is over, let's go do what we were doing, or let's eat.

There is power in praying in the authority of Jesus Christ, by the authority He has given you, consistent with His character, His desire, and His will. It's like when we say, "Stop in the name of the law." The policeman is saying that because he is standing in the place of the law and speaking on behalf of it. To the degree that he speaks for the law, then he can enforce the law and he has authority. When he steps outside of the law, he has lost his authority even though he still says, "Stop in the name of the law."

It might be better for us to start our prayers with that phrase instead of ending it. But don't even use that phrase. It would be better to start your prayers by saying, "Father, I come before you, not in my own power, not in my own righteousness, not in my own capability. I come before you in the authority of Jesus, your Son, who gave me access in this faith in which I stand because of His blood. I come on the merits of Jesus, not on my own merits." Ladies and gentlemen, that's what praying in the

name of Jesus is. When you come on the basis of Jesus' merits, then you are heard for Jesus' sake. I think it would be better to start out that way and when you end, just stop praying when you are done. You don't have to say anything at the end. If you are praying in a group and you don't want to leave people mystified as to what is happening, you could just simply say, "The prayer is over, let's eat," or "We're done, let's go on." The important thing is not what you say with your mouth. Dispense with the empty words. Get rid of them. Instead, approach the throne of God based on the authority of Jesus Christ. If you are thinking that way and that is your attitude, it doesn't matter what you say at the end of the prayer. God will hear you according to His promise.