

The Message of Acts #1: The Name of Christ

There are many false or twisted gospels:

1. Organizational: Come join our church
2. Psychological: Jesus will make you feel better
3. Pity: Jesus is standing at the door knocking, and if you don't let him in he will feel bad
4. Prosperity: Jesus will make you rich by following us
5. Miracles: "Lord, Lord, haven't we done miracles in your name?"
6. Nationalist: "Of course I am a Christian, I am American"
7. Racist: "Black Theology", or the ante-Bellum Christianity that justified slavery
8. Modernism, social justice: we are to bring God's kingdom by improving society; evolution

But what does the book of Acts show as "the message of the gospel"? (What did they preach?)

1. the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth – that HE is the Christ, the Messiah, the chosen of God, and there is salvation in his name ONLY
2. that this Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead
3. that the kingdom of God is coming, and in one sense has already come to those who believe
4. repentance from sins
5. water baptism for believers
6. the baptism in the Holy Spirit as an experience subsequent to salvation

The book of Acts refers to the Name of Jesus over 25 times. Do we give it the same prominence in evangelism and ministry today?

What is a Name?

A name is really an identifier that we use to distinguish someone from all others. It represents all that a person is.

In programming, an identifier can lead you to everything you know about some entity – first and last names, address, phone number, division, job code, etc. In a community, when people hear your name, they don't think of the name itself (just a word with letters), they think of all they know about you, whether good or bad. So the name of our Jesus is different than someone else named Jesus. This Jesus is the Son of God, holy, sinless, the perfect embodiment of wisdom, the Lamb of God, our Redeemer, Saviour, and Lord, the Messiah.

A name can identify you, not just as an individual, but as a member of a family, whether good or bad. We are to bear the name of God in honor, and not to do anything to bring reproach upon that name. One of the 10 commandments is not to take ("to bear", "to carry") God's name in vain. We bear His name, as "Christ-ians".

When a woman marries a man she changes her last name to that of her husband. That means she is no longer being publicly associated with her parents, but her husband. Those who know them no longer think of them as individuals, but as a couple. Her identity is now associated with her husband, not her parents, and is reflected in her new name.

So when we take the name "Christian", we are proclaiming that our identity is now "in Christ". When we receive Christ, we willingly identify with that name, allowing all He is to be applied to our lives. We are "in Christ".

"Name" References in Acts

A. Salvation is through the name of Jesus

2:21, 36 - And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Peter was telling the crowd that "the Lord" of Joel 2:28-32 was none other than the Jesus they had just crucified.

4:10-12 -Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

16:30-31 - And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

B. Water baptism was in the name of Jesus

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| 2:38 – Repent, and be baptized every one of <u>you in the name of Jesus Christ</u> for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. |
| 8:14-16 - ... Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized <u>in the name of the Lord Jesus.</u>) |
| 10:48 – And he commanded them to be baptized <u>in the name of the Lord.</u> |
| 19:4-5 – When they heard this, they were baptized <u>in the name of the Lord Jesus.</u> |
| 22:16 – And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, <u>calling on the name of the Lord.</u> |

Note: The very people to whom Jesus was speaking in Mt. 28 (baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost), carried out that command throughout the book of Acts by baptizing in the name of Jesus. Also that the whole imagery of baptism in Rom. 6 is of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, not the Father or Holy Spirit.

C. Wonders and miracles were done in the name of Jesus

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| 3:6 – Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: <u>In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth</u> rise up and walk. |
| 3:16 – And <u>his name through faith in his name</u> hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. |
| 4:7-10 – Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that <u>by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth</u> , whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole. |
| 4:29-30 – And now, LORD, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thy hand to heal; and <u>that signs and wonders may be done by the name of they holy child Jesus.</u> |
| 16:18 - ... (Paul) said to the spirit, I command thee <u>in the name of Jesus Christ</u> to come out of her. |
| 19:13, 17 – seven sons of Sceva tried to use Jesus' name, but failed, and "the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." Why? Because "Jesus" is not an incantation, but a recognition of our relationship to him. |

D. Our relationship to God is an identification with Jesus' name, and we become his representatives.

a. Believers are referred to as "those that call upon his name"

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| 9:14-16 - ... he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will shew him how great things he must <u>suffer for my name's sake.</u> |
| 9:21 - ... Is not this he, that destroyed <u>them that called on this name</u> in Jerusalem, ... |
| 15:14, 17 - ... how God did at the first visit the Gentiles, to take out of them <u>a people for his name.</u> ... That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, <u>upon whom my name is called</u> ... |

b. Persecutions are suffering "for his name's sake".

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| 15:26 – Men that have <u>hazarded their lives for the name</u> of our Lord Jesus Christ. |
| 21:13 - ... for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem <u>for the name of the Lord Jesus.</u> |

E. The preaching of the gospel is a presentation of Jesus' name

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| 5:40-42 - ... commanded that they should not <u>speak in the name of Jesus</u> , and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy <u>to suffer shame for his name.</u> And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to <u>teach and preach Jesus Christ.</u> |
| 8:12 – But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, <u>and the name of Jesus Christ</u> , they were baptized, both men and women. |
| 10:38, 43 – How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. ... To him give all the prophets witness, that <u>through his name</u> whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. |