

# "HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME"



Jesus taught us to pray to God, "Hallowed be Your Name" (Matthew 6:9). Is there anything to a name? Many people answer emphatically, "No." They do not realize that they are nullifying the very first petition in the disciples' prayer. One who does not believe that a name matters cannot pray, "Hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9) with the spirit and the understanding. If a name is inconsequential, then it really does not matter whether the Father's name is hallowed or desecrated.

Many quote William Shakespeare: "What's in a name? that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."<sup>1</sup> When one leaves the Bible and turns to Shakespeare to prove what is good in religion, he is admitting that his position is not in the Bible. If from a rose a sweeping generalization is made that one name is as good as another, then logically Beelzebub's name is as good as the Father's. Let us retreat

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*"... 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name'" (Matthew 6:9).*

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from botany and English literature and instead go to the Bible to establish religious truths. As we

linger with the first petition in the disciples' prayer, we will see that names do matter. Jesus thought so, and He wanted His disciples to think so. He wanted them to understand the significance of God's name when they prayed.

## A SACRED NAME

The Almighty's name must not be spoken lightly. Jesus wants you to desire from the depths of your soul that God's name be held by man and angels in supreme respect. When His name

is hallowed (sanctified), it is put in a place by itself, high and lifted up, and is not put to any common use. Adam Clarke pointed out that the Greek word translated "hallowed" is made up of two thoughts: "the earth" and "not"; hence, the Father's name is "not of the earth" and must not be dragged down to His footstool.

## "HALLELUJAH!"

Like the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, a wondrous exclamation was revealed to John. He was privileged to hear the angels singing, "Hallelujah!" (Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, 6).

That grand word is not just an ecstatic emotional cry, as I long thought. Literally, it is a command: "Praise the Lord!" The word comes to us in Greek form (*hallelouia*) in the four times John heard it in Revelation 19, but it is of Hebrew origin. Made up of two words, *halal* and *Jah*, it means, "Praise Yahweh." Notice Psalm 111:1: "Praise the LORD!" A footnote in my copy of the American Standard Version says, "Heb. *Hallelujah*." Hence, when you sing this great word with the understanding, you are doing reverence to the name of God as you proclaim His name.

## PROFANING THE NAME

Over and over (Leviticus 18:21; 19:12; 20:3; 21:6; 22:2), Moses warned against profaning the name of God. There was a time when it was held in such reverence that a man was arrested and jailed for cursing and misusing the Name. Everyone who had heard his blasphemy was to be present (Leviticus 24:11-14) when he was brought "outside the camp," and each witness was to walk by and lay his hands upon the

man's head as a testimony that he had heard what the culprit had said. Stoning followed.

## PRONOUNCING THE NAME

Though God was severe toward any blasphemous use of His name—and wrote in stone that His name must not be used in any empty way (Exodus 20:7)—He never did intend that His name should be considered too sacred to be pronounced by human lips. Such a superstition developed and persists among Jews till this day.

Because God commanded that a person be stoned for misusing the Name (Leviticus 24:16), and because of a misunderstanding of the third commandment, rabbis taught that God's name is incommunicable, ineffable, too holy for sinful lips to speak. However, God's warning was only about profaning, not pronouncing the Name. If the Name should not even be spoken, certainly multitudes of good people would not have used it so freely in Bible times: it appears about 6,873 times<sup>2</sup> in the Old Testament.

The abbreviated form of the Hebrew word is included in Psalm 68:4 in the King James Version: "Extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him." The use of this abbreviation does not mean that the Name could not be uttered; rather, it suggests that the Name was much used. The people of Israel felt close to God and did not hesitate to use His name freely and intimately, though never flippantly.

## "FEAR" THE NAME

Psalm 111:9 has been unintentionally misused by those who point out that this verse is the only place in the Bible where the word "reverend" is found, and that it applies here to God Himself.<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, the word here translated "reverend" (Heb.: *yare'*, translated "awesome" in the NASB) is found over three hundred times in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word *yare'* means "to fear" or "to revere." Lot was afraid (*yare'*; Genesis 19:30) to dwell in a certain town. Further, Moses commanded, "Every one of you shall reverence [*yare'*] his mother and his father, . . ." (Leviticus 19:3). The Israelites feared, or "revered" (*yare'*), Moses, Joshua, and God (Joshua 4:14; Leviticus 19:14). This great text in Psalm 111:9 is an exaltation of

God's name. The Name is worthy of respect, of godly fear and dread and awe. The same word (*yare'*) is used twice in Deuteronomy 28:58: ". . . fear this honored and awesome name, the Lord your God" (emphasis mine).

