

# All Must Take upon Them the Name Given of the Father

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The Savior's name has singular and essential power. It is the only name by which salvation is possible.

A few weeks ago, I took part in the baptism of several eight-year-old children. They had begun to learn the gospel of Jesus Christ from their parents and teachers. The seed of their faith in Him had begun to grow. And now they wanted to follow Him into the waters of baptism to become members of His restored Church. As I watched their anticipation, I wondered how much they understood about one important aspect of their baptismal covenant: their commitment to take upon themselves the name of Jesus Christ.

From the beginning, God has declared the preeminence of the name of Jesus Christ in His plan for us. An angel taught our first father, Adam, "Thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore."<sup>1</sup>

The Book of Mormon prophet King Benjamin taught his people, "There shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come."<sup>2</sup>

The Lord reiterated this truth to the Prophet Joseph Smith: "Behold, Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father, and there is none other name given whereby man can be saved."<sup>3</sup>

In our day, President Dallin H. Oaks has taught that "those who exercise faith in the sacred name of Jesus Christ ... and enter into his covenant ... can lay claim on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup>

Our Heavenly Father wants to make it absolutely clear that the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, is not simply one name among many. The Savior's name has singular and essential power. It is the only name by which salvation is possible. By emphasizing this truth in every dispensation, our loving Father assures all of His children that there is a way back to Him. But having a sure way available does not mean that our return is automatically assured. God tells us that our action is required: "Wherefore, all men [and women] must *take* upon them the name which is given of the Father."<sup>5</sup>

In order to access the saving power that comes only through the name of Christ, we must "humble [ourselves] before God ... and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits ... and [be] willing *to take upon [us] the name of Jesus Christ*" and thereby qualify, like my eight-year-old friends, to "be received by baptism into his church."<sup>6</sup>

All who sincerely desire to take the Savior's name upon them must qualify for and receive the ordinance of baptism as a physical witness to God of their decision.<sup>7</sup> But baptism is just the beginning.

The word *take* is not passive. It is an action word with multiple definitions.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, our commitment to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ requires action and has multiple dimensions.

For example, one meaning of the word *take* is to *partake* of or receive into one's body, such as when we *take* a drink. By taking upon ourselves the name of Christ, we commit to *take* His teachings, His characteristics, and ultimately His love deep into our beings so that they become part of who we are. Thus the importance of President Russell M. Nelson's invitation to the young adults to "prayerfully and vigorously [seek] to understand what each of [the Savior's] various titles and names means *personally* for [them]"<sup>9</sup> and to feast on the words of Christ in the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon.<sup>10</sup>

Another meaning of the word *take* is to accept a person in a particular role or embrace the truthfulness of an idea or principle. When we take upon us the name of Christ, we accept Him as our Savior and continually embrace His teachings as the guide for our lives. In every meaningful decision we make, we can *take* His gospel to be true and obediently live it with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength.

The word *take* can also mean to align oneself with a name or a cause. Most of us have had the experience of *taking on* responsibility at work or *taking up* a cause or a movement. When we take upon ourselves the name of Christ, we take upon us the responsibilities of a true disciple, we advocate His cause, and we "stand as witnesses of [Him] at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in."<sup>11</sup> President Nelson has called upon "every young woman and every young man ... to enlist in the youth battalion of the Lord to help gather Israel."<sup>12</sup> And all of us are grateful to take up the prophetic call to profess the name of His restored Church as revealed by the Savior Himself: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>13</sup>

In the process of taking the Savior's name upon us, we must understand that the cause of Christ and of His Church are one and the same. They cannot be separated. Similarly, our personal discipleship to the Savior and active membership in His Church are also inseparable. If we falter in our commitment to one, our commitment to the other will be diminished, as surely as night follows day.

Some are reluctant to assume the name of Jesus Christ and His cause because they regard it to be unduly narrow, limiting, and confining. In reality, taking upon us the name of Christ is both liberating and enlarging. It awakens the desire we felt when we accepted God's plan through faith in the Savior. With this desire alive in our hearts, we can discover the real purpose of our divinely given gifts and talents, experience His empowering love, and grow in our concern for the welfare of others. As we take upon us the Savior's name, we truly lay hold upon every good thing and become like Him.<sup>14</sup>

It is important to remember that taking the Savior's name upon us is a covenant commitment—beginning with the covenant we make at baptism. President Nelson has taught, "[Our] commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available."<sup>15</sup> One of the supernal privileges of taking the Savior's name upon us by baptism is the access it provides to the next ordinance on the covenant path, our confirmation. When I asked one of my eight-year-old friends what taking the name of Christ meant to her, she replied simply, "It means I can have the Holy Ghost." She was right.

The gift of the Holy Ghost is received by confirmation after we have received the ordinance of baptism. This gift is the right and opportunity to have the Holy Ghost as a constant companion. If we listen to and obey His still, small voice, He will keep us on the covenant path we entered through baptism, warn us when we are tempted to depart from it, and encourage us to repent and adjust as necessary. Our focus after baptism is to keep the Holy Ghost always with us so that we can continue progressing along the covenant path. The Holy Ghost can be with us only to the degree we keep our lives clean and free from sin.

For this reason, the Lord has provided a way for us to continually refresh the purifying effect of our baptism through another ordinance—the sacrament. Each week we can “witness ... that [we] are *willing to take upon [us] the name of [the] Son*”<sup>16</sup> again by reaching out and *taking* the emblems of the Lord’s flesh and blood in our hands—the bread and the water—and *partaking* of them into our very souls. In return, the Savior performs His cleansing miracle yet again and qualifies us to have the continuing influence of the Holy Ghost. Is this not evidence of the infinite mercy found only in the name of Jesus Christ? Just as we take His name upon *us*, *He* takes our sins and sorrows upon *Him*, and yet His “arm of mercy is extended”<sup>17</sup> to encircle us in the arms of His love.<sup>18</sup>

The sacrament is a weekly reminder that *taking* upon us the name of Jesus Christ is a living and continuing commitment, not a single event that happens once only on the day of our baptism.<sup>19</sup> We can continually and repeatedly enjoy “that sacred, holy offering, by man least understood, to have our sins remitted and take his flesh and blood.”<sup>20</sup> It is little wonder then that whenever the children of God understand the powerful, spiritual blessings that can come from taking upon them the name of Christ, their feeling is always of joy and their desire is always to enter into a covenant with their God.<sup>21</sup>

As we follow this divinely designed covenant path, our commitment and efforts to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ will give us the strength “to retain [His] name written always in [our] hearts.”<sup>22</sup> We will love God and our neighbors and feel a desire to minister to them. We will keep His commandments and yearn to draw nearer to Him by entering into additional covenants with Him. And when we find ourselves weak and incapable to act on our righteous desires, we will plead for the strength that comes only through His name, and He will come to our aid. As we endure in faithfulness, the day will come when we will see Him and be with Him, and we will find that we have become like Him, thus qualifying us to return to the presence of the Father.

For the Savior’s promise is sure: those who “believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name, and endure in faith on his name to the end”<sup>23</sup> will be saved in the kingdom of God. With you, I rejoice that these incomparable blessings are made possible by taking upon us the name of Jesus Christ, of whom and in whose name I testify, amen.