Deep veneration and a holy dread of the Name was certainly instilled when the Lord descended in a cloud on shaking Sinai, passed by Moses, and "proclaimed" the Name: "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness . . ." (Exodus 34:6).

God then prescribed this beautiful and world-renowned priestly benediction:

The LORD bless you, and keep you;  
The LORD make His face shine on you,  
And be gracious to you;  
The LORD lift up His countenance on you,  
And give you peace  
(Numbers 6:24-26).

The Almighty did not put His name three times into those blessed words accidentally, for He explained: "So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them" (Numbers 6:27).

A beautiful golden box, with glittering cherubim standing at each end of the cover, was God's meeting place with His people (Exodus 25:22). This box was neither to be seen nor touched as it was moved from place to place (Numbers 4:5, 6). Unauthorized personnel who gazed on it "even for a moment" were to die (Numbers 4:20). It was kept in the most hallowed place on earth—the Holy of Holies (Exodus 26:33; 40:21). Appropriately, this sacred box was "called by the Name, the very name of the LORD of hosts" who is enthroned between the cherubim (2 Samuel 6:2).

## THE POWER OF THE NAME

The consciousness of the power of God's name was in the heart of every faithful Jew. The young man David was not afraid to stand before Goliath in the name of the Lord of hosts (1 Samuel 17:45). That same young man, afterward becoming the "sweet singer of Israel," was inspired to exhort every Jew:

Praise the LORD!  
Praise, O servants of the LORD,  
Praise the name of the LORD.

Blessed be the name of the LORD  
From this time forth and forever.  
From the rising of the sun to its setting  
The name of the LORD is to be praised  
(Psalm 113:1-3).

## PRAYING TO GOD

As blessed and all-prevailing as was the divine name in the time of David, and even when Jesus taught the disciples how to pray, a prayer offered today only in the name of God will rise no higher than the ceiling. You cannot get to God in the name of God! By the Father's own arrangement, there is one mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5). According to His own good pleasure, the all-wise Father purposed to bring all things together in Christ (Ephesians 1:10). So important is the position of the God-man that He could make this startling statement: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6; emphasis mine). God, according to the counsel of His own unsearchable will, does not save anyone who is outside of Christ. Jesus is the bright and morning star, the root and offspring of David, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last (Revelation 22:13, 16). He is the head of the corner. "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" (Acts 4:12).

However, the Christ has not always occupied such a place. Before the Day of Pentecost, following His conquering death, salvation was not in His name and prayer was not in His name. He said, "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name" (John 16:24). Thus, when He taught His disciples how to pray, He did not teach them to pray in His own name. At that time such instruction would have been improper. That is one of the reasons why the disciples' prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 is now out of date. The greatest event in human history has been enacted since that prayer was given. The administration of heaven and earth has been changed. God exalted Jesus, having raised Him from the dead to His own right hand. Not only has He given Him a name above every name, but He has put all dominion and power and might under His feet. Angels, as well as men, are commanded to worship Him (Ephesians 1:20-23; Hebrews 1:6).

When you and I pray today, we are to hallow not only the name of the "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14), but also the name of His only begotten Son. We cannot honor the Father without honoring His Son, to whom all things have been delivered (Matthew 11:27; John 5:23). Even the angels in heaven say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Revelation 5:12).

Among all nations, the great God ordained that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name (Luke 24:46, 47). The Holy Spirit descended from heaven upon the apostles on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, on the birthday and in the birthplace of the church of the living God. On that day, everyone was commanded to repent and to be baptized for the remission of sins "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). From that day forward, the disciples' prayer as such was no longer prayable. Since that day, every prayer is to be offered through the name of Jesus (Colossians 3:17); everything connected with a Christian's life in word or deed is to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. God's will is that every tongue should confess the name which is above every name (Philippians 2:9). That is not a demotion to the Father's name; on the contrary, God has ordained that he who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him (John 5:23). Truly, then, you hallow the name of God when you sanctify Jesus' name and follow Him.

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<sup>1</sup>Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, act 2, scene 2.

<sup>2</sup>William Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. Edward Robinson, ed. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 217.

<sup>3</sup>This passage is often misused as proof that no man should allow himself to be called "reverend." Preachers should refuse to be called "Reverend" or "Right Reverend" or "Worshipful Sir" or "Most Worshipful Sir" or "The Very Right Reverend" or "Father" or any other religious title, although that is not the teaching in Psalm 111:9. Sometimes even "brother" is used as a title, for there are those who call preachers "Brother So-and-so," while referring to other men who are members of the church as "Mister." Our Lord condemned all titles in religion: "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven" (Matthew 23:8, 9).